

NEW SOUTH WALES TASK FORCE COMMITTEE

BROADCASTING SUB. COMMITTEE

FIRST MEETING

MINUTES

Held Room 4,
10th Floor,
Australian Government Centre,
SYDNEY.

10. 30 A.M.
5 February 1974.

Agenda Item No. 1

List of Members :

Mr. B. Freedman Director - Information
Department of Immigration,
Canberra.

Mr. J. Calomeris

Mr. W. Schouble

Mrs. F. Arena

Mrs. L. Gustin

Mrs. J. Zammit

Mr. C. Zahar

Mr. I. Lovric

Guest Speaker :

Mr. D. Foster Federal Director of Australian
Commercial Broadcasters.

Pauline Buckley Committee Secretary

Agenda Item No. 2

Mr. Freedman introduced Mr. Foster, Federal Director of *Federation* Australian Commercial Broadcasters and thanked him for his attendance.

Before calling on Mr. Foster, Mr. Freedman outlined the purpose of the Broadcasting Sub. Committee and provided some relevant background information.

The Committee's role was two-fold he said

- (a) To review the facilities available for bi-lingual broadcasting.
- (b) To advise the Minister, through the Task Force Committee on the better use of bi-lingual broadcasting to advance the integration of new settlers.

Mr. Freedman explained that when radio 2CH re-organised its programme arrangements, bi-lingual programmes were discontinued and 2WL dropped its range of ethnic programmes.

In November 1973, as a result of representations to the Broadcasting Control Board to amend the standards which placed limitations on the amount of foreign language broadcasts, restrictions were removed.

The 2½% limitation has since been lifted but the requirements that the content of material be broadcast in English has been retained. |

The present situation was that there has been an overall reduction in foreign language Broadcasting.

According to figures available from the Broadcasting Control Board, at the end of 1973 some nineteen commercial stations had bi-regular bi-lingual programmes, broadcasting in some six languages 36 hours 05 minutes weekly.

This compared with a figure in June 1972 of twenty four stations broadcasting twelve more hours weekly.

Mr. Freedman, commenting on the attitude of the Australian Broadcasting Commission said that Sir Robert Madgwick in reply to a letter from Senator McClelland, Minister for the Media in May, 1973 said that the ABC recognised its obligation to new settlers but felt that programmes could not, at this stage, be extended beyond "Learning English" and "Contact".

Sir Robert said that it was not practicable to supply regular programmes for ethnic groups as it would be physically impossible to afford equal time to all groups. The ABC already had certain commitments, he said, and was not able to extend them.

Mr. Freedman explained that the Federal Government could enforce conditions^{for} licence, but could not impose uncommercial propositions on commercial stations.

Within the present structure of air time it was not possible to satisfy every community.

Mr. Freedman then went on to speak of the Broadcasting Sub.Committee's approach to the Inquiry into F.M. Broadcasting.

He said that the F.M. band would provide opportunities in a new area.

When the Minister for the Media announced the lifting of restrictions on foreign language broadcasting, he indicated an interest in hearing from people in the community wanting access to airwaves, Mr. Freedman said.

The Department of the Media, in an announcement in the press on 19 January 1974 called for an approach from the public wanting access to the media in its present form.

Mrs. Arena said that she, in fact, had been in contact with Mr. Robert Moore about the possibility of certain ethnic groups appearing on a certain programme but she said she, and others, no doubt had found it difficult to assemble an articulate group from ethnics.

Mr. Foster said that, in his opinion, access television was aimed more at political and philosophical levels rather than meeting the needs of migrant groups.

Mrs. Arena agreed that producers sought individuals or groups who would make interesting viewing.

At this stage Mr. Freedman summarised for members the stations currently presenting bi-lingual programmes :-

- † 2CA - Canberra - half hour - Italian.
- † 2KY - Sydney - half hour - Lebanese, half hour - Greek, twelve hours Italian.
- † 2SM - Sydney - half hour Italian.
 - 2KA - Katoomba - one and half hours - Greek.
- † 2LM - Lismore - half hour - Italian (recently discontinued).
- † 2RG - Griffith - two hours - Italian.
 - 2WL - Wollongong - ten minutes Croatian (discontinued).
 - 3CS - Colac - one and three quarter hours - Greek, half hour German.
 - 3GL - Geelong - three hours twenty minutes - Greek.
- † 3NE - Wongaratta - one hour - Italian.
- † 3SR - Shepparton - half hour - German, half hour - Italian.
- † 3UW - Warragul - half hour - German, half hour - Italian.
 - 3YB - Warrnambool - half hour - German.
- † 4KQ - Brisbane - one hour - Greek, one and half hours - Italian.
- † 4AY - Ayr - twenty minutes - Italian.
- † 4CA - Cairns - two half hours - Italian (discontinued).
- † 4KZ - Innisfail - one and half hours - Italian.
 - 5DN - Adelaide - one hour - German.
 - 5RM - Renmark - one hour fifty minutes - Greek.
 - 7HT - Hobart - half hour - Polish.
 - 8DN - Darwin - one hour - Greek.

In June, 1972 radio 2CH Sydney had broadcasted sixteen hours, fifty five minutes, covering Italian, Greek, Yugoslav, Maltese and Lebanese.

Stations 4AK Toowoomba, 4AM Atherton and 4BK Brisbane had also broadcast Italian programmes, he said.

Agenda Item No. 2

Address by Mr. Foster,
Federal Director of Australian Commercial
Broadcasters : -

Mr. Foster explained to members that the Federation was a Trade Association of Commercial Stations and represented all one hundred and eighteen commercial stations in Australia in a variety of matters including legal, industrial and copyright matters.

The Federation did not involve itself in the programming of individual stations, its powers were limited, he said.

Mr. Foster outlined briefly the history of bi-lingual programmes.

Some thirteen years ago it had been the policy of the Government and the Broadcasting Control Board to reduce foreign language programmes to a minimum. Until this time there had been many such programmes on air.

At this time, also, commercial stations were losing revenue to Television and were seeking replacement programmes which were commercially viable. Following this, the Broadcasting Control Board imposed the 2½% limit on foreign language broadcasting.

It was at about this time that programming procedures were being revised by Sydney and Melbourne stations.

Programmes became more specialised and the usual drama and quiz programmes disappeared. Stations realised the importance of a definite format. Almost all stations developed this and ruthlessly maintained it.

Speaking of the difficulties of broadcasting foreign programmes, Mr. Foster said that the commercial impetus must be remembered.

The lifting of restrictions by the Broadcasting Control Board would probably have little effect.

The onus had simply been transferred from the Government to the stations.

Mr. Foster said that many foreign language programmes in the past had been of very poor quality.

Mr. Schauble said he felt that a bi-lingual programme should be aimed at an Australian listening audience as well.

He said that items of interest from news in Australia and overseas attracted an Australian audience and appealing music had always held their interest.

Mr. Schauble outlined the format of his own programme.

He admitted that the German language programme attracted an audience including Germans, Austrians, Swiss, Dutch and Hungarian - but strangely, the reactions were forthcoming from the Australian listeners.

Mr. Colomeris pointed out that this format may not be possible for other ethnic broadcasts.

Mr. Zahar agreed and said that he could understand that programmes in Greek would not be acceptable to Australian audiences.

Mr. Foster added that an uninteresting format with lengthy, commercials was unacceptable in any language.

Mrs. Arena said that if foreign language programmes were to aid the integration process migrants would have to be given news and music from their homelands.

The migrants' need was for something at his own level in that period when he was still learning English.

Mr. Colomeris said that he found it quite disturbing to realise that commercial stations had broadcast programmes for migrants at a time of need.

Sponsors of these programmes had obviously helped stations over hard times, and now that things were on a sound commercial basis the needs of the migrant community had been absolutely disregarded.

Mr. Colomeris felt that migrant groups were being discriminated against.

He said that accepting that commercial stations were ruthless business concerns they had no right to deprive national groups from hearing their own music.

Mr. Foster said that he appreciated these views but warned that he did not feel that any form of compulsion on commercial stations would have results.

Mr. Foster agreed that there was discrimination but denied that it was based on race.

He said that many other non-migrant groups and religious groups were prepared to pay for time but were denied the opportunity to broadcast.

The fact was that such programmes are basically not entertaining.

Mr. Foster agreed that there were many groups with just claims but that the fundamental problems were the problems of programming.

Mr. Colomeris asked Mrs. Gustin how she had managed to secure approximately twelve hours from radio 2KY solely for an Italian programme.

Mrs. Gustin replied that the time could have been given simply because others did not want it because of the continual interruptions for the relay of dog racing and trotting and results.

Mrs. Gustin said that the programme had been running twelve months on 5 February 1974 and over one hundred thousand dollars had been paid to the station in this time.

Mrs. Gustin said that sponsors were forthcoming and included Migrant Advisory Services of the Commonwealth Bank and Bank of New South Wales, H.C.F., and airlines.

Mrs. Zammit claimed that sponsors for bi-lingual programmes in other languages were also forthcoming but stations were not willing to make time available.

Mr. Zahar suggested that the Sub. Committee approach the Broadcasting Control Board about the allocation of frequencies and availability of waves on the A.M. Band.

The Chairman and others were in agreement.

The Chairman suggested that some attempt might be made to elucidate station policy on ethnic broadcasts following claims by members that groups could attract sponsors but were denied broadcasting time.

Mr. Freedman also thought it might be useful to point out to the commercial stations the concentration of ethnic groups in given areas.

This information was available from the 1971 census.

Members agreed that it might be useful to look to those measures adopted overseas where cable and short wave had proved popular.

Mr. Freedman also mentioned the possibility of local stations, run on the lines of the BBC locals and financed jointly by local authorities.

Agenda Item No. 3

Topics listed for discussion were covered under Agenda Item No. 2 and the Introduction by the Chairman.

Agenda Item No. 4

Access Radio and Television :

The Chairman referred again to the announcement in The Australian on 19 January 1974 in which the Minister for the Media sought to gauge the extent of demand in the community for access to the media and suggested that an expression of interest should be made by the Broadcasting Sub. Committee to the Department of Media.

Mr. Freedman also thought that the Sub. Committee might approach Mr. A. Moore and Mr. A. Cowan of the ~~ABC~~ *Federation of*

It was thought that the seeming lack of response from ethnic groups might be based on the fear of expense involved.

Mr. Foster explained, however, that it was not envisaged that access should be paid for.

Mr. Freedman advised that meeting that proposals and ideas for corporate advertising for ethnic groups were under way from other sources.

Mr. Colomeris said that surely the apparent lack of response to access television by ethnic groups highlighted the lack of communication between the ABC and groups.

At this stage the Chairman thanked Mr. Foster for his attendance and the useful information.

Mr. Foster responded, saying that he would formulate some further thoughts and forward them to the Sub. Committee.

Agenda Item No. 6

Date and Venue of Next Meeting :

The Sub. Committee elected to meet on Thursday, 14 February 1974 at 2.00 P.M.