

## Partnership plan

To finance the \$328-million build of its Chicago cable system, Group W Cable plans to raise \$95 million in equity through privately placed limited partnerships and \$233 million in debt.

The limited partnership offering, which is being handled by Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb Inc., is believed to be the largest in the history of cable system financing. According to a spokesman for Westinghouse Electric—Group W Cable's parent—potential investors seeking to buy limited partnership interests (in units of \$150,000) will need to demonstrate a net worth of \$1 million.

The information came to light in a security analysts meeting that Westinghouse Electric Co. held in New York last week.

Construction of the northwest Chicago system is expected to begin in June, said a Group W spokesman there. It was the largest of the Feb. 15 awards handed out to applicants, consisting of 440,000 homes. Group W Cable will remain the managing general partner of the system, although about 20 prominent Chicago businessmen also hold general partnerships in the franchise.

A Westinghouse spokesman said that investors in limited partnership interests would realize certain tax benefits, but the company is not expected to share in them since its tax rate was only 1% in 1983.

## Regional sports on Satcom I-R

New England Sports Network will reach its cable affiliates through Satcom I-R. The satellite's owner, RCA Americom, has an-

nounced that the Boston-based regional sports network has leased transponder 17 on the satellite in time for its expected launch this Wednesday (April 4). NESN is partially owned by the Boston Red Sox (baseball) and the Boston Bruins (hockey), whose games will be the backbone of the network's programming. Said Peter Affe, vice president and general manager, NESN: "NESN will also provide extensive coverage of sports related material including live talk shows, magazine sports shows and other sporting events. Our fulltime dedicated transponder... will allow us to offer subscribers continuous coverage of sporting events even if they are re-scheduled or rained out."

## At the movies

Showtime/The Movie Channel Inc. has signed a nonexclusive licensing agreement with Embassy Pictures Inc. for the exhibition rights to the Academy Award-winning "Ghandi," and "Fanny and Alexander," nominated this year for best foreign film by the National Academy of Arts and Sciences. Both Showtime/TMC and HBO are also said to be on the verge of signing deals with 20th Century-Fox that will closely parallel the licensing agreements the two pay services recently signed with MCA's Universal studio. Those deals cover a six-year term and are valued at several hundred million dollars apiece.

Showtime also announced that it has acquired the exclusive rights to a video remake of the Broadway play, "Frankenstein," which closed after one day in 1981, but which was highly praised for its extraordinary special effects, which cost \$2 million.

## Earning respect

In a luncheon address during the Cable Advertising Bureau conference last Tuesday (March 27) Burt Staniar, Group W Cable president and chief operating officer, said cable advertising, as the business now stands, might be seen as "the Rodney Dangerfield of our industry—it has a lot of trouble getting respect." But, he added, "I think that is going to change."

Part of the problem, said Staniar, was that for several years, "we said that cable was going to do it all, immediately... [but] the truth is, that was a little too visionary."

But while blue-sky opportunities for cable may still be in the distance, Staniar insisted advertising sales can be turned into "a profitable revenue stream [cable system operators] can add to [their] business right now."

"The numbers are amazing," said Staniar, noting that broadcast network share of audience in cable homes is 59% compared to perhaps 80% in noncable households. "And in pay-cable homes the network shares are even lower." He also cited a recent CAB study that found basic cable programming has a weekly reach within the cable subscriber universe of 63%. And demographically, cable is attractive as well, said Staniar, citing some estimates that perhaps 45% of cable homes have an income of \$30,000 or more, while only about one-third of all television households claim an income level as high.

## NCTA's for networks

The National Cable Television Association announced last week executive committee of its National Satellite Network Committee, which was formed to provide a forum for discussion of issues affecting the satellite networks and, according to NCTA, "to develop NCTA's projects for its satellite network members": Frank Biondi, chairman and chief executive officer, Home Box Office (chairman); William Grimes, president and chief executive officer, ESPN; John O. Wynn, chairman, The Weather Channel; Mike Weinblatt, president and chief executive officer, Showtime/The Movie Channel, and Robert Wussler, executive vice president, Turner Broadcasting System.

NCTA also announced that it is splitting its ACE award committee in two. May Alice Dwyer-Dobbin, vice president of programming, Lifetime, will chair the National ACE Committee; Scott Kurnit, vice president, programming, Warner Amex Cable Communications, will chair the Local ACE committee.

## Political affiliation

Arbitron has announced a new customized service for cable system operators, known formally as Cable Political Profiles (CPP). Essentially, the service is a package of subscriber data that Arbitron says it can compile within three weeks of an order and which the operator can use as a sales tool in



**Cable's public service.** Beginning next Monday (April 9), a number of cable networks will cablecast the National Cancer Quiz, a one-hour public affairs program that will, through its multiple-choice format, impress upon viewers the importance of early detection and treatment of cancer. The program is sponsored by the National Cable Television Association and the American Cancer Society and produced by Turner Broadcasting System. On the set: Wras's Bob Neal, who is host of the show; Dr. Gerald Murphy, American Cancer Society and Roswell Park Memorial Institute; Dr. Paul Sherlock, Department of Medicine, Memorial Sloane-Kettering Cancer Center; Dr. Jesse L. Steinfeld, Medical College of Georgia; and Dr. Douglas J. Marchant, Tufts University Medical School.

The program will debut on superstation Wras(TV) Atlanta on April 9 at 9:05 p.m. The superstation will repeat it four hours later. It will also be seen on Black Entertainment Television (April 12, 9 p.m. NYT); CBN Cable Network (April 12, 8 p.m. NYT); The Learning Channel (April 14, 3 p.m. NYT, and April 15, 11 a.m. NYT); Lifetime (April 15, 8 p.m. MYT); Satellite Program Network (April 26, 9 p.m. NYT), and USA Cable Network (April 26, 1 a.m.).