

Greetings! I am a licensed amateur radio operator (extra-class kn4ao) as well as a published songwriter, so my interest in FCC action is well grounded. I have had an affiliation with FCC for over 50 years as a "ham" operator and as a creator/performer in public media. The primary reason for this letter is my concern for broadcasters responsibility and actions vis-a-vis the public that they serve.

I started writing songs before I became a teenager in East Tennessee. I continued through high school and was fortunate enough to have experience in radio performance at that time. Finally, an agent for Acuff/Rose Publishing Co., Mel Foree, agreed to take some of my material to Nashville. I was then awarded a contract which led to a single and an album cut of my first published song, "Western Union %", recorded by Frank Roberts and later by Vic Dana. Since then, though I have had muscular dystrophy all my life and the associated inability to travel -- almost essential for a successful songwriter/performer, I have still been active in music business. In 1996 I wrote and recorded a 10-song album.

Currently I work with a company (MEI entertainment Inc.) dedicated to promoting new talent. It has been my personal experience that it is very difficult to help new or unheard artists break into radio play -- the usual steppingstone to greater recognition. Station owners and/or Program Directors are quick to point out that they receive hundreds of CDs every day and that they can't play all of them. That maybe a valid point, and it may be more difficult for a new act to get a "piece of the action" today than it was 30 years ago, when some of my self-written songs were getting air play. But some stations are very stringent. I would like to see them compelled to set aside at least a small portion of their air time to introducing new artists. I see no reason why that would keep them from being a "Top 100 (Genre) Station%".

Basically, I believe in market forces and a laissez-faire approach to business. I have nothing against anyone becoming a millionaire. But there is great talent out there which, given a little better chance, might keep "Brooks and Dunne% -- excellent in country music, I agree -- from winning the top prize at the awards show year after year after year after year. I do not believe that FCC action to modify air play somewhat will reduce record sales. But Billboards "Top 100" might have to become Billboards "Top 200" in every genre.

"Local programming" demands a definition, and the definition will influence ultimately what the FCC does about radio airplay. That definition may not be easy. (If I am to "love my neighbor as myself", exactly who is my neighbor, for example.) Should songs in foreign languages be promoted on American (and provinces) radio stations? Sometimes such songs become very popular, such as "The Macarena%" did a few years ago. When a song originating in Spain becomes very popular in the states, is that local programming? Surely it must be. Local programming, then, can not be equated with local production. Still, I think the "little guys" deserve a little better break.

As the world becomes smaller, through travel; and international broadcasting and programming; and satellite and cell phone communication, it seems to me that "local area" becomes larger of necessity. The FCC is aware of all this I'm sure, but I hope it does not lose sight of the fact that new talent needs a little room to squeeze through, so that "grassroots" can

occasionally grow into "beanstalks" tall enough for many others to climb.

Radio and television stations serve many purposes in a community: disseminating news, sometimes as a medium for trade or barter, sometimes as a reporter or mediator in political debates, and in many other useful ways. My primary interest in their usefulness is in how they determine what music to play. For that reason, I would like to address a long-standing problem: payola.

Payola was outlawed many years ago, but I doubt that it stopped for a month. Record promoters taking program directors out for a steak dinner is payola in a form other than cash. Common knowledge. I think the FCC could come up with a way to make payola legal. (I'm sure that Congress will eventually charge for use of the Internet -- and that will probably be very useful to the general populace.) But I also think its policies should include assurance for new recording artists to have exposure to the public.

I think the listening audience deserves a right to immediacy. This hope is probably in vain, because I doubt that this practice of voice tracking will be changed much. It is, in my opinion, just as bad as deceptive advertising -- which has become much worse over the years. But the FCC is more knowledgeable about this and I am and is in the best position to do something -- if anything can be done -- about it.

I am especially hopeful that the FCC can prevent big corporate radio station owners from controlling all airplay. This practice makes "localism" far too large in my opinion -- and I wish something could be done about it for the sake of truly local musical talent.

I think LPFM radio is a good thing! In fact, our community -- Sun City Center, Florida -- recently tried to apply for one. It is a retirement community. For some reason we could not get it. I think we shall try again. I like public radio stations such as WMNF that has different music programming at different times on specific days during the week. They are usually happy to play a new artist.

Thank you for reading my letter and giving consideration to my opinions and to those of many others who have an interest in broadcasting media. My big hope is that the "little guys" will get a good chance for exposure.

Respectfully,

John Manning  
Sun City Center, Florida