

BUSINESS



Whatever Happened to Minority Business? --Part 4

by Professor McKinley Burt

It was brought to my attention last week that my observation of the federal Minority Business Programs-- "You can't force the government to do anything (without political heat)--is still holding true in the "disadvantaged" area. I was referred to a "Letters to the Editor" item in the October 29 edition of the publication "American Contractor".

Here, a minority contractor criticizes the Small Business Administration and affiliated agencies for placing him in a "Catch-22" situation in respect to promises of Surety Bond guarantees. Months of expensive effort, time and other preparation went down the drain when the firm was confronted with the "zapper": The government (SBA) will not guarantee bonds/contracts if the age of the requesting firm is UNDER 12 MONTHS. Further, muddying the waters was a less than satisfying "Financial Capability Review": "...a young firm with no infusion of capital required to satisfy the prerequisite financial capabilities demanded by the U.S. Army."

In respect to the first situation, it immediately occurs that it would have been criminal for the SBA and those affiliated agencies to allow this firm to waste so much of its time and energy

without informing them of the "12 month" requirement (the question arises, of course, "Is this key stipulation prominently displayed in the 'script', such that 'any' applicant would have been aware of the fatal constraint?") And is the system still so impaired?

The second situation propels us into one of the most confused and nebulous areas in all the interface between government and citizen. Just what is "FINANCIAL CAPABILITY" within the context and rubric of America's widely heralded programs to "bring minorities into the mainstream of commerce and industry." Somehow the message gets conveyed that many of the laws and rules of generally accepted financial viability and credibility have been suspended in varying degree in order to bring the disadvantaged aboard. Wistful, many seem to believe this. After all, we did not get the 40 acres and the mule--so, conceivably, something is still due.

I can certainly understand it if you are reminded here of the piece I wrote a few months ago citing a passage from "Alice in Wonderland" as reminiscent of the federal bureaucracy: caught up in an attempt to mask his own confusion, Humpty Dumpty exclaims, "Things are what I say they are!" Right on! Let

the buyer beware (caveat emptor). Again, I refer to my own experience cited last week. I had a sufficient financial base until I allowed the government to attain the position of an unenforceable financial commitment. Shame on me! It's a learning game--things went quite well in previous commercial enterprises where there was no federal involvement. So what is it that we are saying in all of this?

First, disabuse yourself of all those naive expectations. Politics and voter registrations reign supreme. Ignore the rhetoric and the large advertising budgets and display ads, and approach the agencies just as you would a USED CAR DEALER. Assume that you are as innocent as any other consumer entering a new marketplace; perhaps more so.

An interesting aside here is that a lot of this kept ringing a bell in my memory until finally things fell into place. Looking through my Black History files used in my university classes, I found just what I was looking for: materials relating to that over a century old debacle set up immediately after the Civil War--the Freedmen's Bureau, ostensibly designed to expedite the entrance of the freed black slaves into the American mainstream with "all deliberate haste." So, what else is new? Will we learn? More next week.

Business Profile:

Don Bankhead of Local's Only

BY CYNTHIA BROWN

"A lot of record stores do carry local artists but they don't do it like we do," said Don Bankhead of Local's Only. "We feature local bands, show their posters, sell their t-shirts, bring them into the store for live, all-age performances, and hold record release parties."

Bankhead and his partners (Sarah Moran, Art Thomas and Dan Sause) decided to open this unique outlet after experiencing the trials and tribulations of trying to sell their own music. "We're all musicians, we've all done a lot of recording and we all had a hard time selling our tapes." The store stocks CD's, albums, tapes, and other merchandise on 500 different northwest artists ranging from Kenny G to the Oregon Symphony to U-Krew.

"But we concentrate more on the guy who is up and coming and trying to make a name for himself," he added. "And there aren't as many black artists as there should be. I know they're out there. We want to sell their tapes."

The broad range of styles is a commitment to freedom of creativity. "We're here to sell music regardless of what it is. Our doors are open to all kinds. We've even had Aryan Nation and Neo-Nazi bands. We have something for everyone," said Bankhead. When Local's Only opened one and a half years ago their first month's income was \$370.00. Now they average between \$2500 and \$3100 per month. But business can still be rocky. "What we'd like now is to find a way to stabilize. We're looking for money for advertising and we want to expand to other cities," he said.

The biggest challenge for Bankhead as a small business owner is the impact on his personal life. "It's not just a full-time job; it's your life. It's

hard if you have a relationship. I spend most of my time at this. People don't understand why I work so hard. It gets really stressful and hard on friends and family. But I always want to be in business for myself. I'd much rather be my own boss than have someone tell me what to do."

While growing up in Salt Lake City, Utah, Bankhead showed his deter-

mination at an early age. "When I was 8 years old I cleaned a music shop in exchange for piano lessons. I bought my first piano at age 12 by working at the shop and mowing lawns. I got a good deal from the owner of the store," he recalled. "My parents had no idea I was buying a piano until it was delivered." He continued to take lessons and listen to an eclectic array of music, mostly rock and roll. "My major influences were James Brown, The Beatles and Elvis Presley; none played keyboards. My favorite keyboard players were in 'Chicago' and 'Spint'". Bankhead cut his first album in 1978 and then changed his musical style to classical and jazz.

After high school he attended the University of Utah and majored in business and marketing. "Going to college and studying business didn't really help me out to run a business. But college is good to learn to get through and stick with something," he commented. After college he went to California and studied fashion design at the University of San Francisco and worked. However, he soon decided to leave the

family was always treated with respect," he said. But he retains a positive attitude about race relations in Portland. "I turn the other cheek. If they'd spend 5 minutes with me they'd know that it was totally inappropriate to spit at me. Let's get into the deep roots of racism, like how alcoholism is studied--why is an alcoholic an alcoholic? We've got to get along. We have to meet in the middle and tolerate each other until the point of understanding each other."

After moving to Portland Bankhead worked as a manager for Fred Meyer, wrote for the now defunct "Preview" magazine, and started a limousine service before deciding to open a record store.

Bankhead is committed to his business and is in it for the long haul. "I've never had a better working relationship than this one. I also think I can set an example. I might have a chance to be a role model for kids without being a basketball player," he said. "And I'm doing it for me, not for anyone else. I'm a type 'A' person. I always have to be doing something and it's an opportunity to prove to myself what kind of person I am and to grow."



Don Bankhead co-owns downtown's diverse music store

Tenth Cans Film Festival To Benefit Hungry

Movie fans can see a first-run movie of their choice and help Oregon's hungry people by attending the Tenth Annual Cans Film Festival on Wednesday evening, November seventh. Forty-two Act III theaters throughout Oregon and Clark County, Washington, will celebrate the event's tenth anniversary by opening their doors to movie-goers who contribute two cans of nonperishable food items in lieu of the regular movie admission price.

Congressman Ron Wyden will kick-off this year's Festival with a public appearance at Lloyd Center Cinemas at 9:30 a.m. the morning of the event. State Senator Jane Cease and State

Representative Ron Cease will read the Mayor's Proclamation, establishing November 7, 1990 as Cans Film Festival Day. OFB Executive Director Rachel Bristol Little and representatives from the Girl Scouts and Act III Theaters will also be on hand to answer questions about the event and its 10-year history.

On the evening of November seventh, local Girl Scout troops will gather at area theaters to assist Oregon Food Bank in collecting the canned goods. Last year, Oregon Food Bank received 34,400 pounds of food from Cans Film Festival, a 38% increase over 1988 totals. This year's goal is 40,000 pounds

statewide.

Cans Film Festival one of a series of Oregon Food Bank pre-holiday events that raise public awareness as well as food. By participating in these events, individuals and families help the Oregon Food Bank's network's member agencies prepare for winter emergency food needs--a time when many Oregonians face the mounting financial pressures that so often come when the weather turns cold.

Oregon Food Bank is a private nonprofit network of 19 regional food banks serving nearly 600 social service agencies throughout Oregon and Clark County, Washington.

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