

said, superstations could mean the "ultimate fulfillment of a national alternative to the three networks," and even without that, more diversity in local markets.

On the other hand, he questions "Why will a guy in Tuscaloosa carry the *Flintstones*" if it's brought in on cable from New York? "Nobody knows" what will happen, Mr. Horowitz said.

(It is those smaller markets such as Tuscaloosa where many distributors fear they will lose sales. Mobil Oil, in fact, is banking on reaching small markets with its *Edward the King* ad hoc network through cable importation of WTCG, WGN-TV and KTVU [BROADCASTING, Nov. 20]).

Don Menchel, MCA TV president, said that his company has the subject under serious review. MCA TV has not sold to WTCG since it has been a superstation, but Mr. Menchel cautioned "that does not mean we won't sell" in the future.

What's worrying MCA TV, he said, is the possibility of "compromising our product." Already, he said, prospective clients have been asking "Have you sold Turner? [Ted Turner, WTCG owner]."

Randy Reiss, Paramount Television's vice president, domestic syndication, said he believes the "whole question is in a state of flux" and he said: "Basically the government is going to decide how big a concern it is."

Two producer organizations, however, have already evidenced concern.

The National Association of Indepen-

dent Television Producers and Distributors showed its misgivings in a petition it filed with the commission. It asks the commission to reconsider its "open skies" policy decision to the extent of requiring the carriers involved to obtain permission from the stations and distributors before relaying syndicated programing in accordance with the commission's order.

NAITPD said the condition is needed if the FCC, "in its entrancement with the prospect of unlimited public enjoyment of golden eggs," is not to take an action "which renders the gold bird of origin an endangered species." The proposed condition, it said, offers a solution to the potential problems of stations unenthusiastic about the prospect of "going national" without involvement in the decisional process, and gives voice to syndicators "whose product is the essential subject matter of the entire scheme" but who have nothing to say about the private and regulatory actions that will determine the product's life cycle.

Long a staunch opponent of superstations has been the Motion Picture Association of America. The MPAA in various filings with the FCC has claimed the trend is both a defeat for localism and for the amount of programing available.

Its filings have concluded that "satellite delivery systems can be expected to result in the importation of national superstations with super-expensive programing made possible by a national advertising

base against which many local stations will not be able to compete."

The MPAA also has charged that a reduction may come in "the over-all quantity of television programing. . . . If superstations are allowed to develop at the expense of local television outlets, the economic base necessary to support program production will shrink. . . ."

Other concerns arise from individual distributors. From the Hughes Television Network, for example, came the question of what happens to sports events that are syndicated.

The subject of WTCG's new rates also came up with several distributors who claim that a superstation should be expected to pay more if, like WTCG, it is collecting more from advertisers. Sandy Frank, for one, said that if he did change his policy and began selling to WTCG, the station "would have to give compensation" commensurate with its superstation status. Another distributor said: "No matter how much a Ted Turner would pay us, he couldn't pay us enough." He added that a sale to WTCG has "got to hurt us" in making future sales.

At basics, however, CPT's Mr. Horowitz would agree with Viacom's Mr. Andrews that in business it's still the same game. On prices, he said, "Your attitudes don't matter. The marketplace will prevail." All the talk that a superstation should pay more while the superstation says it shouldn't he called "part of the rhetoric."

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