

# UB Radio Station's Work Outstanding

By JACK ALLEN

WHEN THE DARK storms of dissent rage in the University of Buffalo campus, it is heartening to witness the performance of the university's radio stations.

(WBFO-FM), the campus outlet, is a beacon of light and reason amid the passionate and intemperate voices which stream from all sides of the political spectrum.

This is due in no small measure to the broad-based philosophy of quiet, soft-spoken Bill Siemering, who puts into practice theories of public radio and its role as a vital service to both the campus and the community at large.

TRADITIONALLY, in times of political upheaval, extremists of the right or left seize the facilities of print and broadcast media to force their tenets to the attention of all those who will read or listen.

Fortunately, at UB, the voices of reason, of compromise, of fairness prevail in the campus radio station. The theories of Siemering, placed in action by program director Henry Tenenbaum and news director Mike Waters, have been sorely put to the test in recent weeks. They have

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# University Radio Station Beacon Of Light, Reason Amid Strife

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emerged—in the viewpoint of this reporter and others—in a triumph of which their supporters, and even detractors, can be proud.

Siemering believes that truth will emerge from free reporting and discussion, and lives this belief as WBFO tries to cover the complex, rapidly changing events on the UB campus.

IN HIS WORDS: "During the three weeks preceding the spring recess, WBFO broadcast more than 140 hours of material about the campus disorders and issues in the controversy.

"More than 100 students, faculty, administrators, elected officials and community persons were heard on our airwaves. They represented a wide range of viewpoints."

Faculty Senate meetings were broadcast in their entirety. One we heard, moderated by Tenenbaum, lasted three hours and was a fascinating piece of broadcaster ingenuity under difficult circumstances.

THROUGH THE tumult and the strife, Tenenbaum calmly explained the intricacies of the parliamentary process to guide listeners to some semblance of understanding of the emotion-

ally charged proceedings. This was a proud moment for WBFO and for public broadcasting in general.

There was also broadcast related debate from meetings of what some UB students not so facetiously call Buffalo's "un-common Common Council."

WBFO listeners were able to hear such differing voices as those of the Strike Committee; Dr. Peter Regan, acting university president; Gerald Saltarelli, member of the UB Council; Sen. Thomas McGowan; Edward Regan, member of the Temporary Commission on Campus Unrest of the State Legislature; and Henry Degener, chairman of the "100,000 and One" citizens' group which circulated a petition asking "enforcement of all existing legislation to terminate and correct the subversive and demoralizing activities on campus."

IT WOULD be extremely difficult for persons of any persuasion to prove WBFO biased and failing to give every side its time on the air.

As Siemering said, "Because of the atmosphere on campus, the WBFO studios have been the only place where both the university and outside community could hear an extensive discussion of different sides of controversial issues without the speakers being heckled.

"Sometimes the panel discussions have been so lively, and phoned-in listener questions so many, that they have lasted for two hours. We've learned to let ideas expand to fill time, rather than confining them to half-hour blocs."

ON REPORTING of police-student confrontations, always an extremely difficult area for a newsman, Siemering said:

"We tried initially to wait until we knew sufficient facts to report accurately about demonstrations, and then only broadcast eyewitness accounts.

"If, as happens in such complex, fluid situations, there were occasional conflicting reports, we called this to the attention of the listeners. It is nearly impossible to present a single view which can adequately reflect the total situation.

AS THE EVENTS proceeded,

we gradually were able to piece together and give an accurate accounting of events. Sometime the confrontations took place directly below the WBFO studios and they were reported as they happened. Generally, we tried to have a little time distance to give a broader perspective.

"Frequently a crowd could be heard shouting in the background of panel discussions. With breathless reporters (two received injuries), the shouting and tension, some listeners said they were reminded of the 'War of the Worlds' broadcast.

"Many recorded eyewitness reports on the scene were too emotional to air directly, but the information was pieced together and aired in a more calm delivery."

BESIDES THE on-the-scene live and lively reports, there were discussions of causes of the unrest, the strike demands and other issues of university reform.

There was full discussion of the Thernis Project (Dept. of Defense research), the controversial colleges, ROTC, open admission, police-community relations, university governance media and city-university relations.

Position papers were read and discussed as soon as they became available. The position statements by the UB Council, the Greiner Report, were read several times in their entirety and faculty members and students were contacted for their reactions.

THE STATION, which broadcasts at 88.7 mc. on a limited power FM band that still can be heard quite a distance from the campus, signed on four hours earlier than usual to provide informational service and fair and complete coverage.

WBFO signs on at 9 a.m. Sunday, and stays on until midnight. Weekdays it is on from 2 p.m. Programming also originates from WBFO's satellite studio at 1203 Jefferson Ave under the direction of Don Blakely.

Many positive effects have been made on WBFO as a result of its baptism of fire.

Siemering said of its future format: "We have permanently changed our afternoon schedule so we can continue to present material as it happens.

"IT HAS enabled us to greatly increase our local talk programming and give a sense of immediacy which is one of radio's prime virtues.

"For example, a reporter may come back with a recording of a press conference, which we will then air in its entirety, later re-processing portions for the news.

"We broadcast other news reports from the city as soon as they come in, and the station

folk and blues) are generally short. This format is still in an evolutionary stage."

**THIS EXCITING** and relevant format allows for such diverse things as symphony concerts, a forum on minority hiring in construction unions, and federal hearings on obscenity from City Hall.

It is vibrant and vital radio, but not all stormy. For instance, try WBFO for comprehensive coverage of Earth Day next Wednesday, when ecology experts across the country will deal with the question of whether Earth can survive if man maintains his current course of pollution and population growth.