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Programing

Pen pals: Mater, Wildmon

Coalition chief says CBS can pick authority to develop system for monitoring TV programs; Mater rejects idea, saying CBS only wants CBTV's methods analyzed

The Coalition for Better Television has told CBS that the network can pick "any recognized authority" to develop a TV monitoring system and CBTV will use it.

CBS—interested only in an appraisal of CBTV's own monitoring methodology but not wanting such monitoring in the first place—has rejected the idea ("In Brief," Sept. 7).

In a letter to Gene Mater, CBS/Broadcast Group senior vice president for policy, CBTV Chairman Donald Wildmon wrote:

"Since you have expressed some concern with our monitoring program, please accept this request from me so that we may do our job with your approval. I am requesting that CBS choose any recognized authority you so desire and have that authority develop a program of monitoring television programs for their sex, violence, profanity and constructive content.

"After this program is completed and meets the approval of CBS, please advise me so that we of the Coalition for Better Television can implement that program in our monitoring process." Wildmon added that CBTV would be "happy to pay any reasonable fees."

The Wildmon letter followed statements by Mater that the CBTV chairman had failed to respond to his repeated written requests that a monitoring-evaluation process get started (BROADCASTING, Aug. 24). Wildmon had agreed to the evaluation during a public debate with Mater in June.

In his response to Wildmon, Mater called the CBTV request "disingenuous," claiming that "it was never our position that advertisers should be pressured into withdrawing from particular television programs or that a monitoring system should be devised for compiling the list of target programs."

Mater also challenged the part of Wildmon's letter where the CBTV chairman said: "Your letters concerning the monitoring report seem premature. We have released no monitoring report. It is rather difficult to turn over to someone what one doesn't have."

Mater called this a "non-response," explaining that a "monitoring report" isn't being sought but rather "the monitoring backup material . . . which you had agreed

to make available" and which "you said already had been provided to at least one advertiser. . . ."

The CBS senior vice president wrote that "all of this leads me to wonder what you have been writing and talking about, how you arrived at the numbers that you publicized and whether, in fact, you have been discussing all this time nothing but your own personal views of television in calling for a national boycott."

Mater told Wildmon that "we regret your unwillingness [or inability] to make good on your commitment to provide this material."

While Mater challenged Wildmon's credibility, Wildmon also challenged CBS's.

Even before hearing that CBS had rejected CBTV's new proposal that the network pick a monitoring "authority," Wildmon wrote Mater that "failure of CBS to act on this request will seem to indicate that CBS is more interested in finding fault than in seeking a system which it can accept."

Wildmon wrote: "Having watched studies done over the years, I can't remember CBS ever accepting any study which indicated television had a negative influence on those who viewed. I have wondered if God could produce such a document that CBS would find acceptable. Therefore rather than using our system, we are requesting that CBS develop a system it will accept."

Oklahoma City TV 'giving up' on all-news format

Independent KAUT, running seven-hour news block for past 10 months, fails to attract audience

All-news television is not an idea whose time has come—at least not in Oklahoma City. Or that would seem to be the lesson learned by Golden West Broadcasters' KAUT(TV) Oklahoma City, which last week announced that, hurting for ratings, it has dropped its seven-hour news block, 10 months after its debut.

Jerry Birdwell, KAUT vice president and general manager, said the independent UHF station is filling the gap with syndicated programming and movies for the "interim," but isn't "giving up on news." Although Birdwell noted the station has dropped all but three members of its 23-member news staff, he said he hoped the station would provide news in the future. But Birdwell added that it was too soon to



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