

THE NATIONAL CABLE TELEVISION ASSOCIATION held a conference ostensibly for college students in Washington on February 11th of this year. The program included speakers from the F.C.C., including Dean Burch, some people from the cable industry, and individuals deeply concerned about cable like Ted Ledbetter of the Urban Communications Group.

As conferences go, the format proved highly successful. Instead of dull panels it was mostly question and answer and at times quite provocative. When Burch claimed that public access in New York was not a success, George Stony of Alternate Media Center spent several minutes rebutting him with a wealth of details about the problems that we've had in New York (e.g. landlords won't give the systems access to their buildings, the buildings don't have cable, people who can use public access have no way to watch).

Apparently, there was some dissension within the N.C.T.A. about having the conference, some of the board members arguing that college students had nothing to say to them. Unfortunately, the N.C.T.A. had nothing to say to college students, so that the trade organization learned a lot about what people are thinking, but in return we learned nothing about where cable owners are at, as the kids say. That was frustrating because we obviously

have to work with those people, not alienate them, and we have to understand what their concerns are. There may be another chance this May, when the N.C.T.A. holds its own convention in Chicago. Some folks in New York are talking about going. If you're interested you might contact them through Alternate Media Center.

POLICY MAKERS CONFERENCE ON URBAN CABLE COMMUNICATIONS "Your Invitation to Study Cable Communications for America's Urban Environment" was held January 25 and 26 in Dayton, Ohio, and we'll bet you probably didn't know about it. Well, about 500 people including city officials from all over the country came to hear discussion about the plan that Rand Corporation drew up for wiring Dayton and also hear endless panels on other facets of cable with subjects like: "Emerging Minorities" and "Response to Social Needs."

Basically, the Dayton plan suggested that the city itself be part of a single system including surrounding municipalities. Funny thing was that Dayton's high-density areas (most profitable for cable) are mostly black, so that by including white suburbs in one system the black community was in essence subsidizing cable TV for the whites. Well, they decided uh-uh, and now the Omniscient Rand Corp. is going to cable conferences and lecturing on "Lessons from the Rand Study of Cable in Dayton, Ohio." Needless to say, there was minimal input into this conference from any of the people actually working at the programming level.

An odd trend seems to have developed among the social planners in America: black and other minorities operating out of self-interest are now not just acceptable, but desirable, but a white minority group, i.e. middle class whites who want an alternative to the dominant life style, is given no legitimacy. The reason probably lies in the fact that the planners themselves are white m.c. and thus become uneasy when people with similar backgrounds act on them in a much different way.

