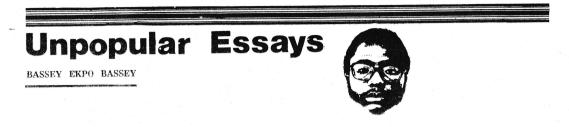
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THE NIGERIAN CHRONICLE



"IT never was easy to brew and operate a policy that balances the democratic demand for a free flow of information with policy the larger need of suppressing the information that might prove destructive of the whole and the obligation of not over-whelming the individual with so much information that he starts living in morbid fear of his environment."

IT is a common feature of indulgent new nations that they operate the colonial struc-tures that were left behind by the "departcolonisers. At least they try to.

Nigeria answers this Nigerla answers this description of neo-colonies. But the Nige-rian Broadcasting Cor-poration has demon-strated that it is not always a traumatic experience to follow where the colonisers ied

led. The N.B.C. is, in my opinion, the best thing "they" did for Nigeria.

Because new nations are set on fragile con-ditions of unity, and because broadcasting is the deepest penetrating medium of mass com-munication which does not respect boundaries of literacy, the choice of a centrally control-led broadcasting system has become an impera-tive option for nationbuilding.

The NBC. as the logical successor to the Nigerian Broadcasting Service and the Empire Service, answers this need for nation building t casting. through broad

There have however, been distractions. There is for instance, a po-werful move to take werful move the broadcasting into the private sector. And broadcasting has since been proliferated to ethnic ends.

Chief Obafemi Awo-lowo who started the the proliferation by setting up a regional radio station at Ibadan in competition with the competition with the NBC, said he did so because he had been denied access to NBC facilities.

Using this logic, it as been argued that it has been argued that proliferation developed as a logical conse-

"THE NBC (without the distraction of regional broadcasting systems) would have played the role occupied by the BBC in Britain- But unfortunately, that sanctimonious position of daily balancing what the audience wants with what it NEEDS, is being challenged by a move to take broadcasting, as it were, into business."

> It never was easy to brew and operate a policy that balances the democratic demand for a free flow of in-formation with the larger need of suppress-ing the information that might prove des-tructive of the whole and the obligation of overwhelming vidual with not individual much information that he starts living in morbid fear of his environment.

That is why the British legacy is good. The NBC (without the distraction of regional systems) would have played the role occupi-ed by the BBC in Britain. But unfortu-nately, that sanctimonious position of daily balancing what the audience wants with audience wants with what it NEEDS, is be-ing challenged by a move to take broadcasting, as it were, into business.

business. The draft constitu-tion endorses the reten-tion of broadcasting in the public sector. But it grants the president discretionary powers to decide w h o should break this public mono-roly. poly.

Similarly, although Broadcasting is, under the current legal sys-tem, still in state hands, contain a minute hards, certain private alterna-tives are inching closer and closer to this and closer "market".

The American-back-ed ELWA studio at Igbaja and the Chris-ian Radio Studio at Uyo are perching in Uyo are perching in waiting for the day when a president of the draft constitution's des cription will give them

power to transmit.

It is not generally realised that the move to "capitalise" broadcasting is backed by individuals who have grown rather powerful in the country. It even includes Mr Christopher Kolade, the director general of NBC himself.

Speaking at a newspaper interview to mark the 20th birthday anniversary of the NBC Mr Kolade is reported to have said that broadcasting "is an undertaking that runs through the life of the people. It is not only for relaxation or education or public enlightenment. It consists of variety. If it is public run, as the NBC, it concerns itself more ed by private enter-prise participation broadcasting Pyblic alone cannot give broadcasting the kind that will of variety make it thrive".

It is difficult to justify Mr Kolade's premise. If anything, the entertainment slice of NBC's programme content has been as large as to be almost scandalous. It has been variously put at twothirds and four-fifths. Just as the balance has started becoming more responsible, the director-general is crying that the NBC concerns itself too much with "public enlightenment!"

The issue, however is not the programme balance of the NBC. The issue is whether the specter of private broadcasters appealing to all sorts of sentiments in order to increase their audience, thereby attract more revenue from advrtising, is not too chilling to contemplate.

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with public enlightenment. But this creates the difficulty of meeting the entertainment requirements of the people. Broadcasting in Nigeria will be enrich-

The NBC is too good to change. If anything all those state broadcasting systems should close down. They stretch our manpower and facilities unneces-sarily.



13

## **NBC: Too Good To Change**

erners were killed in the east.

tune of unity.

In all this, the NBC maintained its compo-

sure, never struck a discordant note to the

As a fall out from this, the corporation has been generally cri-ticised as being too close to the government

to be of much use to the public.

Most of the instances cited to illustrate this

view are largely correct,

but the verdict is too

sweeping and exagge-

Exaggerated a n d

rated.

being

Broadcasting Corpora-tion was perhaps, the the shortquence of comings of the NBC, In most effective vehicle used for educating Easterners away from which case, rather than congratulate the Corpo-ration for bearing the ration for bearing the torch of unity through Easterners away from the national purpose at the time of the crisis that preceded the civil war. So was it alleged that the first wave of pogrom in the north was no escioned by a broadcasting, one broadcasting, one should blame it for allowing (by its errors), regional sys-tems to develop and pander to the tribal divisions of the coun-try. was occasioned by a Radio Cameroun broadcast, relayed by Radio try. Television Kaduna to the effect that north-

try. That observation is, cf course, misleading. NBC is not in error. Regional broadcasting developed as a result of the regionalisation of politics and the in-effectiveness of the centre. It developed, not because of the NBC, but in spite of it. And regional broad-

And regional broad-casting has been quite an experience for Nigeria! Because of their deep penetration, tribal politicians have found the regional

"THE issue, however is not the programme balance of the NBC. The issue is whether the spectre of private broadcasters appealing to all sorts of sentiments in order to increase their audience, thereby attract more, revenue from advertising, is not too chilly to contemplate. The NBC is too good to change."

stations broadcasting stations the most effective bases for their campaigns of hate. Campaigns that cut across class and re-cruit the worst in human tendencies. The Eastern Nigeria

unfair.