

ing the most competitive night, NBC has inserted what sources say was their brightest development project, *Loved by You*, surrounded by proven performers. *Unsolved Mysteries*, a veteran time period winner, returns at 8-9, and *Seinfeld*, which became a legitimate hit last year, will go head-to-head with *Roseanne* at 9-9:30. NBC is banking on *Seinfeld* holding much of the *Unsolved Mysteries* audience and carrying it into *Loved by You* at 9:30-10. The show goes up against ABC's *Laurie Hill*, from *The Wonder Years* creators Neal Marlens and Carol Black. Other competition comes from Fox, which launches its sixth night of programming with *Beverly Hills, 90210* spinoff *Melrose Place* at 8-9 or 9-10.

*A Different World* inherits *Cosby*'s 8 p.m. time slot to open a night NBC has dominated for more than seven years. At 8-8:30, the network has

tabbed *Rhythm and Blues*, which, like *A Different World*, features a mostly young, black cast. *Rhythm* is about a black radio station that hires a white disc jockey. The remainder of the schedule is intact, with *Cheers* at 9-9:30, *Wings* in the 9:30-10 time slot and *L.A. Law* at 10-11.

NBC is taking another crack at solving the puzzle of Friday night with a complete makeover. *In the Loop*, a half-hour comedy at 8 p.m., stars David Keith and Bill Nunn as high-school friends who reunite after one is paroled from prison. The show leads into *The Powers That Be*, from Norman Lear, which had a successful mid-season run on Saturday night this past season. At 9 p.m. the network debuts *The Round Table*, an hour ensemble drama from Spelling about a group of young professionals who gather at a Georgetown hangout. Dependent on the strength of the new

shows is the critically acclaimed *I'll Fly Away*, which started last season in the Tuesday 8-9 time slot and now finds itself closing Friday evening.

NBC returns three proven performers on Saturday night from 9:30 to 11 while debuting two new comedies at 8-9 p.m. *Here and Now*, starring Malcolm-Jamal Warner, opens at 8 p.m., leading into *Up All Night*, which stars singer Patti LaBelle. Warner plays a young graduate student balancing school and adult responsibilities. LaBelle stars.

The network's problems on Sunday night between 7 and 9 almost rival their Friday difficulties. This time around, NBC executives are pitting an hour drama from Grosso-Jacobson, *Secret Service*, and a reality show from NBC News, *I Witness Video*, against CBS's *60 Minutes* and *Murder, She Wrote* and ABC's *Life Goes On* and half-hour video lineup. ■

## PTAR ON FCC'S FULL PLATE FOR SUMMER

*Video dialtone, network-cable crossownership, PCN's are also on Sikes's agenda*

By Harry A. Jessell

**W**ith the White House urging him on, FCC Chairman Alfred Sikes is pushing hard for action this summer on a series of high-profile deregulatory initiatives affecting broadcasting and cable.

Among the items on Sikes's accelerated agenda: launching a proceeding aimed at repealing the prime time access rule's off-network prohibition; adoption of the so-called video dialtone rules intended to encourage telephone companies to build networks capable of delivering video to the home, and relaxation of the ban against networks owning cable systems.

Sikes also hopes to take the next step toward establishing the spectrum and rules for personal communications networks, which promise low-cost portable telephone service and have caught the interest of major cable operators.

FCC sources say Sikes would like the agency to act on PTAR and cable-network crossownership at the scheduled June 18 meeting and PCN and video dialtone at the scheduled July 16 meeting.

Whether there is slippage depends

on a number of factors, not the least of which is the other commissioners, whose personal agendas and timing may not coincide with that of the chairman.

A delay of a month or two on PTAR is possible, if not probable. Except for Sikes, none of the commissioners is keen on launching an off-network PTAR proceeding anytime soon. Among other things, they fear it will generate the same kind of inter-industry contention and internal ill will that characterized the financial interest and syndication rules relaxation proceeding in 1990 and 1991.

Some of the commissioners are also wary of Sikes's "video dialtone" scheme. In launching the proceeding last fall, Commissioners Ervin Dugan and Sherrie Marshall said the proposal smacked of "industrial policy"—anathema in the Bush administration.

And there is enough controversy among broadcasters surrounding the cable-network proceeding to delay action. Affiliates and their networks are locked in a dispute over the nature of safeguards to insure against anti-competitive activities by network-owned cable systems.

Should Sikes find stiff resistance to

any of his initiatives, he could pull his trump card—the presidential mandate for prompt deregulatory action by all federal agencies. The mandate, promulgated in Bush's State of the Union address and renewed at a White House briefing in April, is something none of the Bush-appointed commissioners could brush off.

The White House may not be telling the FCC and other "independent" federal agencies what to do, but it is certainly telling them when.

In an April 29 memo to the heads of the agencies, Bush sets a timetable for regulatory reform: action on reforms that need no public comment by June 1; action on reforms for which comments have already been received by Aug. 1, and action on reforms not yet put out for comments by Aug. 27. The memo also asks for a summary by Sept. 1 of "all pro-growth reforms" implemented since Jan. 28.

According to Sikes, the urgency of his agenda derives not from the White House alone. The items have been pending for months or, in some cases, years and are ripe for action this summer, he said. "We are in an industry segment that is undergoing enormous change, and we have to adapt quickly." ■