

# Black perspective on the news

*Grassroots News, N.W.*—As times get harder, the demand for the who, what, when, where, why and how is predicted to increase. A higher level of consciousness is desperately needed in the various mediums whose function is to disseminate news. Despite the progress in the hiring and promotion of Blacks and other minorities, there remains significant problems addressing the Third World journalist.

The root of the problem lie in the small numbers of non-white media owners, managers, assignment editors and producers.

The National Association of Black Journalist (NABJ) is an organization geared specifically to suppress ignorance among the public and within the industry. It's president, Bob Reid of KNXT-TV, Los Angeles, says, "A Black Journalist can never lose sight that he's Black. All he has to do is look in the mirror. The question of whether Black Journalist should cover only Black issues or are different from their white counter-parts, is one that we have to contend with. We do bring a certain sensitivity to issues that concern Blacks. And we should have the ability and access to cover such things. On the other hand, we should not limit our coverage since we are journalists and thus capable of being fair on any subject."

Among the problems faced by Black journalists is the non-control of capital resources. "There is a problem in broadcasting things that are positive. News, by its nature, is that which is different and unique.



BOB REID

Often, one is simply to report the news of the Status Quo which is not to be considered as news by any standard. It is difficult to report features about certain segments of the so-called minority community because the media is controlled by the majority race which feels that since a major segment of their audience is of a race other than minority, they wouldn't be interested in minority affairs. What's

wrong with that is it's an underestimation of the interests of the audience. Any news can be presented in an interesting light that says, "This is a part of you because your community is not limited to what's immediately around you! Your community is just as much the people who live in the valley as the ones who live on the top of the hill." No part of the community can be whole if it ignores any of its halves," Reid explained.

What can be done to deepened the perspective offered? Reid answered: "We need greater diversity among the people who control the media, along with a different understanding of what is news and what is of interest to the people. Those same white men refused to put women on the air because they said their audience wouldn't be interested in it. Now, in almost every market there is a woman anchor. We see a historical record of those men being wrong in their perception and judgement. If they were enlightened enough to see that they're wrong in this instance, we would have alot more progress in reporting all kinds of news instead of negative news about Black people."

The business of news collection and distribution is said to be elastic to communication technology which Reid believes is yet to reach its

Zenith. "There are a great deal of changes to come. Cable may not supply the answer that Black people are looking for in terms of diversification. The technology is too expensive to do this and the control of this technology is in the hands of big corporations that are concerned with large-scale production and big profits."

The NABJ publishes a monthly newsletter that compiles national information concerning and of interest to the Black journalist. Among the news items to be found in the NABJ newsletter are:

San Francisco news reporter Dorothy Reed of KGO-TV, was taken off the air because she came to work with her hair in cornrolls. A compromise was mediated that allowed her to keep the cornrows if she wears them pulled back while on camera.

The *New York Times* reached an out-of-court settlement with a group of its Black reporters who filed suit charging the newspaper with discrimination in pay and promotions. The record showed that Black reporters often were paid less than their white colleagues.

In New Jersey, Donald McMean has been harassed by the white leadership of a near-by town because he is building a UHF television station. This type of

problem does not ordinarily receive much press coverage.

Recently ABC's new anchorman, Max Robinson suggested that race might motivate some decisions of the television networks. Controversy arose when some critics of the industry questioned his role as a news anchorman. They focused on whether he had a right to express such a point of view rather than on the validity of his statement.

In Boston, Robinson stated: "There's an unconscious racism at the decision making level in the print and electronic medium. Black concerns are not a major factor in the selection of news to be covered."

His thoughts on being the first Black national anchorman: "Being a symbol, the first Black, without any substance is worse than not being a symbol at all. There's a need for Black Americans to talk about what ails Black America."

The Janet Cooke incident where the reporting of a less-than honest reporter stirred some critics to question the entire course of conduct regarding the recruitment and hiring of Black reporter. The NABJ believes the Cooke affair will and has caused an impact on Blacks working in Journalism, but it is not likely to cause any permanent harm to either.

## Herndon speaks to Citizens Party

By John Blank

Last weekend, the Oregon Citizens Party, part of the national group that ran Barry Commoner for President in 1980, held its annual state convention in Portland. Ron Herndon, co-chair of Portland's Black United Front, was featured as the keynote speaker of the weekend, the greater part of which was devoted to hammering out platform planks and a new constitution.

In his speech, which was well received by the delegates, Ron expressed a general sympathy with the ideals of the Citizens Party. However, he stressed the historical failure of white progressive movements, from the Abolitionists on down, to systematically take up the struggles of Blacks, recognize Black leadership in those struggles, and oppose racism not only in the general population but in the ranks of the progressives as well.

As a contemporary example, Ron pointed to the new "Black" legislative district, House District No. 18, fought for and won by the Black community. Already several white "progressives" with no significant Black support have indicated a desire to run for office in that district.

The Oregon Citizens Party left no doubt of its stand on this question: on Sunday, it adopted the following resolution (previously adopted by the Party's Portland chapter):

"RESOLVED: Unless the Citizens Party is able to recruit a Black candidate who has widespread support in the Black community, the Citizens Party will run no candidate in the 18th District. Since it was the

Black community which fought for and won the new district, the Citizens Party will not endorse or assist any candidate who does not have support in the community. Since we perceive the Black United Front to be the most dynamic force in the Black community, in any discussion regarding support or possible assistance by the Citizens Party towards a candidate in the 18th District, support or lack of support by the BUF will be considered the most important criterion."

In other resolutions, the Party pledged its support of the 4-point program adopted by the National BUF (mobilization against the Reagan foreign policy and support for Third-World liberation struggles; mobilization against the growth in racist violence, including police killings and the Ku Klux Klan; mobilization against budget cutbacks against Blacks and the poor; mobilization of public pressure on Congress to extend the 1965 Voting Rights Act). Further, it explicitly recognized the centrality of independent Black organizations such as the BUF and the National Black Independent Party in bringing about a major progressive political realignment in this country. As one resolution concluded: "... we see continued cooperation between the Citizens Party and such groups [as the BUF and NBIP] to be a necessary and fundamental tenet of our political philosophy."

Other issues taken up included corporate domination over the economy and measures to increase popular control over economic decisions.

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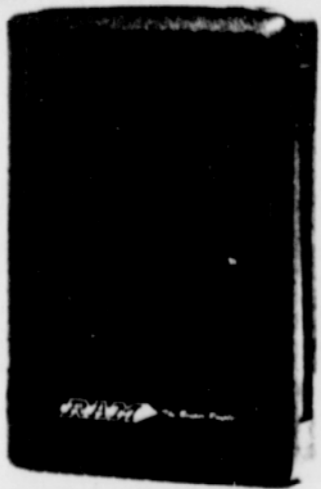
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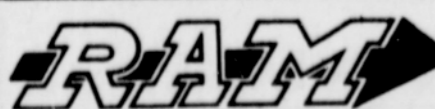
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