Squeeze play put on composite-week figures

NCCB says licensees are using them as appropriately reflecting news and public affairs programing, while networks say they're not typical

The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting has asked the FCC to conduct an inquiry into what NCCB suggests is an effort on the part of 1974 television renewal applicants to have it both ways so far as their news and public affairs programing are concerned.

And if the inquiry indicates that the applicants have not been candid with the commission, NCCB said, the commission should designate their applications for hearing "to resolve important questions of their character qualifications."

The issue raised by NCCB revolves around the 1972-73 composite week that the commission constructed, and the uses to which it was put. The commission used it for updating programing data in connection with the ongoing inquiry into whether percentage guidelines should be used for determining whether a renewal applicant has provided "substantial" service, and if so, what the guidelines should be. The commission also designated the composite week for use by 1974 renewal applicants in reporting on programing.

The statistics that broadcasters provided for use in the inquiry, NCCB noted, indicated that standards the commission had proposed in an earlier phase of the proceeding, in 1971, were being met if not exceeded by most licensees.

When the commission released the figures, however, the networks attacked them as not typical of a normal broadcast week, and said the FCC should not base its proposed standards on the data. The networks, NCCB recalled, said the week was studded with an unusual amount of news and public affairs specials. Yet, NCCB added, the licensees in seven states which thus far have filed renewal applications apparently are not indicating to the commission—as required by a question in the renewal form—that the composite week does not adequately reflect their past programing.

NCCB said it checked 58 of 75 applications on file and found none that indicated its past news and public affairs programing quantities were unusually high as reflected by the composite week. On the other hand, seven were found which said the programing quantities indicated by the composite week were abnormally low.

The composite week picked by the commission and the network specials shown that week in prime time are Sunday, April 18, 1973: Monday, Dec. 4, 1972 (two back-to-back 30-minute programs on ABC—*Countdown to 2001* and *Vandals*); Tuesday, March 27, 1973; Wednesday, Aug. 9, 1972: Thursday, May 31, 1973 (two back-to-back programs on CBS—*We're Okay in Bricktown, N.J.*, and *But What if the Dreams Come True*—and on ABC a one-hour program —*Nuclear Alternative*): Friday, Oct. 13, 1972; Saturday, Jan 6, 1972 (on ABC, a one-hour program—*Population: Boom or Doom?*—and on NBC, from 5:22 to 6:30 p.m.—*Projection '73*).

In urging the inquiry to determine whether the renewal applicants were candid in completing their license renewal forms, NCCB said the inquiry could reach only one of two conclusions: Either the networks are lacking in candor "in their all-out combined attack on statistics that are really typical, or their affiliates are misleading the commission into believing that an atypical broadcast week is really typical in order to assure license renewals."

Honored at home. J. Leonard Reinsch (r), chairman of Cox Cable Communications and retired president of Cox Broadcasting Corp., was given the first annual distinguished service award of Digamma Kappa, broadcasting fraternity, at the Georgia Radio-Television Institute last week. The institute is an annual event co-sponsored by the Georgia Association of Broadcasters and the Henry W. Grady School of Journalism of the University of Georgia, Athens. The school administers the George Foster Peabody awards. Mr. Reinsch was honored for his service in broadcasting and cable, as broadcast adviser to Presidents Truman, Kennedy and Johnson and as chairman and member of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information. In photo, at left, is Warren K. Agee, dean of the Grady school of journalism and (c) R. D. (Pooch) Johnston, president of the Georgia chapter of Digamma Kappa.

One more in St. Louis

Eight citizen groups that earlier this month filed petitions to deny the renewal applications of three broadcast stations in St. Louis have now filed an informal complaint against a fourth—KPLR-TV.

The groups, whose "informal objection" missed the deadline for formal petitions to deny by two weeks, allege that the station's licensee, 220 Television Inc., "grossly" misrepresented, both to the FCC and to residents of the St. Louis metropolitan areas, the public-affairs programs KPLR-TV broadcast in its last renewal period.

They referred specifically to programs allegedly aired on the *Bill Fields Show* and said that three of the five programs mentioned in its renewal application were not broadcast and that a fourth was not broadcast "during the past year," as claimed. The groups based their allegations on information they said they obtained in a conversation with Bill Fields, host of the show.

Accordingly, the complainants said, they "cannot help but question the veracity of the entire renewal application and also the station's sincerity and concern in serving their community of license."

The petitions to deny that the groups filed were aimed at Storz Broadcasting Co.'s KXOK(AM), Newhouse Broadcasting Co.'s KTVI(TV) and Pulitzer Publishing Co.'s KSD(AM).

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All above board. Post Corp., owner of WEAU-TV Eau Claire, Wis., says it was not guilty of wrongdoing and in fact acted promptly to eliminate wrongdoing on part of its employes in connection with matters on which stations' renewal application has been set for hearing (BROADCASTING, Jan. 21). V. I. Minahan, Post president, said fraudulent billing charges stem from two incidents, three years apart, that involved two managers. In each case, he said, manager was fired as soon as company learned of "dishonesty" and Post made full disclosure of facts to FCC and to those affected. Charges are said to involve deletion of network (NBC) program material.

Fine called unfair. WCCO(AM) Minneapolis has asked FCC to reconsider $3,000 fine against station for alleged violation of sponsorship requirements in connection with announcements paid for by Minnesota School Boards Association. Commission ruled that statement by announcer that he is speaking for named sponsor does not meet requirements; that announcement must also include statement that material was "paid for." WCCO said that fine is unfair because FCC is breaking new ground with this interpretation and overturning what has traditionally been treated as acceptable practice.

FCC sticks to guns. FCC has rejected petition by radio evangelist Rev. Jimmy Lee Swaggart for "partial reconsideration" of $5,000 fine levied against WCIR-AM-FM Beckley, W. Va., for logging, political advertising and network contract violations. Mr. Swaggart said that broadcast announcements for sale of his record albums should not have to be logged as commercial material because records were "religious artifacts, not commercial products."

Questions raised. Renewal application of Golden Broadcasting System for KOAD(AM) Lemoore, Calif., has been designated for hearing by FCC on exercise-of-control and character-qualification issues. Action stems from field investigation of KOAD that raised questions about station's management by licensee president Clarke E. Parker. Application for sale of KOAD to P&S Broadcasting Co. was filed last October.