A Closer Look

By Ernest Kreiling

HOLLYWOOD—The Federal Communications Commission recently handed down a decision which slices closer to the heart of television in America today and tomorrow than anything that has occurred in recent years.

It's an enormously complex matter and these brief paragraphs can't help but deal in massive generalizations, but so important are the implications of the decision, I trust the generalizations will be forgiven.

* * *

EACH OF THE three giant television networks are limited to owning and operating seven television stations, but in order to provide nationwide network service they enter into contractual agreements with between 150 and 200 separately owned TV stations across the country. The soul of this affiliation contract is a clause that reserves to the network at least 2½ hours each quarter day for airing network originated programs.

For example, each ABC station, let's say, must air ABC programs for at least 2½ hours between 6 and 11 p.m. each evening. During the remaining 2½ hours the station can air its own local programs, syndicated programs, or additional ABC programs if it chooses.

* * *

THIS ASSURES the network, however, that all of its stations will carry at least a minimum number of network programs, an assurance that is necessary to enable the network to sell its time and its programs to national sponsors.

Such sponsors can't be expected to buy a series of one minute commercials at a cost of about $30,000 each without some guarantee as to how many stations located where will air them.

At those prices even a sponsor has some rights, it seems to me, one of which is confidence that the plugs will be seen beyond Sleepy Eye, Minnesota and Sciptio, Utah.

* * *

BUT STARTING Sept. 10, barring the inevitable legal delaying tactics, these two private commercial entities—the networks and locally owned stations—cannot be parties to contracts which options station time to the networks.

The Commission's rationale, based on several years of study and investigation, is complex, but foremost among the many considerations is the belief that too much power over television resides with the networks. This may be true, but it doesn't follow, ipso facto, that the public's interest will be served by fragmenting that power.

We will have freer competition in the program market place, so the reasoning goes, because local stations won't be forced to depend on the big naughty networks for their programs. If the local stations doesn't want to carry Bonanza or The Defenders it can show re-runs of Pet and Gladys or Bat Masterson.

* * *

BUT WHY might a station settle for such lesser programs? IF such programs could be sold to local sponsors the station would make more money than they would receive for running the network offering. Also some stations are going to feel coerced into rejecting some network programs just to prove to a paternal FCC at license re-newal time that it does indeed have a mind of its own.

More producers will undoubtedly create more programs from which stations can choose. If, according to some liberal magic, increased quantity is supposed to elevate quality, I would only recommend that the Commission invoke that same magic to produce the required creative talent.

* * *

AGAIN I CONFESS to some deft over-simplification here and to discussing only a few of many facets. But the fact still remains that no responsible observer has advanced a theory that the Commission's decision will improve program quality. The decision can assist some independent stations financially by weakening the position of the network competition and it will undoubtedly dilute the power of the networks. But how these things will necessarily serve the public's interest remains a moot point.

On the other hand one can muster an impressive list of reasons why the FCC's decision may eventually result in a disgraceful disintegration of television programming. Personally I'd prefer to tolerate the great power now resting with the networks, than risk the economic and creative chaos that can result from the option time decision.

LEE DAWSON
Manages Kent Office

Kent Realty Opens Local Office Soon

Kent Realty will open a Torrance office Monday at 5035 Torrance Blvd. Lee Dawson will be the manager.

Dawson, a former president of the Torrance-Lomita Board of Realtors, said the office will specialize in listing and selling homes and income property.

Kent Realty is a member of the Torrance-Lomita board, of the Inglewood board, and the Southwest branch of the Los Angeles board. The firm has three other offices located in the Westchester area.

Hugh Becker, owner of the firm, is a past vice president of the California Real Estate Assn. and a past president of the Inglewood Realty Board.

Del Amo East Ready for Occupancy

Residents of the new East Del Amo Pacific co-operative apartments are now in the midst of moving into the completed units of the apartments. Some 80 units are realy for occupancy at the Madrona Aveune and Carson Street facility.

The Del Amo Pacific development will contain more than 300 units when construction has been completed. The North and South units are currently under construction, while the West unit has completed formation of the corporate structure.

The co-operative units have been pre-sold by the Sovereign Development Co., and the development is financed by FHA. A furnished model is open at the site.

Cars on Sale But Must Be Towed Away

On Friday and Saturday, the Long Beach Naval Shipyard's Retail Surplus Store at the Torrance Annex will offer for sale 19 abandoned privately owned vehicles and one motor bike.

These vehicles are various makes ranging from 1937 to 1956. The condition is poor and all vehicles must be towed or trucked off the station.

The vehicles do not run, but possess a wealth of valuable repair parts that are difficult to obtain on the open market, Navy officials said.

Many other surplus items of value are being offered at the store; electronics repair parts, electrical items, desks, file cabinets, chairs, hardware, paints and other items useable to homeowners and small contractors and businessmen.

The entrance to the store is on Crenshaw Boulevard between Carson Street and Sepulveda Boulevard. The retail store will be open on Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and every other Friday and Saturday thereafter.