

Returns coming in after week one of syndex

Syndicated exclusivity returned last week, apparently more with a whimper than a bang. There are some early reports of dropped stations, both distant signals and regional stations, and in some localities, stations or cable systems received hundreds of calls. But the early consumer education action taken by many broadcasters and cable operators appears to have mitigated widespread outcries.

Several MSO's contacted—Warner Cable, Cox Cable and Jones Intercable—report they have heard very little in subscribers complaints, and they attribute that to an education process that often included joint efforts with broadcasters. NCTA said it has gotten many phone calls, primarily from the press to explain syndex. NAB's press department said late last week it had received no calls.

The satellite carriers report some dislocation, but they say the full extent won't be known for several more weeks. Eastern Microwave said it received no calls from operators, but some calls from subscribers inquiring about certain programs on WWOR-TV New York. Eastern Microwave said it lost about 500,000 WWOR-TV subscribers, many when Cablevision Systems added TNT. But it also reports gaining about one million as cable systems opted to take a "clean" feed of the station as Eastern Microwave substituted for the blacked out programming. In some cases, such as in Sacramento, Calif., the cable system switched one EM station (WSBK Boston) for another (WWOR-TV).

United Video reports some drops—KTVT in Tulsa, WPIX in certain Boston area and New York state systems—but overall activity appears to be light. UV said WGN-TV Chicago may see its biggest month in January, meaning the addition of more than one million subscribers.

Continental reports that reaction in its western Massachusetts systems was less than expected and in Connecticut about as expected. In both areas syndex caused some programming blackouts, although in many cases it was in later time blocks (11 p.m.-1 a.m.), Continental said, and subscribers may have yet to notice.

Syndex did not return without problems, however. Steve Fetveit, station manager, of NBC affiliate KCFW(TV) Kalispell, Mont., received 125 calls on day one and 75 on day two, including bomb threats made in the heat of some calls. He said he was "not worried about them, but I respect their potential" and has taken steps to protect his staff and plant. The local TCI cable system blacked out 75%-80% of the programming on imported KHO-TV Spokane, Wash., under network nondupe request. TCI

ran information on the screen explaining the blackout and referring to KCFW. Fetveit does not begrudge TCI its tactics, saying it was a small community and the calls would have come in anyway. He said he and the local manager have been meeting on syndex prior to Jan. 1 and described relations between the two as excellent. Fetveit said the system is ordering switching equipment and he doubted TCI would continue blacking out that much of the signal once it got its point across. What has angered viewers is that two time zone changes mean the network programming on each station was seen two hours apart in the past. That time period flexibility for subscribers no longer exists, he said.

There were also reports of large regional stations taking hits. Dixon Lovvorn, senior VP-general manager, wis-TV Columbia, S.C., said five of 77 cable systems have dropped his station. In Rock Hill, S.C., which is part of the Charlotte, N.C., ADI, the cable system dropped wis-TV because of network nondupe. But because of public outcry, it has placed wis-TV's other programming—local news, public affairs (Columbia is the state capital) and sports—on a local access channel. That helps, said Lovvorn, but "there is no flow to it."

Lovvorn said the station has just begun getting mail from outlying areas complaining about the blackouts. Although he said he supported syndex, "this cuts against us." One problem is the nearly 20-year-old viewing standard rules, he said, which would allow wis-TV to be carried in outlying areas if the viewing was there. Lovvorn said in several counties beyond the ADI, wis-TV is the dominant station, but still is subject to network nondupe. Private viewing studies are expensive, he said, for stations to commission in order to remain network nondupe free. He also said his ad sales staff has used the extra reach beyond the ADI provided by cable to sell time.

TCI reported that its Scottsbluff, Neb., system received 2,000 calls last week, four times the normal amount, with the excess mostly related to syndex. Scottsbluff dropped Denver stations because of network nondupe rules.

In Stockton, Calif., despite an all-out educational campaign, the Continental system received 1,200 calls over a two-day period, mostly concerning All My Children. The Stockton ABC affiliate requested network nondupe against KGO-TV, the ABC affiliate in San Francisco. The problem, according to Continental, is that KGO-TV airs the soap at noon, during viewer's lunch hour, while KOVR(TV) Stockton carries the same episode the next day at 11 a.m.

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million senior debt and will increase shareholders' equity 65% to \$33 million. Agreement also calls for IDB to enter joint ventures with Teleglobe "to provide selected telecommunications services."

Edens Communications Inc. has retained Lazard Freres & Co. to assist in seeking merger partner or recapitalization. Phoenix-based group headed by Gary Edens owns WRBQ-AM-FM Tampa, Fla., WRVA(AM)-WRVQ(FM) Richmond, and WWDE(FM) Norfolk, both Virginia, KOY-AM-FM Phoenix and KKLQ-AM-FM San Diego, Calif. Stations, according to industry source, are worth \$175 million.

TVRC Syndication will bring Future Stars in Sport to NATPE, 13 weekly half-hours showcasing young athletes on way to pro careers. Show, scheduled to premiere next June, will be hosted by Mike Schmidt, former third baseman for Philadelphia Phillies.

Production on **second-cycle** of 13 new episodes of **Samuel Goldwyn Television's American Gladiators** will begin Jan. 9

in front of live audience at Universal Studios, Hollywood.

LBS Communications Inc. will distribute Medal of Honor: True Stories of America's Greatest War Heroes, six-part series

MCA TV said last week that My Talk Show, first-run syndicated late night talk comedy strip, **has been cleared in 25 of top 40 markets.** Program, scheduled to premiere next fall, is produced by Second City Entertainment, in association with Ron Howard's Imagine Television. MCA also announced that **What A Dummy,** half-hour first-run syndicated situation comedy for next fall is **cleared in 65% of country,** including 23 of top 30 markets.

Republic Pictures Domestic Television has announced "All Nite Movie" ad hoc network consisting of classic features to premiere next September. Five-night network, offered on barter basis for overnight presentation, will provide two hours of American films, produced between 1930 and 1965, from Republic Pictures' library. Movies may be aired anytime between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Barter split is 11 national and 13 minutes local.