

Multichannel problem

The cable television industry has a problem: multichannel (television) sound (MCS). If all goes well, the industry will adopt an MCS system next week, and television stations will put it to work some time next year to broadcast stereophonic sound and, if they wish, an auxiliary sound track.

According to Alex Best, chairman of the National Cable Television Association ad hoc committee on MCS and head of research and development of Scientific-Atlanta, cable television systems will be able to retransmit broadcast signals with MCS stereo although older headend equipment may degrade the stereo quality somewhat. But, when consumers begin buying stereo television sets and start getting accustomed to the new service, he said, cable programming services will feel compelled to offer stereo sound. Problems will then arise because the MCS system is not compatible with the systems that operators use to scramble pay services.

The solution to the problem, Best said, is to use a different nonstandard stereo signal that is compatible with the various scrambling systems. The concept is not foreign to cable operators. They have been transmitting music services and the soundtracks of some programming services in stereo for years through subscribers' FM stereo radios.

Galaxy lineup

The CBN Network has joined the rush to Hughes Communications' Galaxy I satellite. The family-oriented, advertiser-supported cable service has purchased the last transponder available from Hughes on the bird.

In addition to CBN, the satellite, as things now stand, will distribute the Eastern feeds of HBO and Cinemax, The Nashville Network, The Movie Channel, CNN, CNN Headline News, SIN, GalaVision, The Disney Channel, superstation WOR-TV New York, ESPN and C-SPAN.

As part of the Galaxy lineup, CBN will be expected to join Hughes and the other programmers in buying earth stations to give away to thousands of cable systems. The giveaway is designed to make the programmers' move to Galaxy as painless as possible for their cable affiliates and to insure that they don't lose any affiliates in the process.

According to Rocky Luciano, the Hughes executive in charge of the program, in the coming weeks, Hughes will send out questionnaires to cable systems throughout the country. Those systems that meet certain criteria—that they serve more than 500 subscribers and promise to use the earth station to receive the Galaxy signal, for instance—will be sent dishes starting next March, he said. Luciano said he expects to give away between 3,500 and 4,000 dishes before it's all over. Operators, he said, will have to cover the cost of freight and installation.

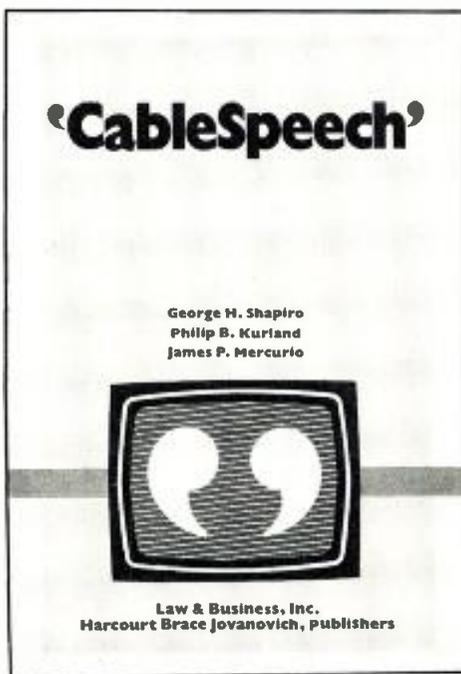
Unlawful

Cable operators' First Amendment rights are being violated not only by such obvious curbs on free speech as antiobscenity laws and requirements for access channels but also by nearly every other government regulation being imposed on them, including the FCC's must-carry rules and the tendency of most municipalities to regulate rates and award exclusive franchises. That is the thesis of "CableSpeech," a new study commissioned by Time Inc. and published in a 220-page book by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich's subsidiary, Business and Law Inc. (\$48).

Written by three First Amendment attorneys, "CableSpeech" traces the develop-

ment of communication, but it promises to be one of the most influential in years to come," conclude the authors. "There will be a serious loss of freedom for the nation's communications media unless cable TV is allowed to develop free of unwarranted governmental restraints."

Authors of "CableSpeech" are George H. Shapiro and James P. Marcurio, attorneys with the Washington firm of Arent, Fox, Kintner, Plotkin & Kahn, and Phillip B. Kurkland, a professor of law at the University of Chicago. Time Inc. commissioned the study about a year ago, according to a spokesman, and decided, after seeing the final result, to use it not only as a position paper but also to have it published.



ment of major regulations that have been imposed on cable TV, including applications of the fairness doctrine, the imposition of franchise fees and requirements on the number of channels and kinds of services offered, and demonstrates how they ignore or violate First Amendment case law as it has developed for other media, including newspapers, books and over-the-air broadcasting. Because cable is still a relatively new medium, it must wage its own battles, similar to those fought by the older media, to establish First Amendment freedom (see story, page 56), according to the authors, or American citizens will suffer serious losses of their constitutional rights.

Congress, the FCC and the courts have permitted a heavy layer of regulations to develop for cable TV primarily because it began as a medium that simply extended the reception of over-the-air broadcasting, according to "CableSpeech," and because cable's nature as a business that must secure physical right of way from municipalities made it an easy target for city governments in need of new revenue sources.

"Cable television is a relatively new medi-

Chicagoland sports

Chuck Dolan's pay TV sports operation has moved into another city. Cablevision Program Enterprises and the Washington Post Co. announced at the Western Cable Show they had acquired SportsVision, the Chicago pay sports network owned by Chicago White Sox owner Eddie Einhorn. The service will now join the other SportsChannel subsidiaries of Cablevision, the Woodbury, N.Y., cable operator. Those include operations in New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

The Chicago service will continue to offer the programs it has in the past: White Sox baseball, Bulls basketball, Black Hawks hockey and Sting soccer, in addition to regional collegiate sports. The service will initially be marketed to 13,000 cable subscribers on Cablevision systems in the Chicago area. The total subscriber count on all four sports networks is 850,000.

Marc Lustgarten, group vice president of Cablevision, said the company had purchased the long-term rights to SportsVision, but declined to give a price. Pricing for the service would vary, he said, depending upon whether the service was taken alone or as a package. Einhorn, who has agreements with an STV outlet in Chicago, said individual games on that channel will continue. Rainbow Programming Services will handle the marketing of SportsChannel.

Rainbow also announced it will handle the marketing of the cultural pay service, Bravo, in Canada. Rainbow and Rogers Cablesystems announced an agreement whereby Rogers, pending Canadian government approval, will offer Bravo to Canadian homes. The level of Canadian-produced programming on Bravo will increase to 10%-20%. Further, Rogers will provide Canadian-produced programs as wraparound fare in order to comply with Canadian law which mandates a certain percentage of programming on services there be Canadian produced.

Cable rating

In a major coincidental survey conducted by Nielsen to determine viewership of The Nashville Network programming in prime