

Cable volunteer commission to hear producers, Cablevision dispute

By BOB SEIDENBERG

A minor war has erupted between the two producers of a local cable television show and the city's cable company, which furnishes the facilities and assistance to produce such shows.

Independent producers Scott Sanders and Paul Rosen are accusing Cablevision of Chicago of restraining their right to free speech by revoking their privilege last month to produce the show, "Evanston Alternative Television," which appeared on Channel 27.

However, cable officials say the producers' right to produce was revoked because they spoke *too* freely, alleging that both Sanders and Rosen on different occasions made threatening statements to Cablevision employes — Sanders orally on Sept. 24 and Rosen in a handwritten note Sept. 26. Explaining about the incidents, Sanders told the Review: "All that happened was that we got a little hostile verbally towards Cablevision after being told, in effect, to 'get lost' for the 500th time."

Sally Roethle, the city's cable administrator, said the matter is expected to go before the the cable commission's public and institutional access committee, one of four voluntary committees staffed partially by-citizen volunteers, sometime next week.

That committee in turn will recommend what action the city should take on the matter to the full cable commission, probably in November.

ASKED TO COMMENT about the situation, Pat Falese, systems manager for Cablevision, characterized the incidents as "unfortunate, troublesome and perceived as dangerous to our employes."

Roethle conceded that a note which allegedly contained the verbally abusive remark was unfortunate at best. "That wasn't a real effective way to deal with the problem," she said. But she said she thought the production and technical problems which constantly plagued the producers was a real source of frustration.

Cablevision, in a letter to the producers dated Sept. 28, said

their status as a public access user was revoked and access privileges terminated after charging that Sanders had threatened a Cablevision employe "with physical harm," and had been verbally abusive.

Cablevision attorney Anthony Naughtin warned the two that their presence on Cablevision property or use of the firm's equipment would be considered trespass and legal action would be taken.

UNDER CABLEVISION'S franchise agreement with the City of Evanston, in return for the franchise to provide the city's cable service, the New York-based company is to provide a certain amount of free video equipment, production facilities, help and promotion in the production and airing of local programs.

Sanders and Rosen argue, however, that rather than help, Cablevision has denied them entrance to the facilities, aired shows late, without sound and on the wrong date or not at all. They claim that a March show was "aired with no picture for 20 minutes and later played out of sequence." A show on Sept. 27, they claim, was played for nine minutes without sound, apparently touching off Rosen's alleged verbal explosion.

ASKED ABOUT THE complaints, Falese said, "My only response would be, number one; they have been unreported and from what I have seen the majority are unfounded; and many of the comments that have been made are irresponsible."

The two billed their show, "Evanston Alternative Television," as a "unique, progressive TV series which has dealt with such subjects as disarmament, women's issues, animal rights, tenants' rights and apartheid in South Africa" — a show Cablevision apparently put out a disclaimer for, denying responsibility for the content, according to Roethle.

Of Sanders, Roethle said, "He's a very active producer. He does good quality work and he's extremely committed to the type of programming he's been doing."

Evanston Review 10-18-84