

As expected, peplemeter has turned around race among morning TV network programs: NBC's *Today* (which had been in lead), ABC's *Good Morning, America*, and CBS's *The Morning Program*. For all but last three weeks of third quarter (through week of Sept. 11, last week of old Nielsen audimeter/diary service), NBC's *Today* was leader with 4.4/24, followed by *GMA* with 3.5/18, and *The Morning Program*, with 2.2/11. For first five weeks since then, however, *GMA* has taken slight lead in household ratings. Numbers, based on Nielsen peplemeter ratings were: *GMA*, 4.4/22, *Today*, 4.3/22, and *Morning Program*, 2.0/10. *GMA* beat *Today* during week ending Oct. 11 for first time since week of Sept. 26, 1986. *GMA* also beat *Today* following week (ending Oct. 18), last week ratings for programs were available at deadline. *Morning Program* remains mired in last place and has lost about two-tenths of rating point, on average, under peplemeter. In one month, CBS show goes back under wing of CBS News, where it had been until last January.

Television Academy of Arts and Sciences has formed cable committee to determine eligibility of prime time cable programming and to resolve questions of cable membership classification. ATAS awards committee has voted to recommend to board of governors that cable be included in current awards structure, depending on eligibility findings of cable committee. Board of governors will make final determination.

Fox Broadcasting Co. has ordered 13 one-hour episodes of *The Dirty Dozen* from MGM/UA Television for airing beginning in April 1988. Production staff and casting for series, based on 1967 MGM feature film and subsequent TV movies, has not yet been announced.

Though he has yet to sign on dotted line, sources report ABC News anchor **Peter Jennings has agreed to new five-year contract that will pay him slightly more than \$1.8 million annually.** Sources with knowledge of talks denied that ABC News president Roone Arledge refused to give Jennings managing editor title for *World News Tonight*, which latter was said to want. Early on, source said, "Peter wanted to explore it." But after some "thought and discussion" with management, source said, Jennings concluded title was "meaningless," because it would not change his role with program, "which is a large one" both on and off camera.

Bochco bidding. Steven Bochco, executive producer of NBC-TV's *L.A. Law* and an executive consultant for ABC's *Hooperman*, may be close to signing an exclusive, multiyear development agreement with either CBS or ABC. Sources at both networks confirmed last week that discussions were under way to obtain the services of the writer-producer, with ABC reportedly prepared to offer him \$10 million for a long-term deal.

Bochco and his bargaining representative declined to comment on the negotiations.

After Bochco settles on a network, he will reportedly begin talking to several production companies and financial backers about future projects. Bochco's contract with 20th Century Fox, where he went in 1985 after a falling out with Hill Street Blues producer MTM Enterprises, is set to expire this year. Harris Katleman, president of 20th Century Fox Television, producer of *L.A. Law* and *Hooperman*, has previously said Bochco is happy with the creative freedom he has been given at the studio. Fox executives declined to comment on contract negotiations last week.

The bidding war between ABC and CBS for Bochco, industry observers speculated, could produce a deal similar to one reached earlier this year between CBS and GTG Entertainment. GTG, under president Grant Tinker, received a five-year commitment from the network for a mix of comedies and dramas (BROADCASTING, Feb. 23).

ABC's World Series ratings: average 23.9/40 over seven games and 24.4/39 over six prime time games. Last year NBC averaged 28.6/46 for seven prime time series games, about 20% higher than ABC's seven game average. But in key male demographics (18-49 and 25-54), ABC spokesman said network was only off 5% from NBC's mark last season. And overall audience was off only 1%, with average total persons viewership of 35.9 million, compared to 36.4 million year ago.

As expected, NFL will give three networks substantial rebate on football rights fee covering four weeks affected by recently settled players strike. Both league and network officials confirmed reports that rebate will be close to \$60 million, although exact figure has not yet been reached. Rebates, network sources said, would cover most if not all revenue losses resulting from advertisers pulling spots during strike.

Axe began swinging last week at NBC in wake of settlement with NABET (story, page 61). At NBC News, sources said two low-level job categories were being wiped out completely—news and features assistants (NFA) and desk assistants (DA), totalling about 35 slots. Those staffers were notified verbally late last week they were being laid off, with official notices to arrive this week. In addition, some 20 newswriters are being let go, sources said. One union source last week expressed outrage that network did not inform DA's and NFA's that their jobs would not be there after strike. Source insisted network had plan on drawing board to eliminate two categories going into strike. Network spokesman responded that company did not feel it was appropriate to communicate with any NABET members, outside negotiating committee, during strike. More layoff announcements from other network divisions are expected soon.

Word is that **Coca-Cola Telecommunications will close its doors on Dec. 31**, about same time Coca-Cola's Entertainment Business Sector and Tri-Star Pictures release proxy statement for newly formed Columbia Pictures Entertainment. Unit's 60 employees will leave company, which handles first-run syndication and other ancillary areas. Tri-Star released statement confirming that unspecified number of positions would be eliminated "to achieve operational efficiencies" in new Columbia Pictures Television division. Telecommunications Chairman Herman Rush and other senior executives are negotiating to buy rights to certain first-run programs belonging to unit. Rush group plans to form its own company (BROADCASTING, Oct. 19).

NBC confirmed that G.E. Chairman John Welch, at urging of NBC President Robert Wright, awarded NBC Entertainment President Brandon Tartikoff bonus of "several hundred thousand dollars," for keeping network dominant in prime time this season. Welch surprised Tartikoff with bonus at lunch with Wright, last Monday (Oct. 26). Welch disclosed award later in week in talk at Harvard Business School.

King World announced last week it received approval of its development of Monopoly from Parker Bros. King World's development of television version of game follows many attempts by other producers to develop 50-year-old game. King World will make announcement of production personnel for show soon. *Monopoly* will be King World Production in association with Parker Bros. Because of its current contracts with Merv Griffin Productions for *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy*, King World will not be able to syndicate *Monopoly*. Instead, company is pursuing network deal for show. Syndication rights would be licensed to outside company.

Syndicated special **Return to the Titanic...Live** (Wednesday, Oct. 28, 8-10 p.m.) scored **22.5/33 in 15 overnight markets.** LBS Communications sold advertisers gross average audience rating of 25 for two plays of event. Special was carried by roughly 150 stations