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THE CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR BLACK
BROADCASTING

MIAMI, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 26, 1972

MINORITY BROADCASTING:
THE LINK BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT

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First of all, I would like to say how happy I am to be here, and to tell you what a fine job I think you are doing. The harmony you are working for is not a hit or miss proposition. It takes time and untiring dedication by everyone concerned.

Effective communication is not easy. Today, even as we gather here, the President of the United States is meeting half-way around the world with the leaders of China -- a nation of nearly 800 million people -- a nation with which we have had no effective communications for nearly twenty years.

This trip to China was not merely a result of a sidewalk decision to go to China, but, the untiring efforts of the Administration to bring about some viable form of communication in an orderly manner.

Let us look for a moment at some of those efforts. Six weeks after the President came into office Dr. Henry Kissinger was instructed to explore avenues which would effect communication with the Peoples Republic of China.



President Nixon further enlisted the aid of President Charles de Gaulle as well as the President of Romania.

During 1969 and 1970 the President undertook some rather small steps -- such as revision of the U. S. trade embargo and modification of travel restrictions for Americans.

In April of 1971, what has become known as the "ping pong brigade" was invited to China.

And finally came the announcement on July 15, 1971 that Henry Kissinger had been to Peking and the President himself would go to China sometime in the near future.

The future has arrived -- as Chou En-lai said in his toast to the President "Now, through the common efforts of China and the United States, the gates to friendly contact have finally been opened."

It will remain to be seen, the tangible evidence of this historic "Journey for Peace." But, we have been witness to the fact that with



dedication and hard work -- effective communication can be established. It must be remembered that without effective communication nothing tangible can ever result.

You, are all communicators -- yet, have you asked yourself recently whether you are effective communicators?

Webster's defines communications as "an act or instance of transmitting."

You, as broadcasters, occupy a position of responsibility in the community and must, according to law, conscientiously endeavor to be acquainted with its needs and characteristics in order to insure the welfare of all its citizens.

According to the National Association of Broadcasters, the "radio broadcast is supposed to be responsible to the people; but such is not always the case, especially where Black Americans are concerned."



KDKA in Pittsburgh started formal broadcasting November 20, 1920. During that time we have witnessed a tremendous growth in this industry. Today there are over 7,000 radio stations communicating news and ideas to their listeners. Of those 7,000 stations only about 500 list themselves as having any programming that deals with the Black community. Only 16 are owned by Black people.

16.....16 radio stations to communicate with a population of 22 million. What is the status of Black radio? Most Black oriented stations carry jazz, rock, blues and gospel music. Most of them are devoid of news and community affairs programs. Many of these stations shy away from controversy for fear of offending their white sponsors. When controversy appears it is often edited out.

"Soul" radio has, in the view of many people, become a promotional medium for Black recordings and wares of merchants. Talk shows, topics and persons discussing them often seem to be avoiding



the issues that are pressing in a particular community. Moderators and their guests often appear overly anxious to stress the "positive and establishment condoned" aspects of a situation. Black participants who disagree are often edited out.

"Soul" radio is often thought of as a business venture and not a community service. Programs oriented toward the Black community are almost completely at the mercy of white economic control and are manipulated in ways which are consistent with white interests.

"Do we need twenty-four hours of James Brown" asked William Wright, Director of Unity House in Washington, D. C. I say we don't. If we are talking about freedom and self-determination, we need to hear our Black heroes performing in other arts. We also need to talk about drug addiction, about slum landlords, about jobs, about education, about politics if you will.



We are a minority -- we are 22 million within a total population of 200 million. Some would have us believe that because we comprise only 11 percent of all the peoples in the United States, that does not make us important enough. And some of the most ardent perpetrators of this myth are, unfortunately, Black people.

Three years ago there were those who said we would never communicate with China. There is no longer a myth -- we a nation of 200 million people are communicating with a nation of 800 million.

Communication is possible -- those of you in the Black Broadcasting industry have before you a great challenge -- a challenge to dispel the myths which are most certainly surrounding the Black community as it relates to broadcasting.

Let me sight a few examples where I feel the industry has been remiss in its responsibilities to the community.



In 1969, \$75 million was budgeted for civil rights enforcement activity compared to 1973's recommendations for \$602.1 million -- an eight-fold increase over a five-year period. Also in 1973 the total Federal civil rights budget will almost triple the 1969 expenditures -- \$0.9 billion to \$2.6 billion. How many of you were allowed to relay this on to your listeners?

On a nationwide scale, the number of black students in all black schools has decreased from 40% in 1968 to an estimated 12% in 1971; specifically in the South, this number has dropped from 68% in 1968 to an estimated 9% in 1971.

In 1973, more than \$200 million will be expended on aid to predominantly black colleges -- more than double the 1969 expenditures. How many of you relayed this information to your listeners?

The Justice Department has substantially increased its staff of Attorneys, to enforce Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act from



93 in Fiscal Year 1969 to 158 in Fiscal Year 1972; in 1973 funds will be increased by 35%. The number of compliance reviews performed under this program are expected to increase 52,000 in 1973 compared to 12,300 in 1969.

The 1973 budget provides \$69 million for legal services compared to \$36 million in 1968. How many of you received this information -- so that you might have had the opportunity to disseminate it to your listeners?

Minority business assistance increased from \$200 million in 1969 to \$360.3 million in 1971. In 1973 outlays will amount to \$505.8 million.

Federal purchases from minority firms have gone from \$13.0 million in Fiscal Year 1969 to \$142.0 million in Fiscal Year 1971. This includes contracts awarded directly to minority firms under SBA's



8(a) program, which has grown from \$8.8 million in Fiscal Year 1969 to \$66.1 million in Fiscal Year 1971. In Fiscal 1972, this figure should increase to \$100.0 million. How many of you who work for white-owned, black-oriented stations relayed this information to your listeners?

New construction and rehabilitation of existing housing for low and moderate income families under public housing and other Federally subsidized programs will increase from 156,000 starts in 1969 to more than 566,000 starts in 1973.

I am by no means implying that these figures approach representing all that should be done, but I do insist that to be worthy of the name -- to fulfill its obligation to inform -- the electronic media has an obligation -- a responsibility to inform the citizenry of what government is doing -- this, of course, would include the negatives.



There is not only a responsibility on the part of the broadcast media -- the Black community has a responsibility as well.

The tremendous concentration of Blacks in the urban areas dramatically signal the necessity for closer scrutiny over the broadcast media's responsibility for servicing the program needs of the Black community. FCC license contests in the major cities with substantial Black populations provide new pressure for more community service in radio broadcasts. Municipalities with large Black populations have challenged or are preparing to challenge licenses of radio and television stations when they come up for renewal.

Efforts are being made to alter the ownership, employment and programming of radio and television. The challengers charge that the broadcast industry is one of the most lily-white institutions in the land from the standpoint of control as well as the content of



materials it peddles to the public. This was confirmed by the 1968 report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders which states: "The communications media, ironically, have failed to communicate..." They have not shown understanding or appreciation of -- and they have not communicated -- a sense of Negro culture, thought, or history." Black-oriented radio stations are accused of a type of programming that is strictly commercial, non-controversial, frequently exploitative of the Black community.

Although Black Americans have the opportunity to fully observe the white world, communication flows in only one direction. Blacks never see themselves as they perceive themselves, nor does communication flow from Blacks to Blacks. The consequences of this forced imposition of white culture manifest themselves in the Black American's own self-conception.



We all must recognize and accept the fact that the Black man can speak for himself. For as long as we continue to allow someone else to speak for us the door to effective communications will remain shut.

We can achieve more Black ownership of radio stations; we do not need to edit out constructive debate; we can talk about drugs, education, slum landlords, community involvement, and the total welfare of our brothers and sisters.

The Government provides us with new vehicles everyday in which we can bring about effective communications.

The "in-box" in my office alone overflows each day with government releases which are disseminated by the government agencies and departments. This information concerns Black America.

How many of you receive and read these releases?



There are "spotmasters" located in all agencies. You can talk with government officials and cabinet officials. In short, you have the opportunity for a direct interview with government.

My specific job as Assistant Director of Communications is to make sure that government and the media are working as partners. My job is to help you, the paper media, and the Black community form a partnership with government.

I am truly amazed as I travel around the country how little is known about the accomplishments of this Administration. The information is flowing out -- but interestingly enough very little is flowing into the community.

This then is our challenge -- to see that information is disseminated to the people.



I want no one here to misunderstand what I have been saying -- I have talked about many of the positive aspects of the Nixon Administration -- because the facts speak for themselves. I truly believe that this Administration is moving with great ~~stride~~^{STRIDE} in aiding and resolving the problems of the Black community. However, by the same token I strongly encourage constructive criticism and debate on all issues.

You as the viable link between the government and the people can expect to do no less.

When something positive is accomplished let us talk about it. When we see injustice -- let us talk about that.

We are fast approaching an election year. It will not be an easy year. During an election year -- the rhetoric will flow just as surely as the water from the Mississippi.

We, with the responsibility to all Black Americans, must rise above this simple -- but known fact.



We must question every accomplishment just as we must examine every charge.

This nation was founded on a two-party system. It has faults -- but no one has come up with a better system -- although George Wallace is surely trying!

The Black vote is going to be more important in this year's Presidential election than ever before. As we go to the polls, we must decide whether we are going to go simply because we have the right to go -- or are we going to go, not only because we have the right -- but because we are informed, intelligent citizens?

If members of the Black community go to the polls to vote for a Republican -- then let him go because he knows that this Administration has moved forward in a positive fashion.



If members of the Black community go to the polls to vote for a Democrat -- then let him go not as a man who has been conditioned to the fact that for years the Black vote goes to the Democrat -- but as an informed citizen who has carefully weighed both sides.

Give our people a chance to look at all the facts -- to question -- to debate -- to applaud or criticize.

The challenge is yours -- take it. Fight for financial control concerning communications in the Black community; fight the fear of cancellation; fight censorship; and above all fight the "distortion of information about what's happening in the Black community."

The broadcast industry and the Black community must demand our rights. Washington will respond. This Administration will respond.

And let me state here and now -- that when I say that we will respond -- we will do just that. I take this opportunity to state



unequivocally that within the next few months this Administration, this President, will appoint the first Black ever, to the Federal Communications Commission. That is not a prediction -- that is a promise.

When the President stepped from "The Spirit of '76" and took the hand of Chou En-lai -- the destiny of two great peoples changed.

As you in the broadcasting industry move towards more effective communications bringing a lasting partnership between the government and the people -- then most assuredly you can say you had a large part in the control of our destinies as a people.

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