

petition with the local cable system, but would be shown the same day.

Viacom's Goddard described the leased channel concept many northwestern cable systems have undertaken with the NBA's Seattle SuperSonics. At a cost of \$120, subscribers can watch all Sonic home and away games.

Operators get a percentage of the advertising gross and/or payment from the team, Goddard said, depending on the contract drawn between the Sonics and the system. The Sonics promote and build the subscriber base, Goddard said, and the local cable operator is compensated for security, capital expenditures and marketing costs.

Distribution will be via microwave to the KIRO-TV Seattle transmitter, then to a master antenna system, then to cable operators. KIRO production facilities will be used for the games by the Sonics.

Advertising will be sold at "natural breaks" in the games, Goddard said, with the Sonics retaining the revenue. Six companies have already signed for the service, representing 220,000 subscribers and 400,000 homes. "Marketing has gone quite slowly," Goddard admitted, but said that was because it is difficult "to create a sense of urgency" to induce subscribers to put down the \$60 deposit, and is coupled with the Sonics last-place finish in the division last season.

The key advantage in the situation, Goddard said, is that the middleman has been eliminated in the program purchase

scheme, though it places pressure on the cable system "to negotiate a good contract."

## Showtime expands to 24 hours

**July 4 is start-up day for full-time service; new programs include series with Mickey Rooney, Jonathan Winters; also announced are affiliation agreements with Warner Amex**

Things must have been hopping at Showtime since the pay cable network decided last month to lengthen its programming day from 12-14 hours to 24 hours starting July 4. Showtime President Mike Weinblatt and programming head Greg Nathanson announced a number of new programs and some new directions in Showtime's programming philosophy at a press conference on the opening day of the NCTA convention.

Weinblatt also used the forum to announce affiliation agreements with Warner Amex Cable Communications, Community Tele-Communications and Cross Country Cable.

The bulk of Showtime's programming and its chief attraction to cable subscribers are recent, major motion pictures. A joint ven-

ture of Teleprompter and Viacom International, Showtime counts over 1,100 cable affiliates and approximately two million subscribers.

Showtime's new programming includes six one-hour specials featuring Mickey Rooney performing burlesque and vaudeville comedy; recut and abbreviated versions of *The Wacky World of Jonathan Winters*; *Laff-A-Thon*, game show featuring comic contestants playing for home viewers, and a series of week-long, five-episode serials, produced by Paul Klein.

In addition, Showtime said it has acquired the rights to 1,700 movies of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and it will present "Purlie," a Tony award winning musical, as part of its one-and-a-half-year-old *Broadway on Showtime* series.

To establish viewing habits among its subscribers, Nathanson said Showtime would begin running films and series during regular and recurring time slots. "Over time," Nathanson said, "viewers will learn that they can tune in to Showtime any night at 8 p.m. [NYT] and see a great program start to finish." He said Showtime's best movies will be aired on Friday, Saturday and Sunday in that time slot. The slot will be filled on Tuesdays with *Jonathan Winters*, *Laff-A-Thon* and *Bizarre*, an existing comedy series starring John Byner. Showtime has also scheduled regular family entertainment each afternoon at 3:30 p.m. NYT.

One of the headaches for the pay cable programmer has been what to do with the time between feature movies. According to Weinblatt, this heretofore programming wasteland will be filled with a variety of "micro-series."

Chief among the "programming between programming," Weinblatt said, will be television personalities Renny Temple and Caren Kaye, who will preview upcoming movies. The husband-wife team may be familiar to television viewers. Temple starred in the short-lived *The Life and Times of Eddie Roberts* and Kaye has appeared on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *The Betty White Show*.

In other programs, performer Meredith MacRae will interview popular entertainers; Bill Harris, former writer for Rona Barrett, will report Hollywood gossip and news and "count down" the top 10 grossing films of the month, and young comedians will perform.

According to Weinblatt, the Rooney series, which will be produced by Rooney and Greg Garrison Productions, will bring the "broad humor and baggy pants comedy of vaudeville" to Showtime. In a recorded telephone conversation between Weinblatt and Rooney, Rooney said he would perform many of the 257 "black-outs" he inherited from his father.

The 26 *Jonathan Winters* half-hours, Weinblatt said, are the best parts of 52 half-hours produced for the 1972-73 and 1973-74 television seasons. It too is being produced by Greg Garrison Productions.

Costs of the Paul Klein serials will be kept to a minimum by using Ultra-Mat, a technique whereby characters in a studio are superimposed onto pre-recorded



**Flap.** It was an NCTA convention general session entitled "Agronsky and Company Appraise Free Speech and the First Amendment in the Cable Age," and it brought out a large roomful of delegates. For the first half-hour, Martin Agronsky, moderator of Post-Newsweek's weekly television discussion program (center in photo above), and regular participants, Elizabeth Drew, contributor to the *New Yorker* and other publications (l), and Joseph Kraft, syndicated columnist, shared cerebral thoughts about inflation, economic policy, President Reagan and his administration, without mentioning cable, the First Amendment, or even copyright or AT&T. At that point Agronsky said: "Let's turn to international matters," and a man in the audience could stand it no more. He rose and said in a loud voice: "I can't understand why this panel isn't addressing this audience."

Agronsky said something about cable being a business that like all others is affected by national politics and the general economy. Drew said the title of the session had been printed before the participants had decided to talk about larger matters. Others in the audience began asking such questions as: "How is the Reagan administration going to help cable?"

If anything concrete came off the platform, it was the panel's unanimous view that something ought to be done to prevent national networks from broadcasting election projections or results before polls close. Kraft said he saw nothing wrong with a government law to prevent it. Drew said a prohibition against the publication of political polls before or after an election would be "an advance for civilization." Agronsky, who used to be a network correspondent himself, agreed something must be done to curb network election reporting.