

Networks claim bias charges untrue

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Television networks, reacting to a report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, challenged suggestions of industry-wide discrimination against women and minorities.

None of the three major television networks said it had seen the commission's 181-page report released Monday. NBC and ABC issued statements. CBS spokesmen said they would not comment until the network had seen the report.

The report, titled "Window Dressing on the Set: Women and Minorities in Television," criticized network hiring practices and the

portrayal of women and minorities in programs.

NBC said "some of the commission's... charges appear to be based on out-of-date data, and are not in accord with the facts, at least as they might concern NBC."

ABC said it was "confident that ABC's policy and practice of nondiscrimination in employment" were in compliance with the law.

Among the report's recommendations was a suggestion that Congress empower the Federal Communications Commission to regulate equal employment practices at the networks.

Currently, the FCC regulates

local stations, but has no jurisdiction to license or regulate networks.

The report said requiring networks to prepare employment reports and equal opportunity programs for all employees would "encourage the infusion of minorities and women into the network program and news decision making process."

Portrayal of women and minorities "is an industry-wide problem" that needs an "industry-wide solution," the report said.

The report recommended the FCC "conduct an inquiry on proposed rulemaking on the portrayal

of minorities and women in commercial and public television drama."

White males dominated the screen while white females held a minor share of all roles, many of which were comic, the report said.

Minorities continued to appear primarily in ethnic settings or as tokens in all white shows with 8.6 percent of the roles being played by nonwhite females, the report said.

Network news fared little better in the report, with neither women nor minorities receiving adequate attention during news programs, the report said.

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Scandal possible in gas transport, newspaper says

United Press International
NEW ORLEANS — A newspaper reported yesterday that two Jefferson Parish officials and a former aide to Gov. Edwin Edwards could reap millions of dollars through a company they formed to obtain exclusive rights to transport state-owned natural gas from the Lake Pontchartrain area.

In a copyrighted story, the New Orleans States-Item said Jefferson Parish President Douglas Allen, District Attorney John Mamouliades and businessman H. Clint Pray have obtained a "moral commitment" from the Louisiana Mineral Board to use the proposed pipeline to transport gas from the state-owned lake bottom.

"It's a personal transaction," Mamouliades said. "It has nothing to do with my office." Allen was unavailable for comment.

The newspaper said Mamouliades, Allen and Pray formed a partnership — Lakes Intrastate Pipeline Co. — and became a subsidiary to Houston-based United Gas Pipe Line Co., one of the largest firms in the field.

The Houston company said it would give the local firm 49 percent of the profits if the pipeline project to service potentially productive wells in Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne became reality.

The Jefferson Parish men were not required to invest any cash in the project.

"All they had was basically a good idea," said William B. Cassin, executive vice president of United Gas. "Some people might have said 'thanks for the idea' and gone off with the idea. We don't do business that way and never have."

Several months ago, Edwards said he was imposing a moratorium on the production of oil and gas on state-owned land to conserve Louisiana gas resources until intrastate pipelines could be built to sell the gas within Louisiana or until conditions for the sale of gas outside the state improves.

In response to the States-Item story, the governor said he discussed the proposed Pontchartrain-Borgne pipeline with Mamouliades, but he was unaware that the district attorney's company was seeking exclusive rights to transport the gas.

"I certainly am going to support them," Edwards said of the gas line proposal. "It didn't matter to me who the principals were."

Girl injured on Astroworld roller coaster

United Press International
HOUSTON — Investigators checked yesterday for malfunction of the Astroworld roller coaster from which a 15-year-old girl fell and was seriously injured.

Loraine Winkle remained in critical condition at Ben Taub Hospital after falling from the second drop of the Texas Cyclone Monday. She had surgery for a skull fracture. She also incurred heel injuries.

The ride remained closed pending determination of the cause.

An Astroworld spokesman said a team from Six Flags Inc., which operates the park, and Philadelphia Toboggan Co., which built the roller coaster, were investigating.

"Our preliminary investigation of the accident reveals that two girls were riding together and one came out of the seat while the other did not," the spokesman said. "At this time, we don't know why."

"We really won't know what happened until we've received a statement from the girl or an eyewitness indicating how the girl was riding in the seat. Our investigation is incomplete."

One question was whether a lap bar on the 24-passenger train loosened during the trip, but a spokesman said the coaster is designed to operate safely without it.

The Cyclone's maximum height is 92 feet and it reaches top speeds of 60 miles per hour. The second drop is 88 feet high and at an angle of 53 degrees and starts just after a climb and a curve.

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