

messages that portrays beer as "important to education" or that in any way degrade study.

"It might be fair to say that over the past year we have been especially mindful of those guidelines," said Robert Klugman, vice president of marketing for the Adolph Coors Co. "From time to time [in the past] we weren't as mindful of it." But he added, "I don't think the current discussion is going to significantly change the look of our advertising. We have subscribed to the code... I think our own scrutiny is preponderant." Klugman said that the company's regular Coors brand would soon be undergoing a shift in strategy, but declined to say whether it would be toward harder or softer commercials. He said the change was a basic marketing decision totally unrelated to outside pressure.

Asked whether he foresaw a change in the content of commercials, David Martin, director of corporate media for The Stroh Brewery Co., said: "No. I haven't seen any changes on anyone's part," at least as evidenced by reels of commercials of competitors that the company's advertising agencies collect each month.

And, as a number of his colleagues in the beer industry contended last week, Martin argued that changes in beer advertising strategy were unlikely and unjustified. Not only is beer a socially acceptable and widely embraced product, he said, it is also being sold legally. Any "infringement" on the brewers' legal rights to market and distribute their product "is a loss we won't accept." He added that many products can be abused, but banning their promotion from the airwaves won't solve the problem. "If 30% of all automobile accidents are alcohol related and 70% are not," Martin submitted, it would seem only fair to ban automobile advertising as well as beer and wine advertising if one accepts the premise that doing so will curb abuse. "The automobile is not designed to be abused, but, like alcohol, it can't be prevented."

Stephen K. Lambright, vice president and group executive, Anheuser-Busch Companies, St. Louis, said that any strategy changes relating to A-B brand beers are "made for marketing considerations only and not in response to organizations like SMART." But he said the company recognizes that "there is a problem with the abuse of our product. And we're not in business to hurt people. We are constantly looking for the best possible way to be a part of the solution to that problem." Lambright said it was Busch's position that the problem could be addressed best with education and awareness programs and "not with changes in our advertising program." A-B, the beer industry's largest advertiser, spent more than \$200 million in television advertising last year.

Lambright, like the USA's Shea, did not rule out the possibility of disclaimers at the end of beer ads cautioning consumers not to abuse alcohol. But he said Busch would consider tag lines only if it could be proved they would indeed "do something to alleviate the problem," adding quickly that "advertising is not the reason people abuse the product." Disclaimers, he suggested, offered an "over-

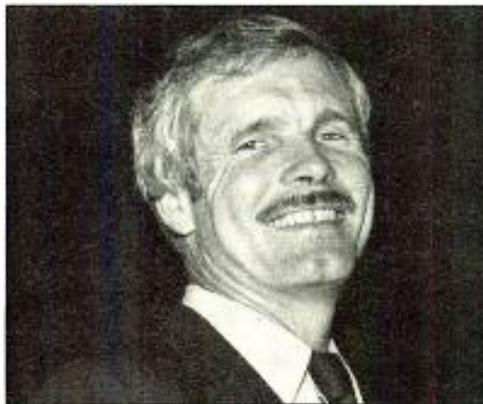
simplified approach to a more complex problem."

Miller Brewing Co.'s Alan Easton, vice president, corporate affairs, expressed similar sentiments. "The issue is abuse, which is a serious problem and actions need to be taken," he said. "Tragically, the focus is on the banning of ban and wine commercials, which are not the cause of abuse, although that may serve the interests of those who wish to abolish alcohol consumption." With that as the company's position, he added, no changes in the on-air look of Miller commercials will be forthcoming—at least not as a result of pressure from groups like SMART. Current spots are not a "causative factor relating to alcohol abuse," said Easton. "How can you be less causative than none?"

The beer and wine interests point to a number of studies conducted over the past several years which conclude there is little if any relation between the viewing of alcohol commercials and the increased (or decreased) consumption of alcohol. But George Hacker, with the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which is spearheading Project SMART, suggests that the issue of causative evidence is an "illusionary standard." The evidence pointed to by the beer

and wine interests, he argued, "really only says no causal connection has been demonstrated. The reason for that is there are so many interrelated variables that it's likely it will never be demonstrated, even though it exists."

Despite denials by the major beer and wine advertisers that mounting pressure will cause them to soften their ads, some skeptics contend that with the high stakes involved, and the fact that beer and wine interests shudder at the thought of following in the footsteps of cigarette manufacturers, banned from the airwaves 14 years ago, that they will indeed do just that. In fact, despite the official National Association of Broadcasters position that the advertising is not a contributing factor to alcohol abuse, one executive there confided recently his belief that softer ads will be the trend in 1985. "You'll see more of that," the executive said. And in a recent program on the beer and wine advertising issue, John Goldsmith, the correspondent and host of WDM-TV Washington's *Capital Edition* concluded that with all that's at stake, "it does seem likely that commercials will change their look. There will be fewer 'hey guys, let's grab a brew,' and more pretty picture post cards..." □



Turner



Ueberroth

## Turner and baseball come to terms

**TBS will pay yearly fee to send Braves games across country via WTBS; agreements are in works with other teams**

After months of negotiations, Ted Turner, owner of the Atlanta Braves baseball team and superstation WTBS(TV) Atlanta, agreed last Thursday (Jan. 24) to make annual payments of undisclosed amounts for the next five years to Major League Baseball for its blessing on the national cable television distribution of Braves baseball by the superstation.

"We are extremely pleased to have resolved this issue," said Bob Ross, general counsel of Turner Broadcasting System Inc. The agreement "represents a *de facto* recognition that superstations are here to stay and that they can serve the interests of baseball by bringing the game to people who otherwise would have limited exposure to it," he said.

The agreement is not an admission that

the superstation's carriage of baseball into distant markets harms other teams as those other teams have charged, he said. It springs solely from Turner's desire to "become a member in good standing within the baseball community," he said. Under terms of the agreement, he added, MLB has promised not to press for restrictions on the superstation's coverage through in Congress or the courts.

The money, "a substantial financial contribution," will be divided among the other 25 teams in the league, Ross said.

The antipathy of most baseball teams toward WTBS and other baseball-laden superstations has been a long-simmering problem that MLB's new commissioner, Peter Ueberroth, put at the top of his list for resolution.

Most teams are convinced that superstations, which are distributed nationally to cable systems by satellite common carriers and which all televise scores of baseball games, are encroaching on their turf, depressing attendance at their ballparks and the value of