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RM-9208

From: Darren Lawless <d_law@usa.net>
To: A4.A4(SSEGAL)
Date: 5/25/98 3:00am
Subject: Comments to the Chairman

Darren Lawless (d_law@usa.net) writes:

I've been thinking a lot about the idea that the airwaves belong to the people (not the rich people) and I've decided that the current situation is the only reasonable one. However, I have an idea that may be a sort of compromise between the "natural" market driven structure and the more free, perhaps more anarchic structure that many people want (i.e. Free Radio Berkeley).

What if you at the FCC were to take a chunk of frequency adjacent to the current FM band and declare it "free radio"? This bit of spectrum would have little in the way of regulation and structure, much like the Internet.

You could argue that without regulation of at least content that you would jeopardize community standards. But, isn't that exactly where we stand with the Internet? And, haven't we managed to get past those exaggerated fears? Aren't we the better for what the Internet has to offer? Isn't it part of what you're doing, accommodating more bandwidth for higher speeds and such? Doesn't making moves like that say, in a sense, that the FCC believes that the net is a positive thing? Then how would a free "area" of radio be any different?

There would, of course, need to be a few very simple regulations designed to keep "big" money and ultra high power out. Eventually an unspoken sort of ethic would prevail. Things like not squeezing or jamming other broadcasters would become part of the "free radio code." Sure there would be those who wouldn't follow this etiquette but I believe they would be the exception and not the rule. Besides, that too would be part of the organic, free nature of this idea (again, like the Internet).

Think of the eventual benefit to the community. All of those small niche groups that get no attention from mass media would now have a voice. Minority groups, clubs, artists, and activists could all benefit greatly from such an opportunity.

The end result of all this, I think, is in time this area would become a "cool" thing to listen to and radio manufacturers would start making radios with the new spectrum. I don't think current mass media would be too adversely affected either. After all, they already cater to mediocrity and there's still plenty of those folks out there too.

Thank You,
Darren

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