

satellite news feeds annually might reduce that by 75% or more.

"Everybody is kind of waiting to see what happens" on a number of fronts, says Dick Tauber, director of satellites and circuits at CNN. "You can look at it two ways: maximizing capacity or cost savings.

"During the Gulf War the U.S. networks used five and a half transponders [the half used for data]. You could have taken all those network signals and put them on two rather than five. Or, given the opportunity, [fed] more video in the same transponder bandwidth."

The startup of at least one planned new service—an international video news network from the Associated Press—is dependent upon advancements in the technology that will allow AP bureaus worldwide to feed video to New York over the wire services' existing global data circuit network. Officially, the service is still in the feasibility stage.

"When compression hits, it won't be who has the most satellite space but who has the most cameras in the field," says Mark Smith. AP's direc-

tor of international television. Smith heads the team that is putting together the new APTV international video service, which may launch in 1994.

Smith says the new AP service will focus on international news because internal surveys show "that is where the hole is, which we can fill very neatly."

In talking up its new service to prospective clients, AP officials stress that the wire service, with 90 foreign bureaus, is not burdened with the need of having a "domestic skew" like CNN and the three networks, or even Visnews, which has a strategic link to NBC. Per its cooperative charter, says Smith, AP is precluded from having any strategic ties to an end user.

AP plans to hire more than 100 new full-time TV staffers for the new video service, spread among foreign bureaus and New York, where the service would be based for distribution to clients. The network would use Betacam and Hi-8 equipment in the field.

Smith also says that compression would enable competing services to more easily generate original video. It's one thing for a government to cen-

sor feeds going out on a television satellite. The task of monitoring individual phone circuits would be next to impossible.

And according to Smith, many news organizations abroad complain that they receive the same footage from different news suppliers so that in effect they are paying twice or more for the same footage. "Clearly, one of our goals will be to shoot unilateral if not exclusive footage for our clients," he says.

The networks have sporadically tested rudimentary forms of compression over the past several years. ABC squeezed still footage into phone circuits that were transmitted from China during Tiananmen Square demonstrations several years back. "Technically, it's doable right now," says Mary Frost, vice president, telecommunications, broadcast operations and engineering, Capacities/ABC.

But, says Frost, questions of reliability, widespread availability, flexibility and cost remain. "If you ask a news person about acceptable quality, the response is likely to be: 'What can you give me?'" she says. ■

## NETWORK NOTES

### BELLISARIO LEAP

Don Bellisario, creator and executive producer of NBC's *Quantum Leap*, has left Universal TV after more than 12 years and signed with Paramount Network Television. The deal includes television projects and a first-look feature film consideration. The move has Bellisario working once again with Kerry McCluggage, president, Paramount TV Group, who previously oversaw all television activities at Universal.

### CANCELLATION CONSPIRACY

The Los Angeles Superior Court heard opening arguments last Monday in a case involving the cancellation of a television pilot at CBS and the alleged connection of the cancellation to the hiring of Jeff Sagansky in 1989. The lawsuit, filed by Philip DeGuere, alleges that CBS, Columbia Television and the legal firm of Ziffren, Brittenham & Branca conspired to cancel *Triangle*, DeGuere's pilot, as part of an overall plan to smooth the way

for Sagansky's hiring by CBS. At the time, Sagansky was president, Tri-Star Pictures, a sister company to Columbia Television.

### ROUND FILE FOR ROUND TABLE

NBC confirmed last week that *The Round Table*, the Friday night young-skewing drama from Aaron Spelling, has been canceled, with its final airing last Friday. The show joins *Final Appeal* and *What Happened?* as another Friday night series to get the early season hook. As a temporary replacement, the network will schedule a series of two-hour *Perry Mason* movies at 8 p.m. beginning Oct. 30, with *I'll Fly Away* remaining in the 10-11 hour. The interim schedule is expected to take the network through the November sweeps. On Oct. 23, NBC will air a one-hour special episode of *What Happened?* followed by a two-hour NBC News special. On Friday, Nov. 13, the network will interrupt the *Perry Mason* run to air the theatrical "The Hard Way," starring

Michael J. Fox. NBC, using a strategy tried several times last year, is double-airing the movie, with the first run scheduled for Sunday, Nov. 8.

### FOX ELECTS COMEDY

Fox will stack its Nov. 3 election-night programming with four of its most successful comedies. Fox, as an example of its increasing dedication to news, will present minute-long election updates every half-hour. Fox originally planned to have launched a regular Tuesday night schedule earlier this year, but has delayed its plans until December or January. The Nov. 3 lineup will consist of *The Simpsons*, *Martin*, *In Living Color* and *Herman's Head*.

### BACK END FOR BOB

CBS's *Bob* became the first of that network's new shows to receive a back-end season order last week. Produced by Paramount, the half-hour comedy starring Bob Newhart has helped CBS challenge ABC on Friday night.