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R.M. 9208

From: Reilly Liebhard <Wayne.D.Liebhard-2@tc.umn.edu>
To: A7.A7(WKENNARD)
Date: 2/27/98 8:29am
Subject: FM microbroadcasting

I appreciate your concern for the lack of outlets of expression over the airwaves and realize that you are not responsible for most of the strict regulations made and enforced by your agency. However, I'd still like to see the following text get to whoever's responsible for enforcing the rules. Thank you.

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The major function of the FCC should be to protect public safety, meaning that the agency's domain should be primarily one of regulating WHICH frequencies can be used for WHICH purposes, not WHO uses the frequencies. Obviously, someone using an aircraft frequency (such as 123.45 MHz) for other purposes should be dealt with severely, but the only way a 5- or 10-watt community broadcaster on an unoccupied FM frequency can be a danger is if free speech is a danger as well.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

I have often heard that the airwaves are "public domain". "Public", to me, means "for use by everyone", not "for use by everyone who meets 50,000 different criteria." One doesn't need a license to use a "public" water fountain! The only rules that should be in place are power limits (so one person can't monopolize a frequency nationwide), limits on bandwidth (i.e., FM is 87.5 to 108.0 MHz), and safe/courteous operation rules, such as mandatory filter use so a 90 MHz signal doesn't interfere with a 180 MHz signal. One shouldn't be forced to spend the time and money necessary to obtain 100-watt or stronger equipment or fill out 10 or 20 different forms and wait for replies. The current system is effectively saying, "You can have your free speech... if you pay for it." It also seems as if the FCC believes that "the commoners can't be trusted" - while reading through the regulations one day, I noticed that ham broadcasters must now be relicensed ANNUALLY.

I propose that one need not apply for a license if one's FM station is on a frequency unoccupied within 75 miles and has an effective radiated power of no more than ten watts. Under optimal conditions, a ten-watt station would transmit for six or seven miles - enough to speak to the community as well as to allow others to have their voice. If this doesn't allow enough freedom for other broadcasters, a provision could be made allowing each unlicensed community station to transmit for no more than 30 hours a week. I sincerely hope that the FCC considers the rights of "ordinary" citizens and changes its regulations. The airwaves don't belong solely to big corporate interests. They belong to both companies and individuals.

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