cameras and other equipment in the courtroom be drawn up and submitted by the presiding judge of each circuit to the supreme court. The plan must also be approved by the district attorney, head of the county governing body and local bar association president.

Most states—and all federal courts—forbid such coverage. The American Bar Association has long been opposed to live broadcasts, claiming that they detract from the dignity of the proceedings and make it difficult for the defendant to receive a fair trial. Florida, Washington and Oklahoma have, or are in the process of instituting trials of similar procedures.

Cable gets boost with deletion of leapfrogging rule

Unanimous FCC decision eliminates 1972 requirement meant to forestall emergence of super TV stations

The FCC has decided to delete its cable-television leapfrogging rule. The commission's decision, expressed in instructions to the staff on Friday (Dec. 19), was reached by a unanimous vote.

The rule, adopted in 1972, requires cable systems picking one of their distant signals from the top-25 markets to choose one of the two closest of those markets.

The rule was designed to bar the emergence of super stations—those that would become nationally dominant through popularity of their signals among distant cable systems, and to spread benefits of cable coverage.

Broadcasters pressed the validity of those arguments in urging the commission to retain the rule. And the commission's Broadcast Bureau expressed opposition to complete abandonment of the rule.

However, the commission's Cable Television Bureau contended it is unlikely that super stations would develop, since there was no evidence that stations benefit economically from carriage. The commission's action was lauded by Robert Schmidt, president of the National Cable Television Association, as "a major positive development for the CATV industry and its subscribers." He saw the action as providing a "strong stimulus for growth" of existing cable systems for the emergence of new systems in "larger television markets."

John Summers, executive vice president and general counsel of the National Association of Broadcasters, took a different view. He saw the action as running counter to what the commission has said it would do if the consensus agreement that led to the 1972 cable rules did not lead to an agreement on copyright legislation. The commission, he said, indicated it would revise the cable rules with a view to imposing tougher restrictions; instead, it lifts the leapfrogging rule. The commission, he said, "is going 180 degrees in the opposite direction."

In Brief

■ **Agreement appeared imminent** Friday (Dec. 19) on new contract covering performers in TV commercials as American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and Screen Actors Guild said they would present package to respective governing boards and to members after first of year. Speculation was that Association of National Advertisers and American Association of Advertising Agencies had not yielded to demands for pay-per-play formula but had agreed to increase rates by more than 20% and to reduce use of non-professionals. Negotiations continued with AFTRA on new contract for radio commercials. There's to be no agreement with either union on TV contract before AFTRA radio negotiations are completed. ■ Legislation making it **federal crime to vandalize property of radio or TV station** or willfully interfere in operation of station was introduced in Senate last week by Senator Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.). Conviction would be punishable by fine of up to $10,000 or imprisonment of up to 10 years, or both. Representative J.J. Pickle (D-Tex.), who is prepared to introduce similar legislation in House, has asked Justice Department to determine whether existing federal statute already covers such vandalisms. ■ Canadian government's tax bill to stop **flow of advertising dollars to U.S. broadcast and print media** was not passed before Parliament recessed Friday for holidays. However, government leaders said bill would be made retroactive to Jan. 1. That is not when U.S. broadcasters would feel impact, however. Effectiveness of provisions dealing with broadcasting depends largely on proclamation by governor general, and observers say Americans probably would not feel effects until Jan. 1, 1977. ■ CBS's new Norman Lear situation comedy, **One Day at a Time** (Tuesday, 9:30-10 p.m.) made its debut last week with smashing 25.1 rating and 40 share, easily winning time period against NBC's *Police Woman* and ABC's *Rookies*. Another new CBS program, Lorimar's cop series **The Blue Knight** (Wednesday, 10-11 p.m.), premiered to satisfactory 17.5 rating and 31 share, finishing second to ABC's hit cop show, *Starsky and Hutch* (21.9/38) but ahead of NBC's Petrocelli (12.2/23). ■ **KDTX(FM)** Dallas has been sold by Starr Broadcasting Group (Peter H. and Michael F. Starr and William F. Buckley Jr.) to Fairchild Industries Inc., owner of KLIF(AM) Dallas and WYOO-AM-FM Minneapolis, for price reported in excess of $1 million. Broker: Blackburn & Co. ■ **Cox Cable Communications Inc.**, Atlanta, has received commitments for $20 million in additional financing, with $15 million coming from long-term loan with Mutual Life Insurance Co. of New York, Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States and John Hancock Life Insurance Co. Loan is at 10 7/8%, for 15 years. Proceeds are to be used to retire short-term bank indebtedness. Cox Cable has also increased revolving credit agreement with group of banks, headed by Chase Manhattan, from $15 million to $20 million. ■ Legislation to force **reform of federal regulatory agencies**, including FCC and Federal Trade Commission, within five years was introduced in Senate last week by Senators Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.) and Charles Percy (R-Ill.). Bill divides agencies into five groups and would require President to submit reform plans for agencies in each to Congress before certain deadline. In FCC's case, that's March 15, 1979; in FTC's, March 15, 1980. If no reform plan were enacted by June of following year, agencies in group would lost most of powers and all rates and licenses would be terminated. "If we expect the economy to get healthy again and remain that way," Senator Percy said, "we must strip the burden of unnecessary government regulation from its back." ■ House passed and sent to President compromise bill on **five-year funding for Corporation for Public Broadcasting.** Vote was 313-72. First multi-year authorization ever, bill authorizes expenditures rising from $88 million in 1976 to $160 million in 1980, under matching plan requiring CPB to raise $2.50 from private sources for every $1 of federal funds (BROADCASTING, Dec. 8). ■ As expected (BROADCASTING, Dec. 8), FCC has set license renewal of non-commercial **WXPN(FM)** Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania) for hearing to determine whether licensee has adequately supervised station operations. Issue stems from earlier charge of obscene and indecent broadcasts, for which station was fined $2,000. ■ **James C. Richdale Jr.**, president of Corinthian Broadcasting's KHOU-TV Houston and veteran of 30 years in broadcasting, becomes professor of communications management at University of Houston, effective Jan. 1. He will remain vice chairman of Gulf TV Corp., KHOU-TV licensee. ■ Sources at NBC-TV say **Lin Bolen** wants to leave post as network's vice president for daytime programs in order to form own West Coast production company. Heiress apparent is reported to be **Madeline David,** director of daytime programs. ■ FCC Cable Bureau's policy division will lose two attorneys (from staff of six) as **Steven Effros** leaves to join Richard Brown in Washington private practice and **Fritz Attaway** joins Motion Picture Association of America.