

AUDIENCE PROJECTED AT OVER 30 MILLION

Frost Group Expects TV Ratings of Nixon Interview to Equal Shows Ranked in Top Ten

By LES BROWN

In light of the advance promotion and the interest in the event that has been fanned by the press, associates of David Frost were projecting yesterday a national audience of more than 30 million viewers for the first of Mr. Frost's four televised interviews with former President Richard M. Nixon, broadcast last night.

In individual cities, the ratings were expected to be comparable to those normally received by such popular entertainment programs as "Charlie's Angels" and "Welcome Back, Kotter," which rank in the Nielsen top 10.

As many as 20 million additional viewers were expected to have tuned in for a portion—at least six minutes' worth—of the 90-minute telecast.

The program became fully sponsored shortly before air time, with Gallo Wines and the movie "Black Sunday" purchasing the remaining two 30-second spots on the special ad hoc network organized for Mr. Frost by Syndicast Services.

Those advertisers bought time only in the first program, however, and two national spots remain unsold for the three subsequent Frost-Nixon telecasts.

Ratings Available Today

Official ratings will become available today for the nation's three largest cities—New York, Chicago and Los Angeles—and those for the rest of the country will be reported by Nielsen and Arbitron in a day or two.

The audience projections for last night's telecast were based on expectations that it would have achieved an average rating of 22.5 on the 155 stations on which it was carried.

Mr. Frost's special network does not cover as much of the country as the major commercial networks; it has about 50 fewer stations than either CBS or NBC, and 30 fewer than ABC.

However, all but 14 of the 155 stations carrying the Nixon interviews are affiliated with the major networks. Thus, the networks will be hurt not only by the competition from the programs but also by the loss of many of their stations on the nights of the Frost-Nixon broadcasts.

NYT

5-5-77

'News Bonanza of the Year'

"This has turned out to be the biggest news bonanza of the year for television, and it's surely going to be the highest-rated syndicated program in history," said Mitchell Johnson, president of Syndicast.

"I think it's going to prove that if you have the right program, you can put together a national network for it," he continued. "Stations that turned up their noses at the Nixon interviews at first were very anxious to have the programs during the last month or so."

Mr. Johnson said he was certain that the remaining commercial spots for each of the programs could be sold at the last minute, if necessary.

The national spots, valued at \$62,500 each, represent one source of income from the telecasts for Mr. Frost and his investors. With a total of 10 half-minute spots for the network to sell in each program, the four telecasts have potential revenues of \$2.5 million.

The special network was set up under a barter arrangement in which the stations were given the programs free in exchange for their airtime. The stations make their money from selling seven local minutes of commercials. Each of the programs has been edited to provide for both national and local spots.

\$600,000 Fee for Nixon

Under Mr. Frost's agreement with Mr. Nixon, the former President is to receive a fee of \$600,000 for granting the interviews and a 10 percent share of the profits.

In addition to the revenues from the sale of network spots, Mr. Frost's organization has realized about \$1 million from the sale of the programs to foreign broadcast systems. Substantial amounts have also come from the sale of the radio rights to the Mutual Broadcasting System and the 16-millimeter nontheatrical film (educational rights to Universal Pictures).

Foreign systems will carry the telecasts one day after they are broadcast here. Among the nations that have purchased the series are Britain, Canada, Australia, France, Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Finland and Colombia.

"It's all worked out beautifully," Marvin Minoff, executive vice president of Mr. Frost's Paradine Productions, said yesterday. "We took a large gamble and had huge expenses, but now we're definitely in the black."

"There were a lot of skeptics when we started this, but we were always optimistic that we could bring it off," he added. "Now we wait and see what the reaction will be and what the ratings will show."