

## Broadcast, cable focus on HDTV

The National Association of Broadcasters, in a continuing effort to support development of a high-definition television system compatible with existing NTSC terrestrial transmissions, last week began a two-year, \$700,000 fund-raising project.

The cable industry also is beginning its examination of high-definition television in earnest under a new engineering committee formed by the National Cable Television Association in Washington.

The NAB fund-raising work will be headed by a recently appointed committee comprising Leavitt Pope, president, WPIX(TV) New York; William Moll, Harte-Hanks television president and chief executive officer, and Cullie Tarleton, general manager of WBT(TV) Charlotte, N.C. The committee held a phone conference last Wednesday to discuss funding options to begin preliminary HDTV studies.

According to Pope, also a member of an NAB HDTV task force formed earlier this spring, the \$700,000 raised by NAB will only be a "scratch in the surface" what is required to bring about a compatible HDTV broadcast system, with further funds to support such a development having to come from the industry at large.

"Most responsible broadcasters realize we have a major problem staring us in the face," Pope said, referring to the far advanced work on the Japanese-invented HDTV system Muse, which can compress a 27 mhz wide, 1,125-line, wide-screen HDTV image into approximately 8 mhz, but which is incompatible with current receivers. Muse receivers are expected on the U.S. market in the next three to five years.

Among the fund-raising options considered by NAB staff, according to John Abel, NAB executive vice president, are a 10% surcharge on TV members' dues for two years, an industrywide campaign or a solicitation more narrowly focused on major broadcasters. Pope added that the funds could also be taken from existing NAB budget allocations.

Once raised, the money would be allocated by the NAB's HDTV task force. NAB Senior Vice President of Science and Technology Thomas Keller said projects that might be funded include HDTV transmission field studies proposed by the Advanced Television Systems Committee and general NAB research into spectrum availability and multiplex problems.

But the NAB fund-raising effort does not appear to be the only one directed at supporting HDTV research. Gaylord Broadcasting's Harold Protter, vice president and general manager of WVT(TV) Milwaukee, has put forward a proposal asking that one or two dozen large group broadcasters each provide \$100,000 over the next two years to support a single candidate HDTV system ("Closed Circuit," June 29). Protter said his company has agreed to the principle in advance to help bring other companies into

such a funding consortium.

The cable industry effort, embodied in a new NCTA engineering subcommittee chaired by Nicholas Hamilton-Piercy, vice president of engineering and technical services for Rogers Cablesystems Inc. in Toronto, will also need money in the long term to conduct its work, although initially much may be accomplished by volunteer effort.

Hamilton-Piercy told BROADCASTING last week the group hopes to conduct a field trial for cable delivery before the end of the year to see how severe cable's technical difficulties in carrying HDTV may be, and added that he hoped the committee's work will provide "the most important answers" within a year.

A limiting factor on beginning the tests, Hamilton-Piercy explained, is the availability of proponent HDTV systems. The systems likely to be examined include the Japanese Muse system and a Philips compatible two-channel HDTV distribution system.

The Muse system is likely to be available sooner, he said, particularly if efforts to cooperate with a Canadian Broadcasting Corp. HDTV test in October are realized. CBC is planning experimental HDTV Muse delivery by direct broadcast satellite, with the signal also being picked up by an Ottawa cable system. The results of the cable test will be incorporated in the NCTA committee's work, and Hamilton-Piercy said it was also possible the Muse equipment would go directly to Washington following the CBC tests for NCTA to begin its work.

The cable group's preliminary intention is to examine high-definition and enhanced television systems from two perspectives, he explained. The first would examine the current cable distribution infrastructure and characterize its impairments to the home image. The second effort would involve alerting HDTV system proponents to problems their approaches might experience on cable.

The committee, which has engineering executive members from at least 17 companies, including MSO's, program distributors and equipment manufacturers, is now reviewing its initial position paper and expects it to be completed by late August in time for the next meeting of its parent NCTA engineering committee.

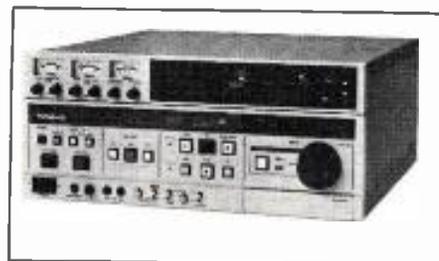
## Two-channel ball

Superstation WGN-TV Chicago is now being transmitted in stereo by United Video. All WGN-TV-produced programming, including Chicago Cubs baseball, WGN News and *Bozo the Clown* are in true stereo, said the satellite service company, while synthesized stereo is being used for other programming. Cable systems must have a BTSC-compatible multichannel TV sound modulator and encoder to provide the stereo signal to their subscribers.

## New pro format

Panasonic Industrial has introduced a new professional video recording product line based on the Super-VHS consumer format. The component analog S-VHS is said to offer horizontal resolution of over 400 lines.

The 15-unit video system, called Proview, includes an editing VCR with \$5,900 suggested retail price, along with a \$1,950 edit controller, and a \$2,900 portable recorder, as well as a duplicator, other player and record-



er-player models and an \$8,700 solid-state camera with 700 lines of resolution and 58 db signal-to-noise ratio. The line also has five color and black and white picture monitors.

Steve Yuhas, vice president and group general manager of Panasonic Industrial's Audio Video Systems Group, said the Proview system "provides performance previously available only from high-priced broadcast equipment." But he added: "It would be foolish for us to propose that this equipment will replace broadcast equipment and we are not going to do so."

The line is available through Panasonic Industrial's dealership network, but will not be sold direct to broadcast customers by its sister broadcast division. Professional S-VHS tape for the units is available from Fuji Photo Film in 30-minute, 60-minute and 120-minute lengths.

## Fiber, digital control lead SMPTE agenda

Fiber optic video transmission and a world standard for digital control will be two new topics on the agenda at the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers annual technical conference and equipment exhibit next Oct. 31-Nov. 4 in Los Angeles.

The use of fiber optics for program distribution, subject of a full SMPTE technical session for the first time, will be addressed by a representative of Capital Cities/ABC, which began an experimental intercity fiber link between Washington and New York last year. Also on the program are Grass Valley Group, manufacturer PCO Inc. of Chatsworth, Calif., Catel Telecommunications of Fremont, Calif., and NBC. A panel discussion closes the session.

Papers devoted to the serial digital communications standard ES-bus, developed jointly by the SMPTE and the European Broadcasting Union for use in equipment