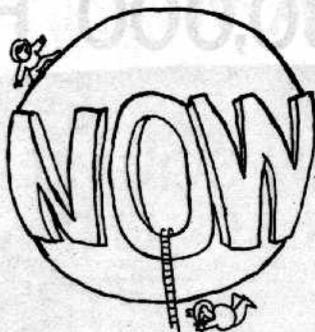


COMMUNITY CONTROL OF TELEVISION

Address by Manhattan Borough President Percy E. Sutton
WNEW Luncheon, March 26, 1971, noon, 205 East 67th Street

When Dave Hepburn and Gwen Barrett invited me to address a luncheon of community affairs people from our local TV and radio stations, I immediately canceled another engagement of long standing and began thinking about what I would say to you today.

I wanted very much to speak to you because you are part of the new power elite in America today and you are uniquely in a position to influence what America will be like in the future. I can honestly say that it will be those people in the communications media, even more than public officials, such as myself, the Mayor, your congressmen and senators or the President himself who will point the way toward new directions for American society.

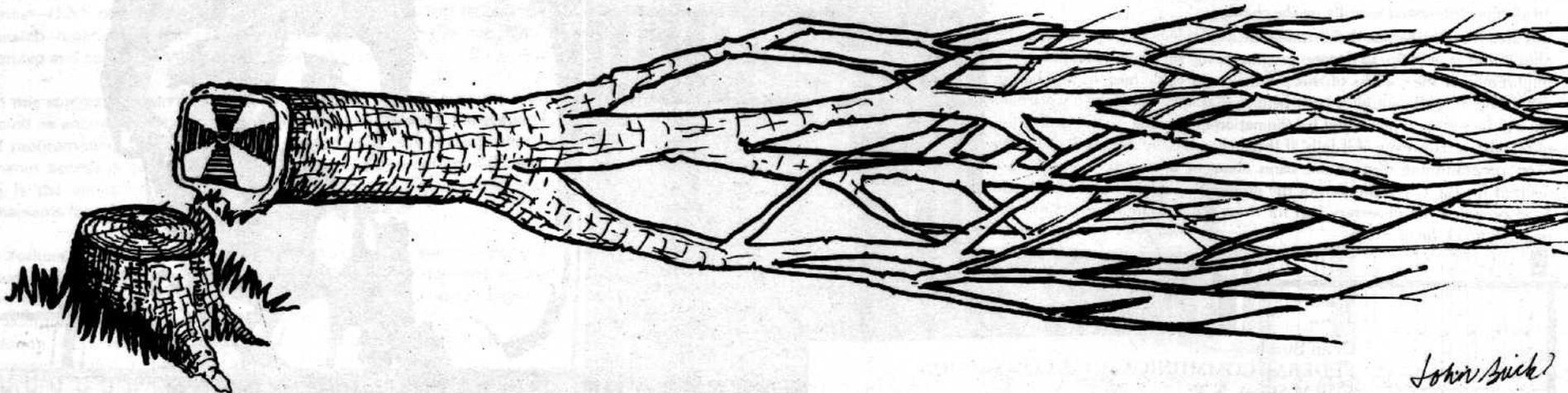


It is not enough to have occasional Black oriented programming on White television, on Saturday, Sunday or very late at night.

There is a definite need in New York City and other cities across America for a full time television station oriented to the needs of Black people—and such a station should be owned and controlled by the community it serves . . .

Because of the competition for use of the electromagnetic spectrum, there are limits on the number of radio and television stations that can exist in a given city before their signals start interfering with each other and with the signals of taxicabs, ham radios, military communications, and out of town stations.

But the coming of cable television promises to end that monopoly. The present cable technology permits a virtually limitless number of television and radio signals to be carried into every household.



John Buck?

It is no secret that I am personally involved in the field of communications. Together with a group of other individuals both Black and white I have been engaged in various negotiations with the hope of bringing into existence a network of Black controlled communications media . . .

The first step in bridging the gap between Black and White, rich and poor in America is to give those groups which have been largely excluded from access to the media—that access which they demand.

I speak now of all groups which have been excluded—Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Indians, poor whites, and those with political, social and economic viewpoints which are radically different from those held by the majority.

Such groups *must be* given the opportunity to originate their own programming, their own reporting, and their own editorializing about their own affairs and the affairs of the nation and the world.

We have in this respect a long, long way to go. In New York, Blacks account for more than 17% of the population but are 17% of the white collar jobs offered by local radio and television stations held by Blacks?

It is true that an increasing number of large cities have one or more radio stations devoted to programming for minority audiences. But of the approximately 7,500 radio and television stations in the United States, and the 350 Black-oriented radio

stations, all but about a dozen are owned by Whites. Less than two tenths of one percent of this nation's stations are owned by Blacks.

That should raise a lot of questions. How well are these White owners telling the Black man's story? How much are they allowing the Black man to tell his own story? How much of their advertising exploits the community they are supposed to serve?

All of these concerns point out the need for Black ownership and control of Black oriented mass media.

It is likely that by the end of this decade, the vast majority of homes in America will be hooked onto the cable. Not only to receive television programming, but because the same wire that today carries television signals can also carry the signals necessary to print a newspaper in a home, connect a home information center with a distant computer or teaching machines, or provide window shopping at home.

The cable franchise agreements developed by the City of New York are models for many being developed around the country.

They provide for public channels on which anyone may produce programming on a first come, first served basis and they provide for additional commercial channels.

The result of this is likely to be increased specialization in television. Just as today there are radio stations that are all news, all rock music, all foreign languages, all classical music, all Black. It is likely that similar specialization will develop in television as well as more and more channels becoming available for programming.

While I have painted an optimistic picture of the opportunities for future diversity in the mass media, I would like to raise one warning.

Right at this very time the future pattern of ownership and control of the communications revolution are being established and fought out in Congress, before the FCC, before municipal bodies and in the courts.

We may end up with a system of mass communications in which racial and other minorities have the opportunity to tell their own story, their own way, in media that they control. Or, it is not inconceivable, that the pattern of near monopoly control which presently exists in the media will be extended to prevent diversity in the media of the future.

The decisions are being made now. And your input is needed to assure that the right decisions are made.



Dear People;

May 12, 1971

We felt your presence in the Last Supplement, and think that mutual contact would definitely be a good idea. We are young strangers in the corporate miasma whose letterhead you see inscribed above; however, the corporation, Coaxial Communications (or Cablenet, or Micanopy, depending on which lawyer you talk with) is still young and relatively unformed. There is a chance here for the cable system to open minds and eyes to different thoughts and ideas that have yet to be exposed through conventional mass media. Why here?

- 1) We have plenty of portable video tape equipment (Sony Port-A-Pack & color cameras)
- 2) The cable system will open with 19 video and 60 audio channels, which means the management here will accept almost any material

3) The management has seen fit to hire a few college, ex-college, and free spirit dropout mindless acid freaks in their ever continuing lust for cheap, minimum wage labor

- a) We therefore have nothing to lose by trying to foist upon these greedy capitalists a few games for the revolution
- b) The power is not really centralized here; so much as that we are able to slip in our own ideas

We're still pretty much mind-boggled by the bureaucracy and unsure of where our power lies, but the search is on and any help would be a major contribution in defining which way this medium will go. We are hoping that there can be established some sort of exchange of ideas and materials for the benefit of all parties (even those who don't know it's happening).



Most anxiously,

Barry Chern Lloyd Sheep
Lackeys

Coaxial Communications
3770 E. Livingston Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43227
(Phone #-1-614-236-1149)