

Commonwealth's \$17.3 million in improvements would benefit Back Mountain service

A \$17.3 million construction and service improvements program is currently underway by Commonwealth Telephone Company and its two subsidiaries, Leesport Telephone Company and Lewisberry Telephone Company, according to the utility's president, William J. Umphred.

Serving approximately 127,000 customers, Commonwealth and its two subsidiaries cover a 4,900 square mile, 19 county area of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Commonwealth Telephone Company is the third largest independent telephone company in Pennsylvania and the ninth largest in the United States. The company has been experiencing substantial growth in the last decade in the suburban and rural areas of Eastern Pennsylvania which it serves.

During 1979 the company will install 24 digital remote switching units throughout its service area, replace two electromechanical switching

systems located in Tunkhannock and Elizabethville, replace long distance switching equipment in Wellsboro and construct 605 miles of new cable.

This year's highlight will be the placement of a fiber optic system between Mansfield and Wellsboro—one of the first of its kind in the United States. Fiber optics is the science by which light beams are guided in a "glass wire." The optical fibers are made of ultra-pure glass and

carry rapidly pulsing laser-generated light waves.

When fully operational in mid-1979, this field application of fiber optic technology will carry 672 simultaneous conversations over two glass fibers the size of a human hair.

"Fiber optic technology is expected to facilitate the company's entry into the provision of broad band services including cable television, electronic mail and shopping and banking by telephone," Umphred explained.

This year's program comes on the heels of another successful year. 1978. The past year's telephone gain represented 9,849 new phones placed

into service. The company's Automatic Number Identification program, which provides positive automatic identification of customer billing numbers as long distance calls are dialed, was completed during 1978.

All Commonwealth, Leesport and Lewisberry customers can now take advantage of the improved efficiency offered by Automatic Number Identification.

John Navich, Central

Division Manager, further elaborated that Commonwealth plans to spend \$619,000 for service improvements and new construction in the Dallas area of the company.

Included in this amount is \$462,000 for new installation, special services, and private branch exchange service for business customers; \$8,000 for improved long distance transmission facilities; \$589,000 for improved local facilities; \$90,000 for central office switching equipment; \$59,000 for land and buildings; \$264,000 for vehicles; \$60,000 for central office test equipment; \$5,000 for tools; \$2,000 for mobile radio; \$20,000 for radio paging, and \$10,000

for the electronic maintenance center.

Specific projects in the Dallas area include: the installation of a remote switching unit at Ceasetown; cable relief for Ceasetown, Vernon and Harveys Lake; line additions for Noxen and installation for Local Automatic Message Accounting equipment and custom calling features for Harveys Lake.

When the new equipment becomes operational later in the year, Harveys Lake customers will have the option of electing call waiting, call forwarding, three way calling or speed calling.

Remote switching units allow the company to

provide customers with improved grades of service and better transmission, without the need for costly outside cable construction. Commonwealth can then pass these cost efficiencies on to customers by maintaining existing local service rates.

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Muroski mum on investigation of child welfare

The question of whether or not there will be an investigation of the local child welfare agency is apparently still open.

Monday Luzerne County District Attorney Chester Muroski refused comment on the subject, saying that he was under a court order to refrain from discussing the matter.

There had been rumors that the office of the District Attorney would be launching an investigation of the Children and Youth Agency in the wake of the beating death of five-year-old Shawn Jodziewicz in Mountaintop last month.

The boy's father, George Jodziewicz, is presently being held in Luzerne County Prison. He is scheduled to stand trial this month. The Jodziewicz family had been a client of the Children and Youth Agency for several years prior to the beating death, and Jodziewicz had

already served six months in prison for child abuse offenses against two of his older children.

District Attorney Muroski said that the court order was connected with the permission given him by Commonwealth Court to gain access to records of the dealings of the child welfare unit with the Jodziewicz family.

He had sought the records in his capacity as prosecutor in the case.

In a related matter, District Attorney Muroski said that he would object to any request for a change of venue for the trial, scheduled for late next month.

He maintained that as of the weekend he saw no reason why Jodziewicz could not have a fair trial in Luzerne County. Said the District Attorney, "I haven't seen any press that is inflammatory." He added that a change of venue is "a costly thing in time and money" as well.

Evans attends seminar

Barbara Evans, secretary to District Magistrate Earl Gregory, Shavertown, is attending a seminar on standardizing district justice office procedures at Wilson College, Chambersburg, this week.

She is the only magisterial secretary and one of just three in-

dividuals connected with the justice system in Luzerne County to be chosen for the seminar.

Also attending are District Magistrate Carmen Maffei of West Pittston and Luzerne County Deputy Court Administrator Wilbert Thomas.

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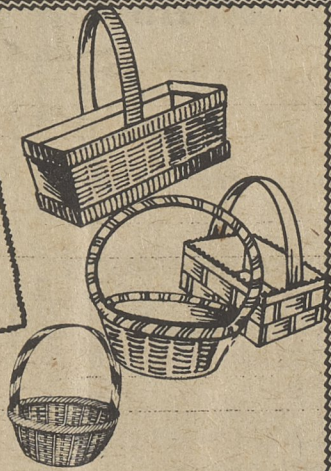
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