

Jan 5, 1979

**SWEEPING UHF PROBES:** FCC has announced wide-ranging inquiries into UHF in particular and receiver design in general. Most actions were routine in short meeting which tied up loose ends of UHF matters.

Most far-reaching action is establishment of UHF Comparability Task Force and start of "inquiry to analyze the many possibilities for improved UHF TV service." Task force will issue periodic reports and invite comments, is charged with making recommendations within 2 years. Commission said action was based on assumption that viewers consider UHF technically inferior to VHF.

Among first questions to be posed by FCC: How much would consumers be willing to pay for UHF-VHF technical equality? Can consumers adjust their sets properly? Is understandable installation & adjustment information available? Do tuning formats (2-dial, pushbuttons, random-access) affect viewer choice of UHF or VHF? Effects of CATV? Would mandated quality labels on sets, antennas & lead-in help consumers? Future UHF uses expected.

Second aspect will deal with methods of improving reception, such as increased transmitter power & height, circular polarization, better receiving antennas, lower-cost lead-in. Commission also said it was "particularly interested" in knowing: (1) Whether upgraded UHF facilities would result in more revenues for stations. (2) If changes in transmitting locations could improve reception. (3) Difference in gain for UHF & VHF antennas packed with TV sets. (4) Receiver gain & other guidelines to provide "adequate UHF reception for various environments."

In addition, FCC will conduct consumer survey to determine what public sees as UHF reception problems, along with technical study to evaluate UHF vs. VHF performance. Comments are due April 2.

Second inquiry looks toward improvement of TV receivers as well as transmission standards, asks: (1) Evaluation of design, benefits & cost efficiency of Texas Instruments' "ideal TV receiver." (2) Other potential improvements in TV set design. (3) Possible changes in transmitter standards and "coverage protection criteria." Comments are due July 1, replies Oct. 1.

At same meeting, FCC turned down EIA Consumer Electronics Group's request to delay scheduled reduction of maximum UHF noise figure from present 18 dB to 14 dB in most new sets Oct. 1, 1979 and to 12 dB beginning Oct. 1, 1982. Electronics Group's argument that standard measurement technique should be developed first was overruled by Commission, which said existing acceptable methods and additional method provided in recent FCC bulletin were adequate. As to argument that 12-dB limit was impossible to meet, FCC said 1982 deadline gave sufficient lead time to develop technology.

Commission also terminated 1977 inquiry into whether UHF channel-number markings are clear enough because inquiries cover same

**PTV SUPER STATION BACKED:** Proposal to form PTV "super station" using satellite advocated by FCC Comr. Quello (Vol. 1:5 p1)—is called "inherently valid" by WNET Pres. John Iselin. But Frederick Breitenfeld, Md. Center for Public Bcstg. exec. dir., warns that super station could drain funds from local stations and warns that proposal might attract "super hustlers."

Breitenfeld, head of PBS Transponder Allocation Committee, says PTV super station is inevitable. "Asking if you believe in it is like asking if you believe in the Atlantic Ocean," he said. He warned, though, that concept flaunts the "localism" called for in 1934 Communications Act, and suggested that PTV station that becomes a super station first won't necessarily achieve that status through excellence in programming so much as through fact that "one of our development directors is smarter than the rest."

Funding, structure are seen as biggest obstacles. Lloyd Kaiser, WQED Pittsburgh pres., sees higher priorities, worries that support for a super station could cut into local station viability. "The purpose escapes me—it's kind of crazy." But Kaiser says Quello's idea for FCC-sponsored PTV advisory group is "excellent"—says more understanding of public bcstg. is needed.

Iselin, most enthusiastic of PTV execs polled on Quello proposal, says best way to implement super station is to create a new "super entity" to run it, suggests EEN could handle the job. Iselin is particularly keen to get public station output on cable: "It's a natural partnership in the offing."

Iselin said he was speaking "conjecturally" and has no firm plans for getting a PTV super station on the air. "We're all obviously intrigued."

In Chicago, Quello proposal is old-hat. WTTW Pres. William McCarter says his station has been monitoring super station development all along and has even been "approached" by an operator keen to put station into national distribution.

McCarter says he's reluctant to rush into a deal—especially because of negative impact it could have on sister stations in PBS system. WTTW is already carried by cable systems in five states, will take proposal to become super station under advisement. In meantime, McCarter says he won't disclose identity of group seeking to distribute station over the bird—instead will seek to answer the question: As a public station, how can it be helpful?

**"Academy Leaders"**—series of 34 short films which either won, or were nominated for, Academy Awards—is 10-part series starting Feb. 4 on public stations. Series was produced by KCET L.A. underwritten by Polaroid Corp., narrated by Norman Corwin. Classic films range from 2-1/2-30 min., cover period from 1940's to present.

**"Golden Fleece"** award given by Sen. Proxmire (D-Wis.) for waste of govt. money, went to Office of Education for granting \$219,592 to Boston U. to teach college students how to watch TV critically

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