CABLE

in Oakland County

Cable monopolies hard to fight alone

■ Cable industry competition is heating up. If you live in Birming-ham-Bloomfield, Farmington, West Bloomfield or Southfield, you might not see it yet. But you soon will, in the form of expanded service and new rates.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR

Cable monopolies and multi-million dollar telecommunica-

Cable monopolies and multimillion dollar telecommunicatian mergers are of no interest to
Cormae Wright. This Bloomfield
Township resident sees cable TV
as a war between the haves and
the have-nots. Wright puts himself in the latter category.
The computer analyst's brother-in-law, Chris Mason, lives in
Troy and has what Wright sees
as the Gadillac of cable: Comedy
Channel, History Channel,
ESPN 2 and the Spanish channel Univision.
Wright wants those channels
on his system. More so, Mason
has two companies courting him.
This irks Wright, who pays
nearly the same — \$27 a month
— for his service from Booth
Cable. Mason, instead of bragging about a new snowblower or
the family's trip to Disney
World, unknowingly needdes his
relative by recapping his TV
viewing habits.
His frustration, though,

viewing habits.

His frustration, though, underscores a fact: There are few avenues for the disgruntled local cable viewer who wants Corporate executives of the cable TV remote are a faceless

They're also entrenched due to 15-year franchise agreements worked out with city officials



On air. Jack Roberts, host of "In Tune," a local show at Continental is spruced up by producer, Jeannette Avolio.

going back to a time when MTV played music videos. So, Wrights insurrection started with a letter to Booth Communications, headquartered in Birmingham. "Of course, you never hear back from them," he said.

The disgruntled cable watcher could air grievances in front of the commission that oversees the city's franchise, but hasn't tried yet.

Bloomfield Hills and Bloom field Township have a sevenmember board, which includes three township trustees, two Hills commissioners and two sembers at large from the school district. The board doesn't exactly keep a regular meeting schedule. When asked about how often and when the board meets, cable commissioners and two schools, and that's all I'll say. "People think because of the sale when they turn on their TV ended with the school district. The board doesn't meets, cable commissioner and two members at large from the school district. The board doesn't wantly keep a regular meeting schedule. When asked about how often and when the board meets, cable commissioner and two moday morning their operator is going to be Continental." May-nord said, "Periodically, and that's all I'll say."

By comparison, neighboring

has no room to add channels. While other cable operators are changing to fiber optic wiring to increase channel capacity. Bloomfield has the initial coaxial cable installed in the early 1980s and doesn't nearly have the same channel capacity of fiber optic wiring.

"Because they've been up for a sale for a year, they haven't been interested too much in a upgrade, "Maynard said.

Troy, in contrast, is bustling with fiber optic activity.

Troy has TCI — with America and the subscribers. Since Ameritech announced in April that it would offer service in Troy, TCI responded in Man. The media giant started offering the Disney Channel as part of its expanded basic service and lowered rates. Chris Mason's cable bill is \$23.95 a month compared to \$28.80.2. "Indicated that, by the way," Mason said.

Some customers weren't too excited, though, a Troy official said. "Six months before, they TCI jacked up the rates by four bucks," said Roger Kowalski.

Ameritech's Americast is not expected to be available to all residents for another year.

Competition might not be the pie in the sky everyone thinks.

Ameritech's Americast is not expected to be available to all residents for another year.

Competition might not be the pie in the sky everyone thinks.

Ameritech officials made a presentation before the Southwestern Onkland Cable Commission (SWOCC), but the arrival of a competing cable operator is only something to fantasize about.

"It would be better for awhile." said Farnington Hills Mayor AldoVagnozzi, who sits on the cable commission. "Knowing the industry, though, if they didn't make as much money as they expected, they'd merge."

OAKLAND COUNTY CABLE RATES

The major cable companies in Oakland County all offer a form of expanded cable the major cause companies in James and the service that appeals to a majority of subscribers. Usually this includes Detroit-sera broadcast stations, public access/government channels, and the so-called 'cable networks' (MTV, USA, TRT, ESPN, Comedy Central, QVC, etc.). Certain notworks (Sci-Fi Channel, MSNBC, TV Land) may not be available to all services or communities. Additional fees apply for "premium" channels, including HBO, Showtime, PASS Sports and The Disney Channel.

The gray screens identify each company's expanded cable service, the monthly rate* and major communities they serve:

Limited & Expanded

\$23.00

Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills Bloomfield Twp, Franklin



Broadcast Basic and Satellite Tier

Continental Cablevision

\$23.55 to \$25.99

in Oakland County.

Southfield, West Bloomfield, Geego Harbor, Orchard Lake Franklin, Lathrup Village

Basic and Cable Plus \$28.02

Berkley, Clarkston, Clawson Lake Orion, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Troy

Broadcast Basic and Standard Cable Service 526.42

TIME WARNER Farmington, Farmington Hills, Novi

Limited and Preferred Basic

\$26.99

Lake Angelus, Pontiac, Waterford Twp

COMCAST

tes listed are for regular monthly service, and do not include promotional nts, franchise fees and taxes

Sources: Booth Communications, Comeast, Continental Cablevision, TCI Cablevision of Oakland County, Time Warner Cable.

ently, and that a all II say. By Cable TV, telephone companies when the bigger problems ariting in Troy. Continental Cablevision is preparing to offer large as well as other services, like a home security system—from a lephone company. Other households will be able to get television cable service—as well as other households will be able to get television cable service—as well as a service—as as an ell as high-speed access to the Internet—from cable. Stervice—as as well as a sulf-as high-speed access to the Internet—from cable. Stervice—as as well as a sulf-as high-speed access to the Internet—from cable. Stervice—as as well as a sulf-as high-speed access to the Internet—from cable. Stervice—as well as the speed access to the Internet—from cable. Stervice—as well as the speed access to the Internet—from cable company. Other households will be able to get television cable service. As an article in The Wall Street and federal regulators in the television of the case. Many as the lingus. State and federal regulators insist the changes will come about more quickly with minimal government interference. Dergogulation is the watchword, regulators insist, the langes will come about more quickly with minimal government interference. Dergogulation is the watchword, regulators insist, the langes will come about more quickly with minimal government interference. Dergogulation is the watchword, regulators insist, the langes will come about more quickly with minimal government interference. Dergogulation is the watchword, regulators in the time of the case. Many substitute is the special companies and cable in the companies and cable is the special control of the case. Many touseholds feel proverless, even frustrated. Ameritech is accessing to many the control of the case with the competition. The company got overly an about the companies of the case with the same time. The company got overly an about the companies of the case with the same time. The company got overly an about the companies of the case with the competitio

access to the internet - from coole companies.

The major question: When. State and federal regulators insist the changes will come about more quickly with minimal government interference. Deregulation is the watchword, regulators insist, thus leaving the market free to dictate service and price. Providers agree.

With all the emphasis on competition, it would seem that average customers have the advantage. However, that may not be the case. Many households feel powerless, even frustrated.

Ameritech is kicking off the

The Technology of CARLE TELEVISION
The basic structure of a cable system is a sitive major parts to a cable system:

Semerjan, vice president of planning at Ameritech in Detroit.

Some companies may be retrenching, Semerjan said, "But Ameritech is going head-to-head with incumbent cable providers."

In Troy, for example, the telephone giant - through its sister company Americast - is providing cable television in direct competition to incumbent provider, TCI.

Americant currently provides direct table television service in 15. Michigan communities, Semerjian said, "and we're negotiating with numerous other communities.

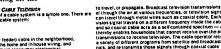
"Ameritech is not backing off," he insisted. "If anything, we're getting more aggressive."

"That's the faiture in telecommu-

he insisted. "If anything, we're getting more aggressive."

That's the future in telecommunications, Semerjian said, single companies offering a variety of services. "It will be so much easier for the consumer," he said, "when one company can provide phone service, cable television, Internet access, home security and other services."

1095 S. HUNTER BIRMINGHAM (810)645-0500



THE END OF THE LINE



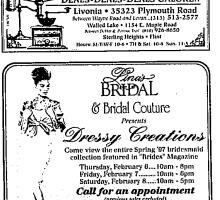




210 S. Woodward • Birmingham 810-642-7755

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Friday & Saturday - 'till 6 p.m Thursday - 'till 9 p.m. Sunday 12-6





BRIDAL

& Bridal Coulure

Countryside Bill

Craft Mall & Antiques Grand Old Antiques & Collectibles SALE The Whole Month of February DEALS.DEALS.DEALS GALORE!!