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ON EXERCISING YOUR  
INFLUENCE

(An address by the Honorable Stanley Scott, Special Assistant to the President of the United States before the Radio and Television News Directors Association, Montreal, Canada, September 14, 1974)

I come to you today, not to speak "to" you as Special Assistant to the President, but rather, to speak "with" you as a former newspaperman and broadcaster who wishes to share his views as a citizen and former colleague on the present and future role of the news media and the communications industry in righting some of the wrongs of our society.

The name of the game today in every city, county, and state of the United States, and in every province here in Canada, and in every nation of the world, both developed and developing, is COMMUNICATIONS. Whether it be by radio or television, commercial or non-commercial, or whether it be by newspapers, magazines or closed circuit T.V. or by telegraph hereon earth; or by telecommunications satellite far out in space, the name of the game is the same: COMMUNICATIONS.

Whether we are talking about black, brown or white people, blue or white collar worker, males or females, rich or poor, the name of the game is the same: COMMUNICATIONS.



And, in the area of Communications, you, as news directors, perhaps more than any other group of persons in your profession, have more power, influence, and control over what goes into our living rooms and how it is reported than any other group. In essence, YOU DETERMINE WHAT SHALL BE LEFT FOR THE "CUTTING ROOM FLOOR" AND WHAT SHALL BE SENT INTO OUR HOMES, INDEED, YOUR HOMES.

Yours is a great trust, with the public as the true beneficiary of ~~your~~ <sup>that</sup> trust. The communications industry, and most especially, the news directors in that industry, have a tremendous responsibility to the communicate the events, ideas and news of the world to millions of people. This requires the utmost in sensitivity to the needs, characteristics and indeed, the problems of the people. How news is reported can have a great impact of formulating public opinion for and against issues, by allowing the public to hear and see facts which they otherwise might not be able to have and understand. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this was in the reporting of the impeachment hearings several weeks ago and the Watergate hearings last summer.

Fifty-two years ago, in 1922, David Sarnoff, one of the pioneers in the broadcast industry said:

<sup>the home,</sup>  
 "When you transmit the human voice into ~~a~~ when you can make the home attuned to what is going on in the rest of the world, you have tapped a new source of influence, a new source of pleasure and entertainment and culture that the world thus far has not been able to provide with any other known means of communication". (Note to Mr. Scott: this quote is from page 36 of "Test Pattern for Living" by former FCC Commissioner Nick Johnson)

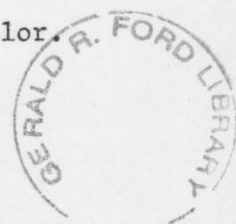


Today I am going to talk about that "influence" and how it should be used today. What are you doing with ~~the~~ <sup>YOUR</sup> "influence"? What are you doing with your "public trust" to assure that the countless thousands of persons, women and minorities, who have yet to have the opportunities for success to be where you are today, have that "golden shining opportunity" to become news directors, general managers, assignment editors, vice presidents and presidents in this industry? What are you going to do to make sure that the hopes, aspirations and problems affecting such groups are given fair and accurate coverage?

First, there can be no fair and meaningful coverage of news of blacks, ~~or~~ <sup>or women</sup> other minority groups when the persons doing the reporting, doing the programming, and doing the assigning are basically all white and all male. Take a look about you, and you will find that this industry, and particularly the news operations, are virtually lacking in color. As John Kennedy said years ago:

"Every man should at some time in his life,  
Take a look about him and try to right the wrongs  
that he sees;  
One man can make a difference and every man should try"

If you take that look, you will see that there are indeed many wrongs that need to be ~~addressed~~ <sup>corrected</sup>. I am speaking of the past history of racial and sex discrimination practiced against minorities and women in virtually every industry--including broadcasting generally, and newsgathering and reporting specifically. How can we as reporters report on events affecting blacks <sup>or women</sup> if we have no blacks <sup>or women</sup> in decision making posts with certain sensitivities to key issues and viewpoints. We can not.





This problem ~~is~~ is of concern to me today, just as it was to the Kerner Commission in 1967. As the Commission reported:

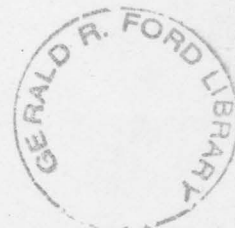
"The Commission's major concern with the news media is not in riot reporting as such, but in the failure to report adequately on race relations and ghetto problems and to bring more Negroes into journalism...In defining, explaining, and reporting this broader, more complex and ultimately far more fundamental subject, the communications media, ironically, have failed to communicate....They have not shown understanding or appreciation of--and thus have not communicated--a sense of Negro culture, thought, or history."

Most importantly, the Report went on to state that:

"The journalistic profession has been shockingly backward in seeking out, hiring, training, and promoting Negroes. Fewer than 5 percent of the people employed by the news business in editorial jobs in the United States today are Negroes, and most of them work for Negro-owned organizations".

You might say that this was stated in 1967, over 7 years ago, ~~and is therefore out of date and does not reflect the situation of 1974.~~ and is therefore out of date and does not reflect the situation in 1974. Have

Have things really changed? I do not think so. I am supported in this view by the Congressional Black Caucus, which just two years ago found the situation of blacks in the media to be less than praiseworthy. The hearings held by the Caucus in 1972 marked the first major national effort by black people to interpret their own relationship with the powerful field of communications. Congressman William Clay (D-Mo.), who chaired the hearings, stated that they found that the "black community, the black media worker and the black movement grossly



excluded, distorted, mishandled and exploited by the white-controlled news media." (Note: Quotes from 'Ebony handbook')

The Caucus hearings further concluded that the mass media "failed to report accurately and honestly the day-by-day news emanating from black communities and has consistently failed to point out the hypocrisies of its own existence in dealing with blacks and minorities by failing to investigate its own bad practices with the same zeal with which it has run into investigations of every other human endeavor"/

One of the recommendations of these hearings was the immediate promotion of more blacks into decision-making positions ~~to help~~ to help offset the "distortion, mutilation, and censorship of the true black experience."

The Kerner Commission and the Black Caucus were not alone in pointing to the problems of blacks in the news media. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in a research study only three years ago found the following :

"that black exclusion was great in that only 4.2 percent of all newspaper employees were black. In the professional class of reporters, only 1.5 percent were black; of the approximately 7800 news-editorial jobs available at 196 daily papers, blacks held only 157 or 2 percent and of 1,219 news-executives positions available, blacks held only five. (Ebony Handbook)

Now, we ask, what significance do we attach to these figures and these charges? Should they be ignored because they may be two, three or even seven years outdated? Certainly not. These figures and the findings ~~listed~~ above ~~show~~ clearly indicate that news reporting can not be really meaningful to all of the people if any one group of people have been excluded and do not participate



at key levels , such as news directors, in formulating policies ~~and~~ making decisions as to what shall be reported, ~~how~~ it ~~should~~ <sup>shall</sup> be reported, and when it ~~should~~ <sup>shall</sup> be reported.

What is the situation today, in 1974? It is not good. Look about you. How many blacks, ~~chicanos~~ or women do you see? Watch the next Presidential news conference, how many black or chicano reporters will you see? NOT MANY. Go to a Congressional or city hall press conference--how many blacks or ~~chicanos~~ will you see? NOT MANY. ~~Look~~ Look at the Washington Press Corps--the most prestigious <sup>press corps</sup> in the world. How many blacks or chicanos do you see? NOT MANY. At your next regional meeting of broadcasters, how many blacks and chicanos will you see? NOT MANY. Enough said about the problem--what about solutions.

During the past few years, we have seen the federal government "crack down" on discrimination in ~~the~~ <sup>patterns and</sup> employment practices ~~and~~ <sup>gender</sup> ~~pattern~~ <sup>ment</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>by</sup> employers through the Department of Justice, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Department of Labor. The Federal Communications Commission within the past two years, under the very able leadership of former Chairman Dean Burch, the present Chairman Richard Wiley, and Commissioner Benjamin Hooks, has looked into the employment practices of over 400 stations regarding their practices in the employment of blacks, ~~and~~ women and minorities. Yes, the time has come to eradicate any and all forms of discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. Only when employment is wide open and on merit can the actual reporting and programming of news begin to represent the true needs of all of our communities and



all of our people.

*How are* What are you going to *Exert your "influence"* to correct these deficiencies *changed?*

First, in terms of employment, YOU MUST SEEK OUT, HIRE, TRAIN AND PROMOTE QUALIFIED MINORITIES AND WOMEN, into policy making positions in your operations. ~~██████████~~ How? It can be done through colleges, universities, training schools and indeed, from your competitors. *It is called* Affirmative Action, ~~will find them.~~ ~~Also, do not overlook those blacks and other~~ ~~minorities within your own operations.~~ The National Association of Broadcasters in Washington has established an "Employment Clearinghouse", the sole purpose of which is to refer qualified minorities to broadcasters around the nation through utilizing various "Broadcast Skills Banks" in regional locations most notably in San Francisco, Baltimore and Miami.

Second, maintain systematic and continuous contact with minority and female organizations which can refer minorities and women to you. *John* Work with community groups, ~~in a constructive manner.~~

I know that when the news industry attacks a job, it gets done. When you attack the problem of too few blacks in the industry, you will solve it. I was so pleased to learn a few weeks ago that broadcasters in Louisville, Kentucky have developed a "college intern training program" with the Louisville Urban League so that young blacks can work in radio and television and receive training. This can be done by all of you.

Your influence must be on the side of providing more and better job opportunities for minorities and women in the news media because only then can we have meaningful reporting of events affecting those groups and the entire community at large...





← You and I both know that <sup>the</sup> "public interest" is colorless and sexless <sup>it is</sup> -- a composite of all America and of <sup>as</sup> those "cultures" and sources of "entertainment and pleasure" of which David Sarnoff spoke in 1922.  
<sup>In reporting news regarding blacks,</sup>  
 You, as news directors, must not and can not view the black community as some "MONOLITH". You must view it as it is -- and therefore report it as it is -- <sup>as</sup> just as heterogenous and complex as any other community. You must not talk to one black today and think that he will give you all of the views and concerns of the black community. One black, just like one white, or one woman does not necessarily speak for an entire community.

You, as news directors, must realize that reporting on black news as it relates to the ENTIRE community must be your concern. This means that you must understand that "RATINGS" based on predominantly all-white samples of the viewing and listening audience can not give you a necessarily true and accurate picture of how a program is received by blacks.

You, as news directors, must realize that reporting black news does not mean you provide a half-hour show once a week and call it "black news", give it almost no budget, a small staff, and then put it on the air late in the evening on a weekend, or early in the morning during the week when few will watch or listen.

You, as news directors, must realize that black programming or any other kind of minority directed program is done a disservice when it is relegated to Sunday afternoons opposite the NFL GAME OF THE WEEK.



You, as newsdirectors, must realize that you do a great disservice to the black, or Chicano reporter when you decide that he or she can only cover stories of crime, or community affairs and not the "Mayor's Office," the "Statehouse," or the "White House".

You <sup>as newsdirectors,</sup> must realize <sup>that</sup> ~~that as news directors,~~ you are not utilizing your influence properly when you determine that it is more important for the evening news audience to see two black convicts holding hostages than to also see and hear Senator Edward Brooke, the only Black U.S. Senator, address the Congressional Black Caucus.

You ~~(must realize) that~~ as news directors, you are not properly using your influence when you decide that because you have "a black" in a key position in your operation, that you therefore can not have another.

We do not need quota ~~systems~~. We need ~~and minorities want -- merit system~~ <sup>and minorities want -- merit system</sup> ~~and already hold key positions~~ <sup>you do not ask how many whites already hold key jobs</sup> before you hire or promote another white -- then do not do it when you consider women or minorities.

If you believe that having "one black is enough", <sup>that</sup> "two is getting crowded" and <sup>that</sup> "three is too many", then you had better take a long look, not only at your employment practices, but also at the U.S. Constitution. For that same Constitution which guarantees you ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> newsmen -- the freedom of the press, also guarantees women and minorities ~~the~~ freedom from discrimination in employment. There are no "quotas" in the Constitution. and there can be none in your employment policies. Take people <sup>on</sup> ~~for~~ their merits and you will find they will give you the best.



I am confident in your ability and your determination to rectify the problems I have discussed. I am confident, <sup>because,</sup> ~~since~~ as a former newspaperman and broadcaster, I know the understanding, compassion and humility which you in this business can exhibit. I know of your tireless efforts at meeting ~~those~~ deadlines and in finishing ~~those~~ projects. As representatives of the communications industry, you have a unique opportunity and responsibility to make sure that you tell the story of all of the people of America with fairness and thoroughness. This responsibility can only be met by utilizing the expertise, and contribution of all segments of our great population with regard to their race, religion, color, national origin, or sex.

~~After all,~~ <sup>I</sup> it is a very simple request. <sup>make</sup> I am ~~making~~ of you today, but it is not a new request. It was made over 200 years ago by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and the <sup>Founding</sup> fathers of our great nation in a document <sup>called</sup> ~~claled~~ the United States Constitution.

