

Scouts out

White House personnel office, caught as much by surprise as anyone else by announcement last month that Commissioner Anne Jones will leave FCC by end of May, has been scrambling to find replacement. "A very active search is going on," according to spokesperson. But when search will bear fruit remains to be seen. Not only must decision be made on candidate, but background check by Federal Bureau of Investigation would have to be conducted. Thus, with Commissioners Joseph Fogarty and Stephen Sharp due to leave commission on June 30, under law reducing agency's size to five members, commission could be limping along with only four, come July.

However, names are beginning to surface. One said to be campaigning for spot is Susan Wing, 36, communications attorney at Hogan & Hartson, Washington law firm, who, reportedly, had failed in earlier bid to win general counsel's post at FCC. Wing's husband, M.B. Oglesby, is White House deputy assistant to President for legislative affairs. Another prospect: Mimi Feller, administrative assistant to Senator John H. Chafee (R-R.I.). Yet another: Bobbie Greene Kilberg, attorney with Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies, who had been in running for seat that went to Mimi Dawson ("Closed Circuit," March 2, 1981). White House official said it would be "nice" to find woman for Jones seat.

False alarm?

Initial outcry over devastating effect that recently increased cable copyright fees would have on superstations appears to have been overblown. WTBS Atlanta initially projected losses of million subscribers, but actual figure turned out to be about 320,000. As to how long it will take to make up for lost subscribers with new system sign-ups, WTBS spokesman said, "Not that long." Eastern Microwave, common carrier for superstation WOR-TV New York, reports adding new systems with almost 200,000 subscribers over past couple of months and hopes to have its subscriber count back up to pre-rate hike levels by fall. Eastern is encouraging system operators to pass on copyright fee increases to subscribers in form of separate line item on monthly bills.

WGN-TV Chicago has already recouped about half of its CRT-related subscriber losses of 1.2 million and thinks it can

make up second 600,000 in couple of months. And though superstations concede that rate hikes have imposed only temporary setback, on principle they view increases as unfair and will continue to seek legislative relief.

Strong start

National spot sales activity for radio and television for first quarter was about 10% ahead of same time last year. Billings for TV to be released shortly by Television Bureau of Advertising which relies on data from Broadcast Advertisers Reports (BAR) should exceed \$750 million. Some TV reps are talking about "weaker" second quarter—7-8% ahead—putting first half up 8-9%.

First-quarter billings for radio were up 10.3% from same quarter last year, according to Station Representatives Association which relies on data supplied to Radio Expenditures Reports Inc. (RER) by 15 rep firms.

Higher pile?

Now that reams of reply comments on FCC proposal to repeal network syndication and financial interest rules are in (see page 58), commission is said to be thinking of inviting still more—these on so-called "compromise" proposals. Source said FCC was particularly interested in Department of Justice's "forced sale" rule alternative. Justice's proposal would permit networks to acquire financial interest and syndication rights in all programming but would require them to sell domestic, broadcast syndication rights of prime time entertainment series within fixed time after network run. Justice left hanging what that "fixed time" should be.

Silent Voice

U.S. Information Agency solicitation for engineering study to be done in connection with Voice of America's plans to create AM radio broadcasting network in Caribbean raises several questions Voice has trouble answering. Purpose of VOA's Caribbean Basin Project, according to solicitation, is to make VOA's Spanish- and English-language broadcasts available in major population centers of Caribbean and Central America over AM radio. One target is Cuba, and contractor selected for study would be asked to use Marathon Key, in Florida, as location for antenna. VOA already operates AM station there. Why duplication? And what

impact, if any, would yet another AM station broadcasting to Cuba have on plans for Radio Marti?

But most intriguing aspect of solicitation is requirement regarding Region 2 AM plan completed in Rio de Janeiro December 1981. Solicitation says requirements of that plan "shall be met," but then adds: "Deviations from the plan will be considered by the agency if necessary." If VOA is prepared to violate agreement U.S. signed, isn't it concerned that other countries in hemisphere will follow that lead, "if necessary"? Questions, put to VOA on two occasions last week, went unanswered.

Hitchhikers

Congressman Tom Tauke (R-Iowa) and Billy Tauzin (D-La.) are thinking of attaching their broadcast deregulation bill (H.R. 2382) to House FCC authorization bill (see "In Brief," this issue). Authorization bill may be marked up by House Energy and Commerce Committee this week. Tauke told BROADCASTING they are exploring "all opportunities" to move their legislation. Commerce Chairman John Dingell (D-Mich.) and Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Tim Wirth (D-Colo.) aren't expected to help.

Targets of opportunity

Washington Post Co., which bought into Chuck Dolan's regional sports networks (SportsChannel and New England SportsChannel) last March, is trying to establish regional sports network for Washington-Baltimore area. Official for co-owned Washington Capitals (hockey) and Bullets (basketball) confirmed that he is negotiating with Post for television rights, but that nothing was close to final. To win rights, Post might have to outbid Group W Satellite Communications which has also been in touch with Capitals and Bullets concerning its own national sports network. Baltimore Orioles baseball team is also sought.

Headway

Dissident members of National League of Cities that oppose cable deregulation bill (S. 66) that is backed by NLC and National Cable Television Association reportedly are generating Senate sympathy. Dissidents, composed of roughly 15 big-city members of league, met late last week in Dallas to draft proposed amendments to bill.