

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

In spite of, or perhaps more accurately, because of the economic basis of mass media in America today, people are becoming compartmentalized in their information inputs, selecting out those sources which reinforce their beliefs. Vice President Agnew has effectively articulated the suspicions of many about network television and mass print publications; to many young these same media represent the quintessence of a value system they strongly reject.

The possibility of objectivity, for years an unquestioned ideal of journalism, is seriously questioned by both sides. There are decreasing sources of information in which diverse peoples have faith. Public broadcasting should emerge as one of those sources.

In the absence of any agreed upon objective truth, there are growing myths, rumors and fears. There is an increase in non verbal <sup>symbolic</sup> (non rational) forms of communication which, though personal statements, do not contribute to shared understandings. The increased display of the flag is almost a substitute for thoughtful discussion about the ideals of America and how we as a people can make a more perfect union. In the same way students marching down the main street, groomed and dressed in a manner which is blatantly offensive to many, chanting, "One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war", are issuing an open invitation to meaningful dialogue. Both sides are saying in effect, "If you don't agree with me, you are a (commie slob) (fascist pig); it is easy to hate you because your (degenerate, hedonistic) (immoral, materialistic, hypocritical) life style. You can see where I stand; I don't want to even talk to you." Discourse would modify, or in the eyes of some, weaken or compromise a position which has all the righteousness of a fundamentalist religion. In the insect world, some have protective coloring to escape detection, but others are brightly colored with warning coloration which the predator associates with a bad taste; the predator

## II

would not like this insect; in like manner excessive displays of the flag and repugnant personal appearance are warnings. (on another level, this colorful display is a form of communication because an individual feels his views don't have access to the mass media.)

Between these poles are many persons searching for new life styles which are more human, personal, natural. These new groupings may well prove a valued antidote to the technological strain upon the human spirit. There is a danger that as these new value groups drop out of society, their new knowledge will go unshared. The reader of Business Week and American Legionnaire will not read The Seed or The Village Voice, or hear the voices of groups who have no access to print media. There is a tendency for some young people to reject conventional society to the degree that the Amish have; but the survival of a people depends upon a certain degree of sharing of accumulated divergencies. All groups need more direct access to media for this fruitful diffusion of ideas.

We are describing here the need for a programming concept, not a thirteen week series. Translated into an on the air product, the concept would have the following elements as the matrix:

1. Direct access to the medium by distinct different value oriented groups in a context which allows for an exchange of ideas and points of view.
2. An opportunity for people to learn more about their institutions and make the institutions more responsive to the people.
3. Sharing of knowledge of the University in a context which will be meaningful to the people
4. A programming format which will be engaging, flexible, and unique enough to hold the interest and maintain the credibility of a significant number of diverse peoples.

### III

During the lengthy campus disorders, WBFO learned about radio, listeners and credibility. In spite of extremely high emotions, as long as listeners heard some guests on the air expressing views close to their own at some time, WBFO had high credibility, and they would also listen to opposing views (usually presented in same program). This was in marked contrast to the traditional journalistic filtering of ideas which many feel results in distortion. As responsible broadcasters, we didn't just provide access to the airwaves for broad range of viewpoints, but also clarified issues by selecting articulate spokesmen, providing a quiet setting, and through good discussion leader techniques of defining problems, questioning, restatement, and summation. Fundamental to our approach was an attitude psychologist, Carl Rogers describes as "unconditional positive regard" toward the guests. We assumed they had a respectable point of view; our attitude was more like that of a counselor trying to have an individual share his perception of reality than an interrogating journalist.

We also discovered that radio is best when it is true to the nature of the medium, when it has immediacy, variety, spontaneity, respects people and ideas. After the disorders, for four hours each day, instead of the regular programs, we simply said THIS IS RADIO... and had interviews (recorded and live) press conferences, talks, news reports and a mixture of musical styles. With this experience behind us, we propose to expand and improve this concept with a grant of \$25,000 from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

#### PROPOSAL

We propose to develop an organic programming concept growing out of the need for cross-cultural communication and capitalizing on the unique characteristics of public radio. This program, called THIS IS RADIO... will initially occupy four hours, from 2 - 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with excerpts reprocessed for a half hour newscast at 6:00 and longer portions rebroadcast at an evening hour.

The content would consist of reports of events as they happen; interviews with people in the news; a bringing together of persons and their institutions and of differing political life style patterns with discussion of points of tension, and music.

THIS IS RADIO staff will meet twice a day for planning and evaluation. The first meeting will form the day's schedule of committed segments and times, always allowing for the flexibility to change as events change. The afternoon bloc is chosen because that is the time period when most news develops and allows for the collection of other segments in the morning. The second meeting will plan the events of the following day(s). With priorities established and techniques of coverage (live in studio, recorded on location, related follow-up material etc.) and evaluation of the days program elements. There will be an awareness of the total rhythm of this time bloc and of the interrelationship of the elements. As Frank Lloyd Wright said of the organic house, every part should be a "thing of beauty in itself as related to the whole." Emphasis would be placed upon immediacy, comprehensiveness, relevance, affective, as well as cognitive aspects of daily events.

In addition to the usual techniques of reporters assigned to cover public events, we propose to establish at least one permanent and one portable listening post, as well as our satellite facility in the Black community as a vehicle for allowing for greater citizen access to the medium.

One of these Listening Posts will be located in the Broadway Market, an enclosed series of independently operated fruit, meat and bakery stands in the heart of the Polish-American community. We propose to have an area consisting of a colorful painted sound shell with a round table, chairs, and some park benches. There would be a box with instructions on how to request an opportunity to meet there with some city, government, or university person. In addition to this input, someone living in that community will be employed part time to learn of community

concerns, line up appropriate guests, and conduct the discussion. Local musical groups could also perform in this area. When there was a controversial speech or discussion on the air, there could be a group listening in this location, and when it was concluded, go there for a reaction. The informal natural setting will also be conducive to conversation when not on the air.

The programming from this location would not be purely ethnic, and for a limited audience, but would be an exchange of differing points of view at pivotal areas of difference. The people from this community, for example, talking with an urban renewal commissioner, a director of a controversial university program, a representative of an alien youth culture. The interest for a broader audience would be this interchange. In the affective area, someone trained in counselling might join the group to help both parties (and the listeners) develop greater sensitivity to interpersonal relationships.

The portable listening post would be used to go to other locations in the city where there were specific issues of a general interest. WBFO would work with the Citizens Advisory Committee to help identify some of the locations for this portable unit.

Music would be an important part of the total programming period. One might think of it as mortar holding the blocs (blocks) in place; mortar must be a careful mixture of cement, sand and water. This music must be a careful blend of different musical types (classical, folk, rock, jazz) to hold the interest of a diverse audience. Attention would be paid to the total tempo of the different segments and commentary around the music would lead people to listen to a different musical form. *Thurs*

Universities are on a front of turbulent air masses; they can not avoid this position, and must be actively engaged in sharing its resources with the community and listening closely to what that outside community is saying. Other institutions must also show greater responsiveness to the people and that includes the institution of public radio.