



Art Alexander at the console producing Ebony Nights for KOAP radio.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

From spinning discs to cable TV

Grassroot News, N.W.—Art Alexander has filled the audio world with Ebony Nights on KOAP-FM. But during this time Alexander has interjected himself in the visual community of cable, which recently won him a spot on the Community Cable Corporation. Alexander explains, "It's the body established by the city to oversee the public access commitment. In Portland we'll start with five public access channels. One will be first-come-first-served, which means if you have programming ready you can go on the air. Another is set aside for regular programs and the other three are just spares. Once you pay the flat rate for these channels, you'll be able to tune in forever without paying again."

With the inclusion of CCC there's a possibility of a Black channel. "Cablesystems suggested that they would like a community non-profit organization to lease the channel. By doing this the community will be able to produce their own shows and sell the time for commercials. As it stands now there's really no time selling on the theme channel, but if the community leases it, they will be able to sell time and do whatever they want."

The cable industry is of course a business. What will prevent it from using the same analysis of profits and large audiences that motivates

the big three (ABC, NBC and CBS)? "The basic point of cable is narrow casting, which is different from broad and cable casting. They know that small audiences can be profitable. During the late '60s and early '70s, a lot of large magazines died. What came to birth after that was specialized magazines from 'Golf Digest' to 'Racketball Weekly.' Cable appeals to the same kinds of things. If you're an advertiser you won't have to pay \$100,000 a minute to get a small piece of the massive audience that TV goes after. So there's enough room in there so that won't be an immediate danger."

The goals that Alexander wants the CCC to strive for are centered on community involvement in communication. "I want to encourage people to participate in this new electronic age because this is the last opportunity for third world people to get their foot in the door and some control over things. Cable enables a Black person to broadcast directly to a Black audience. Also you can broadcast at a relatively low cost and control your program. On a national basis you'll be able to distribute your own program because a lot of major cities have their own Black channels. This is really our last chance to gain some control over a major medium because if we don't take

advantage of it we'll be in a sorer shape than we're in now."

One of the items proposed for the Black access channel is an audio side. "When there is no video on, the audio side could be used for Black music and news. The question of funding for personnel and equipment remains to be answered."

"I really wish Blacks who have a basic grasp of TV would begin to get involved. This process has been going on for quite a while. At the beginning there were 3 or 4 Blacks working in and with cable. Now it's down to one or two. I feel that there are enough people around who are familiar with the industry who ought to have gotten involved. People are going to have to get involved or it will always be the case of three years after the involvement was necessary that the Black community will wake up and say, 'How come we didn't know about this?' Because there's no immediate return, people haven't put in the effort to find out what has been going on."

A word of thanks ought to be extended to Art Alexander for hanging in and attending the many meetings and sitting on the committees where he picked up this knowledge. All he wants is for others to follow his footsteps and participate.

Cell Talk

By Asmar Abdul Seifullah
AKA Joe West

The 1981 Legislature emerged from its longest session with the conclusion: That another prison isn't necessarily the answer to the state's corrections problem and that corrections on a community level would better serve all concerned.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh urged the Legislature to submit a new prison bond issue to the voters, therefore mandating a decision from the Legislature that could not be avoided.

Gov. Atiyeh cited the lack of bed space and the likelihood that the problem would become more severe after a federal court ruling prohibited placing more than one prisoner in a cell. Lately the airways and news services have been erroneously reporting that the prison overcrowding class action suit filed against the state over double celling was recently lost in federal court. Basically what happened is that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals sent the case back to Judge Burns for further consideration. At best the state has won a temporary victory in what will prove to be a long war.

Community concern over the rising crime rate, prison overcrowding and the economic state of the state has brought into focus the need for a better designed prison system. What emerged from the final days of the session was a resolution calling for submission of a \$60 million bond issue to voters in May 1982. \$5.5 million of that money for construction of a segregation unit at the Oregon State Penitentiary and 150 forest camp beds. The remaining \$54.5

million would be allocated according to a plan that would be devised by the counties in conjunction with the local Community Corrections Advisory Boards. Another part of the money, however, would be used to construct a 250-bed regional facility, probably in the Portland area.

If this last portion of the bond issue comes to pass the Black community should pay close attention to its implementation. There hasn't ever been meaningful input from the Black community in the area of corrections and now it would appear that the better part of \$60 million will be doled out for a prison unit in the Portland area. With the crime problem that the Black community has, its only common sense and good insurance against the rising Black crime problem, that some of that money go into the Black community. We must take into consideration that when the statistics are used to justify such spending that Blacks and other minorities comprise significant numbers of those statistics. One would think that since Oregon leads the nation in incarcerating Blacks that the likely place to begin some of these reforms would be the Black community. But we know from past experience that the money is usually used to buy more police cars, guns and gas for use in the Black community.

Other bills that effect the prison situation are as follows: HB 2327, which reduces the mandatory minimum period of active parole supervision from one year to six months. Approximately \$3 million will be saved.

—HB 2321 which allows the state Parole Board to "unstack" consecutive sentences by a vote of four out of five members. This means that a number of sentences which are imposed on a person to run consecutively, or one after another, can be imposed to run concurrently, or at the same time.

—HB 2328, which eliminates the requirement that every prison inmate appear before the Parole Board for prerelease hearing. Many prisoners are already on prerelease leave before their final release, and current law requires them to come back to prison for the hearing.

—HB 2326, which allows a sentencing judge to give a person who is on probation and violates it a second chance and extend the period of probation for up to six years.

—HB 2322, which makes any term in prison concurrent with another that is being served, whether it is state or federal, unless the judge specifically orders otherwise.

On the reverse side, a bill was approved giving clear statutory authority for a judge to impose consecutive sentences—and thus lengthen the total time in prison instead of shortening it.

We must all pay close attention to what is happening on the correctional scene. Don't wait until it's happening to you, before you know it's happening! Black people have a vested interest in the criminal justice system, whether we choose to protect that interest is a question that may well decide the fate of thousands of Blacks in maximum and minimum (ghetto) prisons across the nation.

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"Community Unity Day"

August 22, 1981 - 12 Noon until 6pm
Peninsula Park

Last year, "Community Unity Day" was attended by over a thousand people. This year, we predict more. Community unity day is the day the N.E. Community comes together to share its victories, realize its dreams and share the spirit of Black love. There will be music, games, speakers, for example, Thera Memory will be blowing some soulful horn; The Sojourner Truth Readers Theater & Dance Troupe will chill the soul with its presentation of "Atlanta Heartbreak"; The Portland Stars & Stripes Drill Team will step young, gifted and Black; there will be African Drummers; your favorite Disc Jockeys and much more."

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