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BLACK JOURNALISTS

BLACK EFFORTS FOR SOUL IN TELEVISION

1970

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BLACK EFFORTS FOR SOUL IN TELEVISION

1015 NORTH CAROLINA AVENUE, S.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003

TELEPHONE: (202) 547-1286

WILLIAM D. WRIGHT
Nat'l Coordinator
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
Absalom Jordan

June 2

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BEST REPORT:

The campaign for a Black or other minority commissioner is going strong, with support promised from several Republican Senators on the Commerce Committee. Senator Scott (R-Pa) has agreed to bring the concept and the list of BEST candidates to the attention of the President.

At this time, letters to the President from Black groups in every major city in the country could have an impact. A copy of the letter your group sends should be mailed to your Senators. Not only is this a vital issue in terms of changing the make-up of the Commission, but in setting a precedent for the appointment of future commissioners. This is a small but necessary step in opening up the airwaves. The legislators contacted by BEST representatives will be a valuable resource for other communications issues that affect the Black community. It is therefore important that all Senators feel the unity and depth of the Black community by hearing from local spokesmen. Please give this matter your immediate attention as "The Man" is about to make his move. (Send copies of any action you take on this - we can use it on Capitol Hill).

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Broadcasters are beginning to respond to the demands of Blacks for greater access to local television. Groups in Atlanta, Detroit, Louisiana, Mississippi, Boston, Chicago, and Washington are using the threat of a Petition to Deny as a lever in negotiations with local stations. The political and economic climate is ripe for organized pressure. We would like to hear your thinking regarding your local strategy as well as action that could be taken nationally. We think it is time to move into the economic arena and launch a nation-wide boycott of a nationally advertised product to force advertisers to view their relationship to the shows which they sponsor. The structuring, planning and research for such a campaign could be co-ordinated out of this office. Think through the idea and give us the benefit of your advise and comments.

Feed-back from you and from us to you is vital in order to set up a net-work of "communicators". We need to do better by our own communicating in order to see how to fit into a total strategy. Memos, letters, hurried notes, phone calls - all are acceptable. This office will do better in letting you know what everyone else is doing.

Peace and Power

Letters to the Editor of The Times

F.C.C. Minority Voice

To the Editor:

President Nixon's appointment this June of a Federal Communications Commissioner is one of vital concern and importance to the black and minority population. The Commissioners' sensitivity and awareness of minority needs has determined to date whether or not these needs have found access to the media.

Television is a reflection of the "lily-white" power structure of America, which excludes blacks and other minorities from policy-making roles within the industry, and therefore from programing.

In part, the blame for the perpetuation of this profit-motivated syndrome lies with the public, whose response to unstimulating programing has been to turn off their sets.

We have thus allowed a one-dimensional reflection of society to be the major "educational" stimulus, even for our own children.

The airwaves are public property, not the personal possessions of the broadcasters. The laws which govern the industry state that license holders must ascertain and fulfill the needs and interests of the total community. The regulators of the industry set standards of ownership, employment, operations as well as determine whether each station

has adequately reflected all elements of its community.

Minority elements can only be interpreted by those who have experienced them. In the entire history of the Commission, no Commissioner has had the experience or sensitivity resulting from membership in one of the racial minorities in this country. It is time that the Commission become more nearly representative of the diversity of background and views in American society.

If representation and leadership from the Commission can encourage expression of minority views and aspirations, then those excluded minorities can enter into public debate.

It is evident from the wave of campus revolts that students feel strongly that legitimate channels for the redress of grievances are closing. The same frustration of being powerless to influence vital decisions which affect their lives led blacks to react following Martin Luther King's death.

These two issues may appear unrelated. However, poor communication is the major reason for lack of understanding between minorities and those who govern their lives. The mass media must assume the responsibility for communicating all viewpoints for participatory democracy.

Minority representation on the Commission would be a necessary step toward this goal. The alternative is further division into two separate, antagonistic societies.

WILLIAM D. WRIGHT
National Coordinator
Black Efforts for Soul in TV
Washington, May 18, 1970

BEST urges 'soul' in FCC operation

MAY 12, 1970

In a recent letter to President Nixon, the national coordinator of Black Efforts for Soul in Television (BEST), proposed that a black person or another member of minority group be appointed to fill a Federal Communications Commission post which will

become vacant June.

National Coordinator William D. Wright stated, "The Black community and other racial groups have a common history because of a common relation with the white world. That history has generated a rich culture with its own aspirations and values. These elements can only be interpreted by persons who have experienced them."

The seven-member commission is charged with responsibility for setting standards of ownership, employment, and operators for broadcasters on the public airwaves. The FCC also determines whether each station has fulfilled the needs and interests of its local community.

* * *

The letter asserts that the awareness and sensitiv-

(Continued on Page 2)

—FCC operations

(FROM PAGE 1)

ity of these seven commissioners is a key factor in determining whether the genuine interest and aspirations of minority communities are accurately portrayed by the media.

"It is time that the commission becomes more nearly representative of the diversity of background and views in America," said Wright.

BEST is a national organization with chapters in eight cities. Its primary goal is to implement changes in the broadcast media that will bring about greater responsiveness to the needs of the black community.

The group's spokesman also emphasized the importance of insuring that representatives of minority ethnic groups have a voice in determining policies which vitally affect them.

Wright pointed out that all 42 commission members appointed since the commission's establishment in 1934 have been white. "Blacks and other minorities have been excluded from a valid portrayal in

television programming and are virtually non-existent in policy-making roles ..." he charged.

A statement issued by the organization asserted, "It is an insult to millions of black and other minorities to suggest that there are no qualified candidates among their ranks."

The statement also disclosed that a list of qualified potential candidates from community groups as well as individuals will be submitted to the President for consideration.

The upcoming FCC vacancy will occur following the expiration of Commissioner Kenneth Cox's term of appointment next month.

Washington Afro-American

AND THE WASHINGTON TRIBUNE

BLACK COMMUNICATORS

P.O. BOX 2927. PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19126

May 26, 1970

The Honorable Richard M. Nixon
President, United States of America
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20202

Dear Mr. President:

The Black Communicators of Philadelphia is an independent group of black professionals in the broadcast and print media. Our commitment is to the immediate elimination of the gross injustices perpetrated on the black masses through the all-pervasive arm of the communications media.

Supported by the racist history of the Federal Communications Commission, unchanged in its 36 years, and despite recommendations by the Kerner Commission for immediate change, the communications media continue to present their discriminatory views without regard to the needs and interests of all the people. We will not support a commission which continues to cooperate with, and protect the interests of, an industry it is charged with regulating. We demand a change.

The time is long past for platitudes and empty promises. The time is now for you to move toward the reform of this most powerful of institutions. The first step, and by no means the last, in the exercise of your responsibility to the people, is the appointment of a black, or other minority group member, to fill the vacancy in the Federal Communications Commission to be created as of June 30, 1970.

We cannot state too emphatically your responsibility to appoint a commissioner unencumbered by previous connections with, and commitments to, the very industry he must regulate. The commissioner must be one who will be unwavering in his adherence to, and the aggressive enforcement of, regulations designed to protect the public interests.

History demands that you, as Chief Executive, take this small step which may begin to lessen the growing outrage of a nation of ill-considered and mis-represented minorities.

Respectfully,

Lionel J. Monagas
Lionel J. Monagas
President, Black Communicators

BLACK EFFORTS FOR SOUL IN TELEVISION

1015 NORTH CAROLINA AVENUE, S.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003

TELEPHONE: (202) 547-1286

May 8, 1970

SAMPLE LETTER TO SENATORS

After 36 years and 42 Commissioners, why has there never been a Federal Communications Commissioner from a racial minority? America is a pluralistic society and our media is required by law to reflect the needs and interests of the total community; yet not one government regulator of our public airwaves has had the background or sensitivity to interpret and represent the views and aspirations of America's minorities.

In June 1970, the term of Commissioner Kenneth Cox will expire. We have written to President Nixon (see enclosed) urging him to show leadership in ending the "white only" clause and make the Commission more representative of the diversity in our society by appointing a member of a racial minority.

It is evident from the wave of campus riots that students as well as other disfranchised groups feel more and more strongly that legitimate channels for the redress of grievances are closing. This kind of frustration resulting from inability to influence decisions which vitally affect them, led the Black community to react following the death of Martin Luther King in 1968.

It may appear that there is no relationship between these two issues; however the major reason for the lack of understanding between minority groups and those who govern our lives is poor communication. If participatory democracy is to become a reality in this country, the mass media must take a responsible leadership role and permit communications of *all* viewpoints. A wider representative board that governs the airwaves would be one necessary step toward affecting this change.

In considering this issue of wider representation of the broadcasting regulatory agency - with your capabilities and powers as a Senator, you can search yourself for a way of influencing the appointment of the next FCC Commissioner.

Sincerely,

William D. Wright

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
Absalom Jordan

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

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Anna Langford

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April 24, 1970

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
Absalom Jordan

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The Honorable Richard M. Nixon
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

A recent issue of "Broadcasting" magazine depicting the Federal Communications Commissioners since 1934 reveals that all 42 regulators of the broadcast industry have been white. Blacks and other minorities have been excluded from a valid portrayal in television programming and are virtually non-existent in policy-making roles within the broadcasting industry.

The seven-member Commission sets standards of ownership, employment and operations for the use of the public airwaves. They judge whether each station has ascertained and fulfilled the needs and interests of its local community - an integral part of their responsibility to operate in the public interest. The awareness and sensitivity of these seven Commissioners in large part determines whether the many and varied voices of the public can find access to our airwaves and into our homes. No Commissioner has had the special experience or sensitivity resulting from membership in one of the many minority groups in our country.

In June, the term of Kenneth Cox will expire. At that time you will have a rare opportunity to end an unfortunate bias and to begin a tradition of balanced racial diversity. The Commission has a policy which is rarely practiced: that diverse sources of information are vital to the preservation of freedom. It is time that the Commission becomes more nearly representative of the diversity of background and views in America.

The Black community and other racial groups have a common history because of a common relation with the white world. That history has generated a rich

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April 24, 1970

culture with its own aspirations and values. These elements can only be interpreted by persons who have experienced them. If representation and leadership from the Commission can encourage expression of the desires and aspirations of excluded minorities, the minority's view can enter the mainstream of public debate, and the majority white population can better understand the frustrations and goals of the minority. The alternative is, as the Kerner Commission pointed out, further division into two separate and antagonist societies.

We are suggesting another element for your consideration of the qualifications of Federal Communications Commissioners - experience of and sensitivity to America's minorities. Therefore, we urge you to carefully weigh the validity of our position in determining your next appointment to the Commission.

Sincerely,

William D. Wright
National Coordinator

BLACK EFFORTS FOR SOUL IN TELEVISION

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NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
Absalom Jordan

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

May 4, 1970

Letter to the Editor

Gentlemen:

A Federal Communications Commissioner will be appointed by President Nixon in June. This crucial decision will have tremendous impact on the Black and other minority segments of our population. The degree of awareness and sensitivity of these commissioners has determined to date whether or not the many and varied voices of the total public have found access to the air waves and into our homes.

A sugar-coated vision of white middle class America has totally dominated the tube, excluding Black and other minorities from policy making roles within the industry - and consequently from programming. Television to date has been a reflection of the "lily white" American power structure.

In part, the blame for the perpetuation of the profit-motivated broadcast industry lies with the American public - and especially those people whose response to boring and unstimulating T.V. programming is to turn off the set and complain to each other. This sophisticated cop-out allowed the same type of one-sided commercial reflection of American society to be the "educational" stimuli for the majority of Americans, (including their own children).

The airwaves belong to the public. The laws that have governed the broadcast industry since 1934 state that license holders must meet the tastes, needs and interests of the total community. The regulators of the industry, the Federal Communications Commission, set standards of ownership, employment and operations. They determine whether each station has correctly reflected all the diverse components of the licensee's community.

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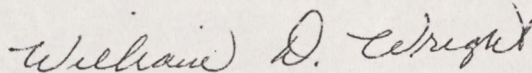
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BEST EDITORIAL
PAGE TWO
May 4, 1970

The Black community and other racial groups have a common history because of a common relation with the white world. That history has generated a rich culture with its own aspirations and values. These elements can only be interpreted by persons who have experienced them. Not in the entire history of the Federal Communications Commission has one member had the special experience or sensitivity resulting from membership in one of the racial minority groups in our country.

It is time that the Commission became more nearly representative of the diversity of background and views in America. If representation and leadership from the Commission can encourage expression of the desires and aspirations of excluded minorities, the minority's view can enter the mainstream of public debate. Therefore, we are demanding fair representation on the Federal Communications Commission. The alternative is, as the Kerner Commission pointed out, further division into two separate and antagonistic societies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William D. Wright".

William D. Wright
National Coordinator

BLACK EFFORTS FOR SOUL IN TELEVISION

1015 NORTH CAROLINA AVENUE, S.E.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 1, 1970

CONTACT: William D. Wright

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
Absalom Jordan

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

BLACK EFFORTS FOR SOUL IN TELEVISION ANNOUNCES ITS CAMPAIGN FOR MINORITY REPRESENTATION ON THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATION COMMISSION. IN JUNE A VACANCY WILL OPEN ON THE FCC WHEN THE TERM OF COMMISSIONER COX EXPIRES.

BEST, NATIONAL COORDINATOR, WILLIAM D. WRIGHT SAID, "ALL THE 42 PAST AND PRESENT COMMISSION MEMBERS ARE WHITE. THE 'WHITE ONLY' CLAUSE FOR THE REGULATORS OF THE PUBLIC AIRWAVES MUST BE BROKEN. IT IS TIME THAT A PERSON FROM A RACIAL MINORITY BRING HIS SPECIAL BACKGROUND AND SENSITIVITY TO THE FCC."

BEST IS A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, WITH CHAPTERS IN EIGHT CITIES DEVOTED TO IMPROVING THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA TO THE NEEDS OF BLACK PEOPLE AND TO BRINGING ABOUT CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTROL OF THE PUBLIC AIRWAVES.

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-MORE-

THE SEVEN MEMBER FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION SET STANDARDS OF OWNERSHIP, EMPLOYMENT AND OPERATORS FOR THE BROADCASTERS USING THE PUBLIC AIRWAVES. THEY JUDGE WHETHER EACH STATION HAS ASCERTAINED AND FULFILLED THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY TO SERVE THE PUBLIC INTEREST, CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY. THE KNOWLEDGE AND SENSITIVITY OF THE SEVEN COMMISSIONERS IN LARGE PART DETERMINE WHETHER THE MANY AND VARIED VOICES OF THE PUBLIC CAN FIND ACCESS TO OUR AIRWAVES AND INTO OUR HOMES.

ON APRIL 24, BEST WROTE TO PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON (LETTER ATTACHED), INFORMING HIM OF BEST'S ACTIVITIES AND THE RATIONALE FROM WHICH THEY WERE GENERATED. BEST REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE OF INSURING THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS WILL HAVE A VOICE IN DETERMINING POLICIES WHICH VITALLY AFFECT THEM. BEST ALSO REMINDED THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION'S OFTEN STATED BUT RARELY PRACTICED POLICY: THAT DIVERSE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ARE VITAL TO THE PRESERVATION OF FREEDOM. LEADERSHIP AT THIS TIME CAN ENCOURAGE NECESSARY EXPRESSION OF MINORITY NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS.

IT IS AN INSULT TO MILLIONS OF BLACK AND OTHER MINORITIES TO SUGGEST THAT THERE ARE NO QUALIFIED CANDIDATES AMONG THEIR RANKS. TO ASSIST THE WHITE HOUSE SEARCH, BEST HAS

COMPILED A LIST OF QUALIFIED POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FROM COMMUNITY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS. THESE CANDIDATES HAVE EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS, LAW, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ABOVE ALL SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES. THIS LIST WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PRESIDENT NIXON FOR HIS CONSIDERATION.

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April 24, 1970

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The Honorable Richard M. Nixon
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Sincerely,

William D. Wright
National Coordinator