

One untouchable among projects on FCC's agenda is implementation of Computer II. That, at least, is view of commission task force that produced five-volume program evaluation report, submitted to commission last week. Report, prepared under direction of Commissioner Anne P. Jones, is designed to provide guidance to commission in making whatever cuts in budget Congress mandates in response to President Reagan's call for economies. Report will form background for discussion on Dec. 9 of agenda item proposing 12% cut. That is size of cut President originally requested across nondefense spending, but Congress last week appeared determined not to cut that deep. Staff will adjust item to whatever action Congress takes. Among broad categories of commission activities, authorization of service is given highest priority in staff report; enforcement efforts, second priority. Support services are given lowest priority. As example of commission activity given low—"below the line"—priority, official cited financial reporting forms.

Utah law barring cablecast of "indecent material" exceeded "boundaries set by Supreme Court" and infringed on First and Fourteenth Amendment protections. That was word last week from Federal District Judge Bruce Jenkins, who ruled that law was unconstitutional and issued permanent injunction blocking its enforcement. (Jenkins had earlier issued temporary restraining order staying statute's enforcement). Home Box Office, together with Community Television of Utah, Community Cable of Utah, Utah Satellite and Wasatch Community TV, had brought suit against state over statute, challenging what they called its ban of "non-obscene 'indecent material.'"

Leaders of House Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and Administration of Justice will be "hard pressed" to convince other subcommittee members to accept industry compromise on copyright, according to Thomas Wheeler, president of National Cable Television Association. Majority of subcommittee members still favor abolishing compulsory license altogether, said Wheeler. If industries can't agree, cable operators could fare much worse, he added. Appearing on satellite-fed cable TV call-in program, *Cable Today*, last Friday (Nov. 20), Wheeler stressed transition period as key to survival of superstations and ability of cable systems to adapt to new rules. Most of cable operators to call program opposed compromise. *Cable Today* was first in series on cable industry issues produced by Appalachian Community Service Network.

FCC Chairman Mark S. Fowler was at White House two weeks ago, visiting with Presidential Counselor Edwin Meese III, it was learned on Friday. Fowler said his visit to Meese, whom he knew before Reagan administration took office, was largely "social." However, he said he reviewed commission's activities, "in terms of President's philosophy." Commission management by objectives program was one item discussed. So was commission's proposal to eliminate fairness doctrine and equal time law. Meese's reaction to that proposal? "Very positive." Fowler, who makes no secret of his dedication to Reagan philosophy, said he recognizes commission is "independent agency" but believes it "perfectly proper" to inform White House and other agencies of government "what we're doing." He said visit lasted about 15 minutes; expects to chat with White House officials from time to time in future.

Almost two years after RCA Americom's Satcom III was inexplicably lost in space, its replacement, Satcom III-R, was sent aloft last Thursday (Nov. 19) from Cape Canaveral, Fla., by NASA aboard its workhorse Delta rocket. Blast-off was at 8:37 p.m. NYT. NASA coverage of event was distributed via Satcom I and carried live by Cable News Network. As of late last Friday, all systems were go. Satellite was flying through space in its elliptical transfer orbit with apogee of 19,000 miles and perigee of 100 miles. Firing of kick motor that sends satellite into 22,300-mile geostationary orbit was scheduled for Sunday at 5:13 p.m. NYT. That event is critical moment in satellite's young life. When button was pushed to fire solid-fuel motor on Satcom III in December 1979 shortly after its launch, satellite was never seen nor heard from again. Once Satcom III-R is placed in its permanent geostationary orbit and thoroughly checked out, cable programmers will move from Satcom I to Satcom III-R and latter will become RCA's new Cable Net One. Big switch is not expected to occur before January 1982.

Another oil company has joined ad hoc networking business. Following lead of Mobil, Gulf Oil now is assembling its own lineup of local TV stations for solely sponsored programing.



Getting their acts together in Rio

The conference of western hemisphere countries on AM broadcasting was bogged down late last week on procedures under which the conference's goal will be developed. A key issue is whether existing operations will have priority over planned ones. The U.S. appeared to be taking care to avoid a "rigid" position that might not serve its interests.

A committee on planning had proposed a two-stage plan. Under the first, those operating stations that are not involved in an incompatibility—either with another operating station or a planned facility—would be entered into the plan. Then planned stations not causing incompatibilities would be entered. Those cases of interference that could not be resolved by the countries involved during the first stage would be dealt with in the second stage in the following order—operating sta-

tions, planned stations in the basic inventory and planned stations submitted in connection with a proposed five-year (1983-87) plan.

The U.S.'s primary concern is in protecting existing stations, but an official noted that "we have a lot of planned stations we don't want excluded because of an ironclad approach."

Despite the confusion regarding the planning issue, Kalmann Schaefer, the FCC's adviser on international communications, was reported by an FCC official to be optimistic regarding the conference. "Konnie is confident we'll get our existing stations and a good number of the planned stations as well," the official said.

Four working groups—one dealing with northern U.S. and Canada; the second, with southern U.S., Mexico, Cuba and parts of Central America and the Caribbean; the

third, with parts of the Caribbean and Central America and the northern part of South America, and the fourth, with the rest of South America—have begun developing the plan as it affects those respective areas. The U.S. and Canada were reported to have agreed on a procedure that permits early entry into the plan of all existing U.S. daytimers and Class IV stations. The stations in those categories that meet certain criteria regarding frequency/power/location will be entered without discussion. Those that do not but which have been accepted by the two countries under the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement will also be entered. The U.S. and Mexico were attempting to develop a similar "bulk" approach.

So far, concern over political disputes with Cuba boiling over haven't been realized.