

By John Carmody

The programming arm of the public broadcasting industry, girding for its showdown with the parent Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CCPB) next week, yesterday named an Austin, Tex. broadcaster to be the new chairman of its 16-man board of directors.

Robert F. Schenkkan, president and general manager of KLRN, has long been considered a strong conservative voice in public broadcasting circles. His election could be viewed as a show of unity among the diverse regional and political groups in the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) network as they head for a battle with the Nixon administration-dominated CPB board on Wednesday. Schenkkan replaced Dr. James Loper, president of KCET in Los Angeles, whose term expired.

At that meeting, the CPB board will review position papers drawn up by staff members of both groups. The papers were ordered by CPB president Henry Loomis last November after the network and the parent corporation locked horns over the latter's sudden decision to take over approval of network programming for the 1973-74 season. The papers defined "roles" for the two groups.

A board member revealed yesterday that the PBS board has "considerably modified" the tone of the original staff paper defining the network's position. He said "they hoped the CPB people will modify their tones, too."

(The corporation position ruled out most of PBS's present functions, except for maintaining the technical "network" which interconnects the stations. The network had insisted its role remain unchanged.)

At a press conference yesterday that ended a two day-meeting here of the PBS board, Schenkkan took pains to sound conciliatory toward CPB, which has threatened to take programming and scheduling functions away from PBS. The network is dominated by the nation's 232 public station managers.

At the same time, Schenkkan pointedly backed the heavy slate of public affairs programming to be submitted to the CPB board for approval next week; and public affairs is the crux of the current fight between the federally funded corporation and its 3-year-old network.

In the past, Schenkkan has been an outspoken critic of similiar programming.

It was also revealed at the press conference that:

• Public broadcasters are counting on no more than a \$45-million budget in fiscal 1974. That is the figure approved by Mr. Nixon last

year, but which was lost in a subsequent veto of an HEW-Labor money bill.

• Schenkkan read a statement from the board warning that CPB "may be moving rapidly in the direction of assuming total control of public television's national program service."

Later, Schenkkan took pains to call the 19-member CPB board a "very distinguished group of American citizens." He said the PBS board "hoped that they would not take that step (of assuming control)."

He pointed to "progress" in public TV in recent years

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due to cooperation between the two groups. He said his board "was reasonably confident" there would be a compromise, pointing out that the position papers drawn up by both sides a month ago "were staff statements" and didn't necessarily reflect final positions of either board.

At stake is control of the nation's public television network. For three years its scheduling, programming and planning have been in the hands of PBS, itself controlled in turn by the local station managers.

A year ago, the Nixon administration began moving to assert control over the network through its parent organization, the CPB board, which is appointed by the President.

In October, Henry Loomis, a strong Nixon backer, took over the corporation. Soon thereafter, the CPB board, not PBS started deciding which programs would be shown in the fall of 1973.

The administration has reportedly been unhappy with PBS emphasis on public affairs programming, which now takes up about 30 per cent of the network's weekly prime time offerings.

Yesterday PBS board members indicated they were happy with a heavy public affairs schedule, despite some private grumbling over the years—another clear sign of unity among the network's supporters.

The CPB board meeting Wednesday will consider the modified PBS position and presumably vote on the programming schedule ratified during the past two days.