

Urban program adopted

The Steering Committee of The National Urban Coalition has adopted a three-pronged action program aimed at the revitalization of American cities which are faced with serious problems of abandonment.

The broad policy outline adopted by the Steering Committee will be implemented in specific programs and projects now under development at the Coalition.

Coalition Chairman Sol M. Linowitz said the three directions in which the Coalition will work are:

- Local action: concrete revitalization programs launched through selected problem areas in target cities.
- National policies: developing an effective national commitment to the revitalization of central cities.
- Information and education: support for the revitalization effort through an information and education program directed at the public, at national and local leadership, and at private sector interests.

"We also hope to capitalize on election-year opportunities by encouraging political candidates and platform committees to take strong positions aimed at urban revitalization," Coalition President M. Carl Holman said.



Arthur A. Fletcher, Executive Director of the United Negro College Fund, Inc., and Ted Etherington, President of the National Center for Voluntary Action, at a recent meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Urban Coalition in Washington, D.C. The group discussed the Coalition's new urban revitalization thrust.

Cable TV- A chance for Blacks in Media

by Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

The President's recent announcement of the nomination of Benjamin Hooks, a black attorney from Memphis to the Federal Communications Commission is a heartening and important step.

The FCC is the powerful regulatory commission that oversees the activities of all radio and television stations in the country, as well as exercising regulatory responsibilities over other communications giants such as the telephone industry. A black presence among the seven FCC commissioners is long overdue. It is almost four years since Whitney Young first called for a black commissioner, and the appointment could not come at a more crucial time.

This is because the whole system of electronic communications in America is undergoing rapid change and is the subject of FCC actions that could revolutionize the industry. Decisions will be made in the coming year or so that have the potential of redressing black powerlessness in this important field.

Perhaps the most crucial of these decisions will be that of the future of cable television. Cable TV is a dynamic, fast-growing industry. It's still in its infancy, but experts predict that by the end of the decade it will grow to a \$4 billion industry that will create about 2 million new jobs.

In a very real sense Cable TV represents a last frontier for black people, our last chance to gain a foothold in the communications industry, as owners, job-holders, and participants.

There is no question that black people have been effectively excluded from present-day radio and television. Nearly all stations are owned by white people. Of the more than 350 radio stations whose programming is primarily directed to black people, a mere nine are owned and controlled by blacks.

Entry into broadcasting, an established industry, requires exhaustive license challenges or millions of dollars of capital. But Cable TV is a new industry whose ownership and capital requirements are still fluid. So far it has been restricted to rural areas and smaller towns, but now the FCC is encouraging its growth in larger cities, and that is where the bulk of the black population is.

Right now, the situation is chaotic. Cable TV franchises are licensed by local governments and this has resulted in some local scandals, control of the fledgling industry by



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some large corporations, and continued black exclusion.

But if the FCC acts to assert its authority over the industry's development, and if it moves to insure a fair chance for blacks in the industry, the picture could change radically.

Black entrepreneurs and community groups should get a fair share of the Cable TV franchises that will be up for grabs. There is no reason why this important new form of communications should be subject to the same concentration of power as other industries.

This is especially so since Cable TV is uniquely a community service industry. A Cable TV outlet covers only a city or a part of a city, so it should be in the hands of the community it serves.

Guidelines that insure ownership access to black businessmen, community organizations, and colleges and a public and private program of financial assistance could be a tremendous boost for black economic development in the '70s.

And since Cable TV can offer far more television channels than conventional, over-the-air, broadcasting, the black community should be assured of access to the home screens. New FCC rules provide for a community channel.

It will be up to the black community to make full use of it, and also to monitor time allocations on such a channel to insure that it operates on a non-discriminatory basis.

If you couple all this with the black efforts to gain access to the communications media, as reflected by license challenges to stations that neglect their public service and fair employment obligations, and the continuing monitoring of local stations' programming, you begin to see the importance of a black voice on the FCC and the need for that agency's becoming responsive to minority needs.

The PORTLAND TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION reports one out of six cars on the highway today would fail to pass a safety inspection. How about yours? Would it flunk the test in an emergency?

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Reports on Brown cases

Eighteen years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregated educational facilities were unconstitutional. The ruling came in a consolidated case involving five school districts, and slowly it was applied to educational districts across the country.

It is obvious that Brown v. Board of Education has had a profound impact upon school systems throughout the nation, but it is reasonable to assume that its greatest effect should have been on the five school systems directly covered by the order. What has happened to education in Delaware, Topeka, Kan., Clarendon County, S.C., Prince Edward County, Va., and Washington D.C. since 1954?

To those who viewed desegregation suits as an educational panacea, the answers presented in the following section should be anything but comforting. Three of the systems are nearly all-black, and the other two have experienced racial tension. System by system, the box score is this:

TOPEKA, KANSAS: There are 49 schools in Topeka, five of which are majority black and some 15 of which are all or predominantly white. Blacks make up 13 per cent of the student population, and Mexican-Americans another five per cent. The atmosphere has changed since the Brown decision days—blacks are now more fearful and whites more assertive and confused.

WASHINGTON, D.C.: The student population in D.C. is approximately 95 per cent black. Standardized test scores indicate educational effectiveness may have declined, and the crime problem is severe. The D.C. school board, hamstrung by a lack of genuine power, has been beset by serious internal bickering, but there are signs that the leaders may be getting together.

CLARENDON COUNTY, S.C.: Whites in massive numbers have fled from Clarendon schools—especially since 1970 when federal courts applied the neighborhood school concept to the county. But

the burden of paying for private schools may force white students back, and a handful of indigenous white leaders are beginning to see desegregation as the only answer to the educational crisis.

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VA.: Perhaps the most celebrated example of defiance, Prince Edward County still has its version of dual schools—public schools for blacks (still white-controlled) and private schools for whites. The county's most recent public school superintendent seems to have improved educational quality, but it appears unlikely his efforts will be sufficient to lure the whites back in the near future.

DELAWARE: The desegregation issue remains alive in Delaware with busing a pivotal concern. In Wilmington, for example, the schools have moved from nearly three-fourths white in 1954 to almost four-fifths black in 1972. Racial tension has been high, and Delawarean newsmen Jim Miller writes that the "seeds of violence remain."

Black journalist raps white press

by Enoc Waters

Norman E. Isaacs of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism is quoted in the Post (4-21-72) as noting that minorities have not been encouraged to seek careers in journalism. He also sees "seven lean years" ahead before there can be a significant increase in the number of black newspapermen.

For fear that the uninformed might believe blacks have not sought careers in journalism, I would like to provide them with some significant background. As a group that has always wanted to put its case before the public—and it has had a worthy one since the arrival of the first slaves—blacks have always viewed the press as a tool vital to their fight for equality and justice in this country. One of the primary reasons blacks have been able to achieve some measure of progress and enlist some support from others has been and is the ability to articulate, sometimes subtly through song, from the pulpits of churches, but more importantly through the written word because it reaches a far greater audience and has permanence.

It is no accident that many effective black leaders, Douglass, Washington, Du Bois, Powell, employed the Negro press as one of their most effective instruments for protest, enlightenment, interpretation and guidance. One with a close identification with the black press is aware of a variety of tactics

employed to denigrate the black press either out of fear of it as a competitor or because of disagreement with its mission.

It may seem laughable to some that white newspapers would consider themselves in competition with black weeklies, but why else did many southern newspapers replate their financial pages to carry "Negro News"?

Or some northern metropolitan dailies employ Negro journalists to write a censored once-a-week column of "Negro News and (unopinionated) Views"?

Or white editors describe the black press as "inflammatory" when its mission was seeking those great American goals of equality and justice? Or when newsprint was rationed during World War II and publishers regularly lent each other supplies, whites invariably denied requests from Negro editors for the loan of newsprint?

I can recall when about 150 Negro newspapers were being published weekly, some with ABC circulations as high as 500,000. In spite of creditable circulations, their margin of profit was always lower than that of white publications with the same circulation. White businessmen shunned them either because they were offended by their militancy or because they underestimated the Negro market.

For years Negro sports writers were denied press privileges by major league teams and particularly for the World Series. I remember a

black sports writer who, denied press accommodations at the Kentucky Derby, covered it by donning a white coat and hawking mint juleps.

A white youth with whom I went to high school was hired with no experience by the city's leading daily as a cub reporter and I was refused a similar job several years later after I had earned a college degree and had some journalistic experience.

I know when a black girl was denied admittance to the state supported school of journalism in Missouri and the state, in an effort to circumvent a court ruling in her favor, established a "separate but equal" Jim Crow school of journalism at Lincoln University in Jefferson City.

Even the White House and Congress denied press privileges to reporters from the Negro press with the connivance and approval of white journalists.

I can recall during World War II the extreme difficulty Negro publishers had in getting the Defense Department to accredit reporters as war correspondents, having to overcome the charge that none qualified as bona fide journalists, then discovering that in the Pacific many of the whites were drunken discards put out to pasture.

With a few exceptions the white press has never been objective so far as Negro issues and events are concerned. In the South until the last 20 years, white newspapers obstructed investigations of lynchings and other illegal

assaults upon blacks. In the North it was a matter of benign neglect refusing coverage of Negro events. With rare exceptions, the only journalistic acknowledgement of Negro existence was in crime reports and occasionally in the obituary column. Unsolved crimes were regularly attributed to "an unknown burly Negro" especially if it involved an assault upon a white woman.

Assigned to cover a double lynching in Mississippi, I had to disguise myself to interview the blacks about the event because of the hostility of the sheriff who later refused to talk to me and referred me to a local white newspaperman for the "facts."

I know from personal experience that many white newspapers have refused to accept experience on a black newspaper as qualification for a job though the average good black reporter on a black newspaper has broader background because he is familiar with two worlds, the white one and the black one, and is more versatile because of the variety of assignments that he must cover out of economic necessity.

It is true, as Roger Wilkins has pointed out, that many white reporters have long since lost their objectivity because of their close identification over long periods of time covering the same beat.

One of the most revealing experiences I have had concerning the objectivity of the white press occurred in 1960 while I was editor of the Asso-

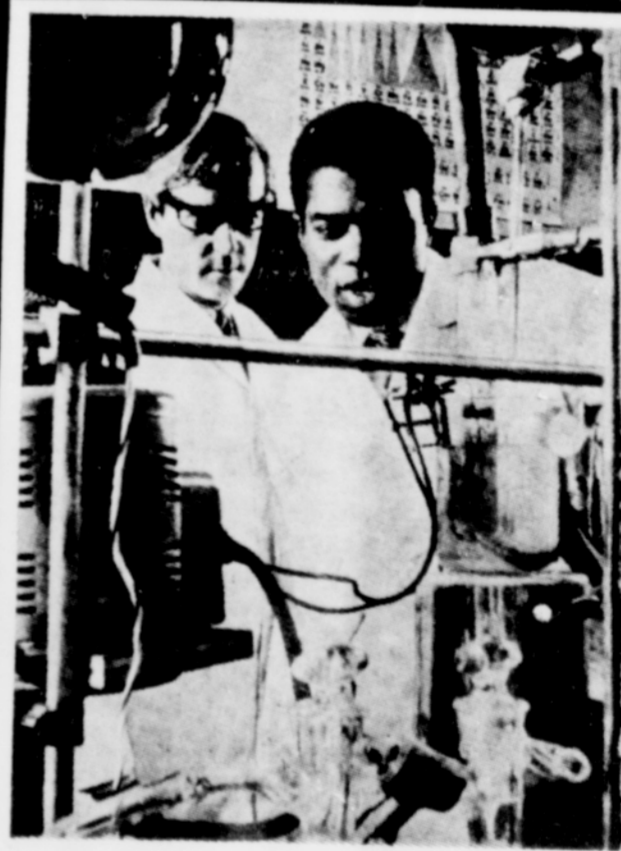
ciated Negro Press, founded by the late Claude A. Barnett. We sent samples of the service we had been regularly providing to the Negro press since 1919, to 500 white newspapers offering for free a trial service. Some of the papers were large metropolitan dailies, others were small weeklies.

Only about a half dozen eventually subscribed. About 25 to 30 evinced interest, but majority didn't bother to reply. What was so startling was not the rejections we received from many, but the insulting remarks that accompanied some of them. "We're not interested in nigger news." "Who cares?" "We don't regard this as newsworthy." "Has no news value." "Propaganda." "Biased."

One of the ironies is that many of the best black reporters in TV and print media today were trained by the black press which is now faltering for lack of advertising revenue.

If it is true there are only 300 non-white reporters among a workforce of 40,000, it's a self indictment, for the claim that a shortage exists is to some extent a convenient and not too original excuse.

The white press that has claimed clairvoyance so often on so many issues has been strongly myopic concerning its relations to minorities. In the early sixties when blacks were clamoring for participation in almost every human endeavor, the white press was rejecting practically all applications from black journalists.



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