



Happy birthday for the Voice. President Reagan was on hand to help the Voice of America celebrate its 40th anniversary last Wednesday (Feb. 24). The vintage microphone on his left, one used in the early days of the VOA but one newer than those Reagan said he used as a sports announcer, was given to him by VOA's director, James Conkling (at far left). Charles Z. Wick, director of VOA's parent organization, the International Communication Agency, is next to Conkling. John Houseman, the author, actor and producer who was honored as the VOA's first director—although he was only the first head of the program bureau of the organization that was then a part of the Office of War Information—is flanked, on his right, by Gilbert A. Robinson, deputy director of ICA, and by Terrence Catherman, deputy associate director for broadcasting. Reagan and Wick used

the occasion to affirm the administration's commitment to objectivity and responsible journalism on the part of the Voice—qualities some press accounts have said are endangered in an effort to politicize that organization. With "freedom . . . no less threatened and the opposition no less totalitarian" than was the case 40 years ago, Reagan said, "there is no greater weapon than the truth. Free men have nothing to fear from it; it remains the ultimate weapon in the arsenal of democracy." The VOA, he added, will remain faithful "to those standards of journalism that will not compromise the truth." Wick echoed those words and added that staffers would hear nothing from him that would reflect anything but a desire to provide the support they need to make their jobs "more satisfying, more effective, particularly in these times of crisis."

the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, for resolutions in support of its campaign. The Radio-Television News Directors Association, which has long been in the forefront of efforts to remove the rules, is already an ally. NAB is compiling a list of programs not aired because of fears of fairness complaints and programs over which broadcasters have been taken to court for fairness complaints. "We want to demonstrate the harm that's been done by the rules," said Sheehan.

Although NAB leaders predict eventual success for the campaign, no one will estimate how long it will take. The opposition is formidable, with a broad range of consumer groups, labor unions, public interest and church representatives on record opposing repeal of the laws. On top of that, leaders of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee have said they'll fight any effort to remove the laws.

Voron reported on the editorials project last week at a meeting of groups interested in seeking repeal of the political broadcasting laws or at least in learning more about the issue. The meeting was held in the Washington law offices of Pierson, Ball & Dowd, counsel to RTNDA, which is playing a coordinating role in the fight for repeal. And RTNDA's Schultz reported later that the print press appears to be lining up with broadcasters on the issue.

He said Pamela Riley, staff counsel for the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and Arthur B. Sacker, general counsel of the National Newspaper Association, indicated the boards of those

organizations will probably vote in the next couple of months to support the fight for repeal. Schultz said he was told the American Society of Newspaper Editors also would take that stand.

What's more, the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, which was represented at the meeting by Robert Lewis, chairman of the group's Freedom of Information Committee, is already on record as opposing the fairness doctrine and the equal-time law. Lewis said the group's 300 chapters will be asked to make discussion of repeal a part of their Freedom of Information Day observance, scheduled for March 16.

Others who attended the meeting were the NAB's Sheehan, Steve Stockmeyer, Roy Wilcox and Carol Randles; Robert Roper, an attorney for the National Cable Television Association; Linda Page, staff executive for the Association of National Advertisers; Jim Haag and Kate Black, staff executives of the Association of American Advertising Agencies; David Bartlett, of the Independent Television News Association and chairman of RTNDA's Freedom of Information committee; Larry Scharff, RTNDA's counsel, and former FCC Chairman Dean Burch, who also is a member of the Pierson, Ball & Dowd firm.

The FCC, which has formally recommended to Congress repeal of the political broadcasting laws, also was represented at the meeting by members of the public affairs office—William Russell, the director, and Janice Langley, acting deputy director.

An interim plan for WNAC-TV

FCC will permit RKO to run Boston station beyond March 7, with profits to go to charity in event it loses last appeal; NETV gets conditional CP; next move up to Supreme Court

The FCC has granted RKO General Inc. authority to operate WNAC-TV Boston beyond the March 7 date on which its license is scheduled to expire. That was the commission's answer to the question of how the station would continue to serve Boston while RKO's Supreme Court appeal of the commission action denying renewal of RKO's license is pending.

But for the longer run, the commission approved the merger of two of RKO's competitors for the license—Community Broadcasting of Boston and The Dudley Station Corp.—into New England Television Corp., and conditionally granted it a construction permit, a first step in permitting it to take over the station.

The commission, which acted on a 7-0 vote, structured its decision in a way designed to avoid conflict with the original order, issued in June 1980, denying renewal to WNAC-TV. That order directed that the station cease operating 30 days after the reviewing court issued its mandate in the case. The U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, which in December affirmed the commission decision, issued