A Look At The 70's and Beyond

By William O. Walker
Publisher, Cleveland Call-Post

The mandate of the Black Press to blaze trails and advocate the cause of black people, has never been greater than it is today.

The tools of battle were never in better prepared hands. The minds of men were never more open to the truth. The responsibility of the newspaper to stimulate, advocate and motivate, is one we cannot be indifferent to or overlook.

Those who would bury the Black Press in the graveyard of integration and the obsolescence of dogmas, overlook the fact that the black man is no taller in America than he can reach in Mississippi.

Our freedom must not be measured in Ohio, but in South Carolina. The level of justice is not what it is in Illinois, but what the gage shows in Georgia. Our education must be evaluated by Alabama standards and not those in Pennsylvania.

'Must Be Informed'

This is the heart of the editorial battle the Black Press must wage in the seventies.

It has been well said that; "The people cannot judge wisely without being informed ... and misinformation is the public's worst enemy."

The Black Press is the cutting edge of the civil rights movement.

In this role, we must perform; the responsibility we must assume, and the leadership we must give.

John B. Russwurm, in his first editorial in Freedom's Journal said: "We wish to plead our cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

In setting the tone for all the black newspapers to follow, Russwurm said; "The civil rights of a people being of the greatest value, it shall ever be our duty to vindicate our brethren when oppressed, and to lay the case before the public."

W. O. WALKER
Publisher, Cleveland Call-Post Newspaper

HOWARD S. WOODS
Editor-Publisher, St. Louis Metro Sentinel

Discouraging as it often seems, the black editor must meet the challenge of the future with courage, conviction and determination.

Publishing a successful black newspaper is no easy task. High cost of printing, shortage of good editorial talent, and the difficulty of securing substantial advertisers, tempers idealism with practicalities.

Independence Vital

The decline in the number of black papers printed in their own plants is alarming.

This not only takes away some of our independence, and flexibility, but denudes us of skilled craftsmen and outlets for apprentices in the printing trade.

The Black Press remains today the best training ground for writers. While many of our schools are belatedly establishing courses in journalism, the hard, practical experience on the beat and at the typewriter must still be gotten in the newspaper office.

Traditionally, black newspapers have developed this talent. Integration and fair employment has developed a need for instant experienced journeymen. The white news media, government and others, have tapped our staffs and shops for these instant workers.

This has put a tremendous burden on the Black Press to maintain high quality, competence and adequate staff to man our newsrooms and shops.

'Future Is Bright'

In the seventies, we must solve these problems if we are to survive and have profitable operations. It is evidently unfair for the white media to profit from our training programs and for us not to be by some means, compensated for our efforts and investment in training.

In the seventies, the Black Press must again answer the prophets of doom and those who can't see any future for black newspapers. No racial group of people anywhere in the world since the development of newspapers, have attained their freedom or improved their status without the aid of their own fighting press.

Thus, as we look to the seventies and beyond, the future is bright and promising. Freedom for minorities and subjugated people always comes high. If the black man thinks he can purchase his freedom from segregation and poverty in America at a bargain, cut-rate price, he is going to be sadly mistaken.

The Black Press wants and will lead the way to freedom, but we can only do this if we have followers and are backed up by the unity, support and cooperation of all black people.

Sentinel Crusades Against Crime

The St. Louis Sentinel came into being in March 1968 at a time when metropolitan dailies were folding their doors unable to stand the economic problems of the publishing world.

Born into a city with a viable black population, the Sentinel soon found its niche and moved at once into a status of respect and strength. It was conceived by Howard B. Woods, its present editor and publisher, who had spent a lifetime with the Black Press throughout the country.

The success of the Sentinel and its progressive viewpoint enabled it to produce the Metro Sentinel for Tuesday publication in 1971 while the regular Sentinel maintained its Thursday publication date. Together, the Sentinels supply its St. Louis metropolitan readership with a total circulation in excess of 60,000.

Much of the success of the newspapers has been its civic consciousness. Significantly, the first issue was published on the 50th anniversary of the Urban League of St. Louis. It was distributed at the League's annual dinner and that association has continued through the years.

The Sentinel publisher is now president of the League's board of directors. The newspaper annually sponsors a "Block is Beautiful" contest among the 600-plus organized Federation of Black Units.

CRUSADE ON CRIME

The Sentinels were the first black newspapers in the metropolitan St. Louis area to launch a concerted and sustained battle on crime. With ringing editorials and news stories, the Sentinel pointed out that black people were the greater victims of crime and were vitally concerned about law, order and justice.

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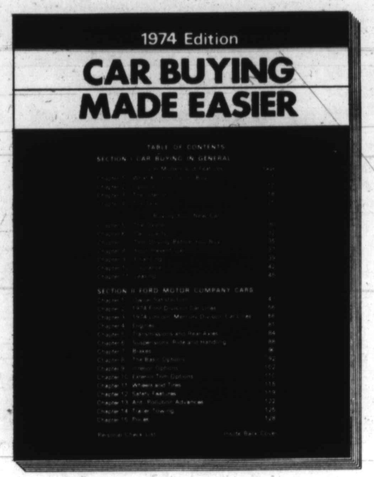

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