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LONDON — CANADA

Flip's Show Bucks Trend
Of Lower Ad Time Prices

by Jerry Buck

New York — In this time of economic recession for the U.S. television industry, 60 seconds of network time that normally commands \$55,000 can be had for \$40,000.

It is not unknown for an advertising agency to call up a network around 5 o'clock on a Friday afternoon and negotiate an even lower price for a weekend show.

But one show above all others is bucking the trend against knock-down prices with a full head of steam — Flip Wilson.

The cost of time on the Flip Wilson Show has nearly doubled since NBC first announced it a year ago.

His comedy show is the most successful of the fall shows and the first since the introduction of Laugh-In in January, 1968, to zoom to the top 10 and stay there. Most often, Flip has been in the top five and twice he was No. 1.

His impish humor and such alter egos as Geraldine and the Rev. Leroy of the Church of What's Happening Now have made him a favorite with young adults, the most sought-after of audiences by sponsors.

It wasn't always so for the young comedian. It took him nearly 15 years to become an overnight sensation.

"It's terribly exciting to see a young performer work his way up," said Mort Werner, programming vice-president at NBC.

"We've blown about a million bucks on this. A special he did for us was about the worst I've ever seen and so far only a few people have seen it. It's in my closet."

A second special made the grade and was a hit when it was shown in September, 1969.

Last winter, after announcing his new show, NBC asked for \$46,000 a minute. In September, when the show opened, the price went up to \$55,000 a minute.

By October the price had climbed to \$60,000. The following month it went to \$65,000 a minute.

When the 30-second commercial was adopted by the networks that became the basic unit for the show and the

price went to \$40,000 for a half-minute. And that was at the time of the loss of the cigarette money.

In addition, the lead-in audience from Flip's show pulled up the price of Ironside, which follows on Thursday nights.

Ironside always had been a success, but its minute price went from \$52,000 a year ago to \$57,000 in October and to \$60,000 in November.

The 30-second price for Ironside goes for \$34,000.

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