

NBC and consumer activist Karin Weber, whose appearance on *Donahue* in 1989 launched suit. Court said suit, based on Weber's on-air complaints about Behr's furniture store chain, was dismissed on grounds that opinions are protected and show was not responsible for Weber's personal views. Defense attorney Charles Sims labeled decision "an important victory for live television in general, and the talk show format and televised consumer advocacy and reporting in particular."

**National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters**, in letter to Congress last week, said "no conceivable public benefit will result" from raising limits on ownership of radio stations. FCC plans to launch this Thursday (May 9) rulemaking revisiting limits—12 AM's and 12 FM's.

**WNJR(AM) Newark, N.J.**, sold by Spanish American Radio Communications Inc. to Douglas Broadcasting Inc. for **\$6.75 million**. Station was sold out of bankruptcy in 1989 for \$4.1 million. Seller is headed by Raphael Diaz, Hugh McComas and Danny Stiles, and has no other broadcast interests. Buyer, headed by John Douglas, is licensee of KMAX(FM) Arcadia, KEST(AM) San Francisco, KWWN(FM) Placerville and KOBO(AM) Yuba City, all California. WNJR is 5 kw fulltimer with urban contemporary format. Brokers: William B. Schutz Jr. and Gordon Sherman & Associates.

**Henson Associates and Walt Disney settled their differences** and dismissed respective law suits last week with Disney issuing apology to Henson family and their company over disagreement between Disney's licensing rights to Henson's muppet characters. New agreement allows Disney to exhibit "Kermit the Frog Presents: MuppetVision 3-D" and "Here Come the Muppets" at Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park in Florida for initial run of 18 months and contains option for Disney to extend its term for additional three-and-a-half years.

Turner officials confirmed last week that company and ABC reached verbal agreement for **weekend carriage of 1994 Goodwill Games from Soviet Union**. It is envisioned that ABC will carry four to six hours each weekend, while Turner will carry midweek portion.

New York Governor **Mario Cuomo will speak at NAB Radio '91 convention** in San Francisco. Cuomo appears on Friday, Sept. 13, during management session. Among other highlights: speeches by FCC Commissioner Sherrie Marshall and Keith Reinhard, chairman of DDB Needham.

## OFF-NET KID'S SHOW BEING STRIPPED FOR FALL

**K** eith Samples' Rysher Entertainment, formed just last month, has launched its first syndication project. The company, in a venture with Tribune Entertainment, is selling the off-network version of the NBC Saturday morning show *Saved by the Bell* as a strip for fall 1991.

According to Samples, Rysher has already cleared more than 55% of the country with the strip, including the top three Tribune-owned stations, WPIX-TV New York, KTLA-TV Los Angeles and WGN-TV Chicago.

Samples is selling the show as a transitional vehicle leading out of children's programming (4:30-6 p.m.). "Demographically, it's a lot like *Charles in Charge*, which Tribune has had success with, and which played a big role in their interest in the show," said Samples. That sentiment was confirmed by Michael Eigner, vice president and general manager, WPIX-TV.

Rysher is selling the show to stations, while Tribune is selling the barter time in the program. The show is being offered for straight barter in the first year (2 minutes national/4½ minutes local), and for cash only in years two and three.

The program, which expands to an hour next fall on NBC's Saturday lineup, has 65 episodes in the can, with another 23 on order for next season. There's no word on whether the show will remain in production beyond next year.

The deal raised a few eyebrows among NBC affiliates, who said the network probably should stay out of the business of licensing for syndication shows still on the network. (*Saturday Night Live* has been in syndication for some time, however). The concern, however, seemed to be based more on principle than the potential for real harm. "It bothers me somewhat but it isn't something I'd slit my wrists over," said Jerry Eaton, program director at KYW-TV Philadelphia, "it's not unprecedented." Another NBC affiliate program director suggested the strip version of *Bell* could actually promote viewership of the Saturday network version.

According to John Agoglia, president, NBC Enterprises, the *Bell* distribution deal has been in the works for some time, and has been permissible under both the new and old sets of financial interest and syndication rules. NBC retains the international rights to the show, and has sold it in countries including France, Spain and Australia. "This deal will give us the ability to produce a higher number of original episodes," Agoglia added. -SM

## TURNER'S PREEMPTIVE STRIKE

**T** ed Turner fired the first shot last week in anticipation of a Senate Commerce Committee vote on cable reregulation legislation. The committee is expected to mark up S.12 some time this month, and Turner sent a letter to committee members stating that it would have a "large and adverse regulatory impact on cable television." "In a major change from last year's bill, municipal rate regulation would reach beyond a 'lifeline tier' to include all or nearly all basic cable networks," Turner wrote. The effect, he said, would be "municipal rate regulation far more pervasive than before enactment of the 1984 Cable Act." S.12 also imposes "complex regulation of program access, must carry and vertical and horizontal integration, which we do not support."

Meanwhile, the National Association of Broadcasters is making a big push to pass an amendment to S.12 that would give broadcasters a retransmission consent right. It would give broadcasters control over the use of their signals. Jim May, NAB's executive vice president for government relations, said the association had its members meet with senators who were home last week during a recess. It is an "extensive effort," said May, whose members are "excited about the prospects" of obtaining retransmission consent right.

Community Antenna Television Association President Steve Effros said S.12 would knock off distant signals for rural cable systems as well as TVRO subscribers. "It's very draconian," he said. He added that it would probably be very harmful to small broadcasters.

Fox Broadcasting said the must carry portion would prevent carriage of imported, but significantly viewed, Fox affiliates on the lowest tier and preempts cable operators directly affiliating with Fox Net to place it on that tier.