

scenes. Featuring new characters and a new story each week, Weinblatt said, the five-part series will run Monday and Friday and rerun "vertically" on the weekend.

Showtime's new addition to *Broadway on Showtime*, "Purlie," stars Robert Guillaume, best known for his lead role in ABC's *Benson*, Melba Moore and Sherman Hemsley from CBS's *The Jeffersons*. The musical will be restaged at Lehmann College, New York, for the Showtime taping. It is being produced by Bob Thiel Productions in association with CBS Video Enterprises.

The top affiliation news was that Warner Amex would introduce Showtime into all new-build Qube systems, a market of 1.7 million homes. It was also announced that Cross Country had signed to offer Showtime in four new-build systems that will encompass 200,000 homes and that TCI, which already offers Showtime in many of its systems, would extend the service to 150,000 more subscribers within the next two years.

Cable news service may be Westinghouse entry for future, program session hears

And television's in for a run of program failures, predicts NCTA panelist; CBS following P&G's example; Cox is bullish

The president of Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. hinted last week that the company may introduce a news service for cable television. Appearing at the closing general session of the NCTA convention in Los Angeles on Sunday, May 31, Daniel Ritchie, responding to a question, said he had hoped to make an announcement during the convention but was unable to complete plans.

Perhaps, he said, there would be something to say in two or three weeks. He pointed out that Westinghouse had engaged transponder capacity for satellite delivery of programming and that Westinghouse stations were active in a satellite news exchange.

Ritchie was one of four members in a panel discussion of "The Evolving Marketplace for Cable Programming." The theme was set by Richard Frank, president, TV distribution, Paramount Films, Hollywood. "We've watched the dedication to the building of plant," said Frank, "while programming has taken a back seat. Now we ought to see a reallocation of dollars to programming."

But where's the money to come from? Ritchie said expanding advertising volume and increased pay service would combine to support cable programming, "but there will be failures."

Frank agreed. "More money will be lost in programming and there will be more failures in the next five years than we have ever seen in television," he said. As for ad-



Show's the thing. "The Evolving Marketplace for Cable Programming" was the subject of these participants in a general session: (l-r) Daniel Ritchie, Westinghouse Broadcasting Co., New York; Richard J. Cox, CBS Cable, New York; Sandi Freeman, Cable News Network, Atlanta (moderator); Richard Frank, Paramount, Hollywood, and George Paris, 20th Century-Fox, Beverly Hills, Calif.

vertising, said Frank, "advertisers will insist on numbers, and the numbers on some channels just won't be there."

Richard J. Cox, president of CBS Cable, disagreed. The programming his company intends to offer "can be sold at premium rates," said Cox, "because of the value of the audience we will deliver."

CBS Cable will aim at a cultural level higher than that of conventional TV. "The country has never been better educated," Cox said. "We intend to serve an underserved need."

Won't CBS Cable, Cox was asked, be competing with the CBS TV network? "It's like P&G putting out another soap," Cox said. "If you're going to have competition, it might as well be your own."

The fourth member of the panel, George Paris, vice president, daytime television programming and specials, 20th Century-Fox, said narrowcasting on cable and quality programming "are on a collision course." Unions, he said, must be reasonable if costs are to correspond to audience size. "We mustn't be too greedy in the developmental stage," Paris said.

Not only that, said Paris, "in years to come television networks won't be able to pay the fees they pay now for programs. We'll have to be innovative to maintain quality."

Sandi Freeman, a Cable News Network correspondent, was moderator.

Cable's local side

Public access and local origination are growing as systems seek more localism

One of the NCTA's most enthusiastic panel sessions—it ran 30 minutes overtime—concerned the twin subjects of local origination (LO) and access—which, if the tenor of the discussion was any indication, may be communications avenues whose time has come. Both are aspects of the cable experience that in the past have ranged from controversial to troublesome to disappointing.

Much of the impetus for the current wave of LO and access activity has resulted from franchise contests in the big cities and major suburban areas, where communities have demanded and operators have agreed to provide extensive channel set-asides for those purposes. The evidence advanced by the NCTA panelists was that the investments were proving worthwhile.

Sue Buske, executive director of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP), offered three basic reasons for cable's activating such channels in the first place: (1) to make money from programming—through the sale of local advertising—on LO channels, (2) to



Enthusiasts. Both local origination and access channel activity are enjoying a new boom in cable, according to panelists (l to r) Sue Buske of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, Jabari Simama of Cable Atlanta, Don Smith of NFLCP, Marguerite Johnson of San Leandro Cable and Joan Young of Golden Triangle Communications.