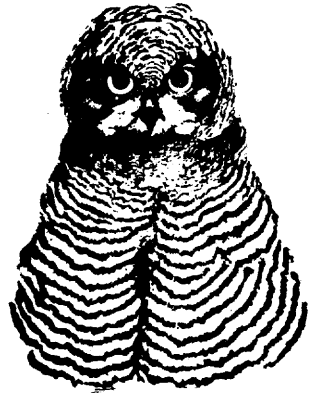




National Alternative Radio Konvention

THE UNCOMMON
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CARRIER
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(an introduction by Lorenzo Milam)

Some might think that it all began when Reginald Aubrey Fessenden sat down before his coils and sparks and whorls in Brant Rock, Mass., 24 December 1904. His wife sang some pleasant carol, he read a poem or two, one of the neighbors played the piano. There were friends,

and listeners were invited to write in and tell what they heard, and that they heard (we are never sure, even now); and that may well be where community radio began.

Or it might have happened in the hothouse mind of Lew Hill when he left his news job in Washington, D.C. in 1946 --- and took a band of pacifists (fresh from the jails of World War II) to Berkeley, California, to spend three years building what was to come KPFA; and with its input of the BBC Third Programme, and the passionate pacifistic poetry news drama ideal, it became the repository of the intellectual minority's need for an alternative voice.

Or some partisans would say that it wasn't until KRAB or KDNA that the real "community" radio idea emerged: one that depends on hoardes of volunteers, and constant influx from the city and environs of license, with free-form rambunctious tear-'em-up radio

finally torn away from the pale grey shadows that had encumbered "educational" radio in the United States for forty years: where a new type of radio not only needed and used the sophisticated kultchur minority --- but with poetry and music and telephones and commentary and news gave the not-so-intellectual but alienated disenfranchised social minorities their own world of speech-&-music as well.

We didn't even think of the need to give it a title. I mean it was sort of 'Pacifica-like,' or sort of 'educational,' or more exactly 'non-commercial, free-forum (even free-form) radio'. Then the Carnegie Commission began to talk about "Public" radio --- as opposed to "instructional" radio and television; and in the same way that the world created "broadcasting" as a contrast to "narrowcasting" --- we had a bag, and we were expected to sit in it, and maybe even try to fill it.

But even that won't do --- we can say "public"

but we might be put in bed with the CPB stations that do 60% net feed, 25% late-romantic-and-big-band-jazz, with announcers that came again out of the Ron Bailie school where you talk at, not to. And we can say "community" and that makes us feel better --- at least until the next word comes along --- because that means that we belong to the towns and cities from which we radiate; but still we would rather not be defined, really. Except to say that we prefer to have at least 100 volunteers, and a goodly selection of Puerto Rican, African, and Japanese music; that we usually operate out of the most dismal shabby buildings (or dumptrucks) imaginable; that we often will have equipment which should have been retired with Harding, and that the volunteers-staff-on-the-air-people have a good bit of discretion in bringing the voices of the city into the hole in the dial called frequency.

It was at this time two months ago that some of us who were gathered together to pay homage to the Great God of Aether decided that it would

be A Good Thing if we could get together and define ourselves again: the 25 or 30 stations, CPs, or organization groups, coming into close contact with each other for four or five days --- along with lawyers and engineers and program people, and a smattering of other people who have watched us, bemused, as we came from the doughnut shop in Seattle, or Pom-Pom Joes in St Louis, or The Marina in Santa Cruz, or the parts shop in Pittsburgh, or The Haunted House Tavern in Dallas --- and turned each of these entities into a vortex of Communication and the Ideal of Free Form Song&Dance in our separate areas , to where this type of radio has its own hallmark key signature (John Ross calls it rough-around-the-edges radio), following, schemata, purpose, orientation, feeling, atmosphere, and, no doubt, Divine Plan.

In Madison [they will soon be referring to it in the same way they do "Vermont" or "Seattle" or "Verdun"] we will have enough time to see where each of us has been, where we are going, and why and how we are going there. We have asked a few representatives from Pacifica so that we can see their way;

we have asked some lawyer types so that they can bring their own particular bizarre perspective to what we do; we have invited a few people from the more traditional 'educational' outlets; we have asked a smattering of the Citizens group to tell us of their problems with access in the more traditional broadcast media; we have invited representatives from CPB and NPR; we have invited ourselves, non-stop, and constantly, so that we can be reminded that finally, at last, in some central location, at a time when we feel that at last there is some gluey mind-spit of unity possible in and about and between the KRABs and WFACs and KUSPs and KSMLs and WORTs and KBOOs and KPOOs and WRFGs and WYEPs and KCHUs and KTOOs and KOPNs and WEVLs and WDNAs and KBDYs and WYSOs and all the others enough to make it appear, once and forever, at all and for one, that this dismally sweet aether that we pluck with the raptured frets of our own distracted timbrals (coming down the ragged radio edges of time) will, at last, and for no good

reason, have some reason for sporting, somehow,
that centrifugal if not centripetal perspective
on unity which we all hope will at last mark our
brief stay in the shadow of the Sporadic E Layer
of our days... forever. Amen.

Dallas Texas
15 May 1975



So here we are. At the Chicago meeting mentioned by Lorenzo, Mike O'Connor and Backporch Radio were given the job of making the physical arrangements for the convention. I (B. T.) took on the task of general organization. I wrote a lot of letters asking people for suggestions. The most repeated piece of feedback was that I should not over-formalize or over-organize the conference. Accordingly, I've set up a system that allows this thing to be fairly self-structuring. So now if it's over-organized, it's your own fault.

scheduling

Tuesday and Sunday, I've scheduled nothing. That allows for informal interaction for the early arrivals on the 17th; by the 22nd I figure we will know who we want to talk to about what, and an advance schedule would just get in the way.

A little further on, you will see a chart showing how I have divided the day, and listing the few workshops that I have scheduled. A large chart corresponding to this will be on the wall at Freedom House. It will have a lot of blank spaces, to start with. Hopefully, they will get filled in with repeats of successful workshops, and newly thought of meetings of one sort or another.

Since most of us will be eating supper together at Freedom House, I reckoned that after the meal would be a good time for anyone who wanted to talk to all of us at once. People who want to do that should contact me, so I can make sure that everyone isn't planning it for the same time.

I also scheduled a 'big meeting' for Saturday afternoon. We plan to be occupied with non-business Saturday night.

One more thing I will do: I will put up a list of a few people who have some information to pass on in a way other than through workshops; next to their name, they may write times that they will be available for folks to just talk to them.

workshops

The Training Book. Terry Clifford wants us to write it here.

Newspeople. The newshounds can meet and plan their agenda.

Station organization. Led by Mike O'Connor, another attempt to figure out what way is best for who.

PRE-SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS

10	training book	training book MUSIC programming a community communications Center	training book NAPRA CPB	training book Program guides	10
11	Newspaper Station organization	end to antagonism Program guides television	WBAI obscenity case the community and the station	position paper	11
12	possible tape exchange engineers' meeting	on-the-air fundraising acquiring used equipment dealing with the FCC	frequency searches NPR	big meeting	12

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CPB. The Corporation will have two people in Madison for us to talk to.

The WBAI obscenity case. The ruling in this case is important for every one of us. Larry Josephson will fill us in.

The community and the station. Or how to put the people on the air without boring everyone to death.

Frequency searches. Thinking about a power increase? Or starting a station in New York? R. McLaughlin and S. Lewis say it's easy.

NPR. National Public Radio will also have someone for us to talk to.

Position paper. Jeremy Lansman would like to see us put together a document that we could all sign. This could then be presented to the agencies that deal with public radio.

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These are workshop topics that were suggested, but left homeless because no one offered to lead them. If you wish to get a group together to talk about any of these things, please feel free to schedule it in.

Doing remotes -- recorded and live
Getting federal money
volunteers
Getting local gov't money
Women's programming
Aesthetics
Various program sources
Doing interviews
Children's shows



(cont.)

Power increases
Building phone systems (for on-air calls)
Obtaining records
Block programming vs. "the flow"
Radio and the black community
Publicity for your stations
Latino programming
What is your station's role in your community?

social functions

I did even less planning here. But it does look like we'll have some music Thursday night for those who want to carry on. And Backporch is doing a benefit Saturday night. Also, Steve Lewis has been talking about a party, for Saturday. That's all that is scheduled. But I'm sure you can make it on your own.

NARC

Freedom House
1925 Winnebago St.
Madison, Wisconsin
244-5444

June (17) 18-22
1975