numerous terrestrial microwave operators ranging from the county of Los Angeles, which uses the band for intracounty communications, to The Washington Post, which uses it to transmit the digitized pages of the newspaper to a remote printing plant. The microwave operators dislike the prospect of being bumped to the less reliable and more 18 ghz band. The DBS service has been earmarked by the FCC for the DBS service and they have made their feelings known in comments to the FCC and in testimony before Congress.

The proponents of DBS have held that the fears of broadcasters are unfounded. It has been the contention of STC in particular that its proposed service will have little or no impact on broadcasters. Not only will DBS not "wipe out" broadcasting but representatives of USSB and VSS say that by providing them with high quality programming they will help marginal broadcasters survive.

At least some of the DBS applicants appear willing to pacify the terrestrial microwave users by contributing to a fund that would be used to reimburse them for costs they incur in moving from the 12 ghz to 18 ghz band.

The stickiest DBS question facing the FCC may have to do with the CBS proposal for HDTV. Some of the other DBS applicants, particularly USSB, have attacked the CBS proposal as being impractical. They are concerned because HDTV takes wider channels than conventional television, and the wider the channels, the fewer may be accommodated by the DBS spectrum. Initially, CBS asked for channels with a minimum bandwidth of 27 mhz, while most other applicants proposed 16 mhz or 18 mhz. Last week, however, CBS indicated it would be willing to enlarge its channels as narrow as 22.5 mhz. The extra wide channels needed for HDTV could be had by combining two channels, it said.

In its filing, CBS asked the FCC to grant its application and defer action on all the others since CBS's is the only one that fulfills the FCC's expressed goal of encouraging experimentation in the DBS spectrum. "Every other pending DBS application merely proposes conventional quality NTSC service, utilizing well-established earth and space segment components," CBS said. "There is nothing truly experimental about them."

CBS defended its proposal from some of the most oft-heard criticism. CBS insisted that the latent demand for HDTV is real. "Given the historic receptivity of U.S. consumers to higher quality goods and services, HDTV will doubtless be very popular with the public and will ultimately permit the U.S. to achieve a position of leadership in television communications. People who have taken a look at HDTV on prototypical equipment," CBS said, "expressed a new and exciting feeling of presence and when viewing such a presentation." In hopes that regulators will express the same feeling, CBS will demonstrate HDTV programming shot in Californi

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Turner buys NCAA cable rights for $17.6 million

It's historic turn of events, says Wussler, as first-ever contract goes to Atlanta superstation; USA Network, ESPN were bidders.

The first national cable television rights to National Collegiate Athletic Association football games were awarded last Wednesday (Jan. 27) to Turner Broadcasting System for nighttime coverage on superstation WTB$TVAtlanta for a price of approximately $17.6 million for the 1982 and 1983 seasons.

TBS won the cable bid in competition with USA Network and ESPN, a spokesman said.

Plans call for a total of 19 games each season, with 14 scheduled on Saturday nights, one on Thanksgiving night and four others during the week on evenings still to be determined. The games to be selected will be drawn from those of NCAA's Division One, comprising 91 of the top football colleges. ABC and CBS have the television rights to the games for daytime coverage. There will be different teams on cable and over-the-air.

Robert Wussler, president of WTB$ and executive vice president of TBS, said the agreement represents a significant turn in cable history. He added: "If I may mix a sports metaphor, cable is beginning to step up to the plate."

Wussler noted that WTB$ serves systems with almost 20 million subscribers and said he expected the total to reach 22 million or 23 million by September when the football cable TV schedule begins.

By Thursday, Wussler said, advertisers had started to call asking for details of sponsorship. He said he expected to announce a major sponsor this week.

For the NCAA, the signing of a national cable agreement represents a strengthening of control over college football television policy. In December, the association averted a head-on collision with dissident members as well as the NCAA when College Football Association schools rejected a tentative pact reached with NBC to telecast games on Saturday night ("In Brief," Dec. 21, 1981). That pact called for a payment by NBC of $180 million over four years, starting in the fall.

NCAA now has the $17.6-million contract with TBS plus a $23.5-million agreement with ABC and CBS spread over four years, starting in September.

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