

A Fifth Estate commentary from James Rupp, president and chief operating officer of Midwest Communications

## Making the name fit the business

In October of 1982, Midwest Radio-Television Inc. changed its name to Midwest Communications Inc. We are just one of several companies, such as Cox Broadcasting Corp. (now Cox Communications), Capital Cities Broadcasting (now Capital Cities Communications), Storer Broadcasting Co. (now Storer Communications), to have changed its name.

These new names better reflect the new businesses a traditional broadcasting company can now find itself involved in. These new business opportunities can run the gamut from cable to cellular radio to satellite program services. The evolution of Midwest Radio-Television into Midwest Communications is not unlike what many other companies are experiencing in a rapidly changing communications environment.

Midwest Communications, up until a few years ago, was basically a company operating radio and television stations in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Green Bay, Wis., and Escanaba, Mich., with some cable system ownership. Today we are a company involved in those same businesses but, in addition, Midwest programs two cable channels (WCCO II and WCCO Cable Weather Channel), owns a common carrier company (providing uplink transmit facilities, teleconferencing and other satellite delivered services), is a regional affiliate of Satellite News Channels, is involved in a pay-TV cable sports service and an interconnect network, and is a major partner in Satellite Music Network, leaseholder of a protected 36 C band transponder on SpaceNet One.

Our involvement in these various satellite/cable-related businesses also has an influence on our traditional broadcast properties. As an example, WCCO-TV is now the largest user of daily satellite time of any television station in the country. A brief explanation might be in order on each of these new communication services from Midwest.

**WCCO II and WCCO Cable Weather Channel.** Both of these program services are made available to all of the Minneapolis-St. Paul cable systems. WCCO II broadcasts 16 to 18 hours a day providing a simulcast of our regularly scheduled news programs and a "replay" of these same programs one hour later. For example, you can watch the 6 PM Report at 7 p.m., the 10 PM Report at 11 p.m. Other program material includes the Financial News Network, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and a "replay" of the last hour of FNN 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., and a "replay" of ESPN's Sports Center twice a day. A mixture of other WCCO local programs, including *Incredible Kids*, *Rashad-Rosen NFL Report*, documentaries and syn-



James M. Rupp is president and chief operating officer of Midwest Communications and is responsible for all the operations of WCCO-AM-FM-TV Minneapolis; WFRV-TV Green Bay, Wis.; WJMN-TV Escanaba, Mich.; Midwest Cable & Satellite, and Rice Lake Cable Co. in Rice Lake, Wis. Midwest Communications is a partner in the Satellite Music Network and the Satellite Radio Network, as well as a regional associate in Satellite News Channels.

He joined Midwest as executive vice president in October 1976. He previously was group vice president and general manager of Cox Broadcasting Corp., Atlanta. Prior to joining Cox, he was a vice president and member of the board of directors of the American Research Bureau in Beltsville, Md.

Rupp serves on the board of directors of Midwest Communications and the First Trust Co., of St. Paul. He currently serves on the TV Cooperation Subcommittee of the U.S. Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON), is a director of the Minnesota Safety Council and the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

dedicated programs specially licensed for cable, also appear on WCCO II.

The WCCO Cable Weather Channel runs 24 hours a day and is a video display service using high resolution color graphics to report on the national, regional and local weather conditions. In early 1983 this channel will be converted to live and replay video weather programming originating from the WCCO weather center.

**Midwest common carrier services.** Midwest Cable & Satellite was licensed as a common carrier in late 1982 as a result of our approved application for an uplink/transmit facility in Minneapolis-St. Paul. The uplink facility, initially designed to service Westar V, is fully capable of transmitting to all communication satellites within the North

American orbital arc. The Midwest uplink site has three satellite transmit pads in place and is designed for four additional pads. The common carrier company is currently marketing "teleconferencing" services to local corporations and providing daily news and weather graphic services to its sister station in Green Bay, Wis.

**Satellite News Channel.** Midwest was the first regional associate of SNC, the cable news channel started by Group W and ABC Inc. last year. A little known fact concerning SNC is that it was Midwest Communications' idea to regionalize the cable news channel and, as a result, it was not unusual that we became its first regional associate, assigned the upper Midwest covering nine states. As the regional SNC associate, we will be providing the *Midwest Report* feed to over 250,000 cable homes on a hourly basis by the end of 1983.

**Midwest Cable Intertie.** Starting in early 1983 "Cable Intertie" will interconnect all of the cable systems in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The capability of "Cable Intertie" includes the distribution of up to 60 video and audio channels to the individual cable headends of these cable systems.

**Midwest Sports Channel.** In the fall of 1983, "Sports Channel" will provide via satellite a complete pay "sports channel" to cable systems in Minnesota and some adjacent states. Programming on the "sports channel" will include professional, university and high school sporting events in the Twin Cities.

**Satellite Music Network.** Satellite Music Network (SMN) distributes radio programming formats 24 hours a day via satellite from studios in Mokena, Ill., to radio stations throughout the country. At present the network broadcasts three separate and distinct formats known as "Country Coast to Coast," "StarStation" and "Stardust." As of December 1982, SMN has signed 220 affiliates and is adding 15 to 20 new stations each month.

As mentioned earlier, even our traditional broadcast properties have benefited from the new communication technologies. In October 1982, WCCO-TV introduced its new 10 PM Report newscast utilizing a tri-anchor concept. One anchor person is based in a news control center in the Twin Cities, another in the newsroom and the third anchor is based in our news center in Washington, interconnected to the Twin Cities by satellite. One yardstick of measuring the impact of this new "satellite anchor" concept is ratings performance, and they have been terrific.

What's in a name is in great part a reflection of what business you are in, and the new communication technologies, along with our tradition of being on the "leading edge," have made us Midwest Communications Inc. ■