

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Since the inception of NAIES, the matter of the organization serving as a communications network has been one of some concern. The need for this kind of activity within the Association is self-evident. When a program, person, or institution encounters difficulty, the existence of a vehicle which can bring to bear external pressure can often be extremely useful. Some might raise the question of being seen as an "outside agitator," but given the scope of the membership of NAIES, this kind of pressure can often be brought from closeby. The matter of a network for communication also opens the door to increased community involvement. While a minority community might not understand the internal intrigues of academic harassment, they should and can understand attempts to undermine ethnic and minority programs, from whatever source, especially from a media element.

Luis R. Esquilin, in his guest editorial, "The Non-Academic Community and NAIES," NAIES *Newsletter*, June, 1977, touched on some aspects of the issue at hand and noted the need to involve the non-academic minority community. The communications network concept provides a concrete way of addressing this need. *Explorations* is supposed to be about finding solutions to ethnic and minority problems and requirements.

Within the last few months, an example of harassment against a minority studies program has occurred very close to home, the Institute for Minority Studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. For several months personnel in the Institute were harassed in a series of long articles by a local newspaper for "questionable" use of University telephones. Close monitoring of the newspaper in recent weeks has brought to light the fact that the press may have had a hidden agenda. First, there appeared a hideous cartoon depicting Japanese American visitors with crew cuts and buck teeth, the worst kind of racial stereotyping I had seen in many years; then an article on what was described as a "jungle mission" assignment to Africa for a local student, which carried with it a clear negative mind set offensive particularly to any African student; then, most recently, an editorial in which comparison and parallels were made between neo-Nazis and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the following statement by way of conclusion: "The civil rights leaders, however, did not march on behalf of advocates of genocide, and did not publicly admire mass murderers." Privately, civil rights leaders apparently did admire mass murders? Other questionable racial comments have been traced to personnel of the local paper.

The Secretary of NAIES, who also happens to be Editor of *Explorations*, brought these instances of not so subtle racism to the attention of some members and to selected community representatives. While the response has not been overwhelming, there has been a response from persons around the country, including several

Japanese-American community groups, and the potential of a communications network brought home to your editor. The other details of this purely local situation need not be repeated here; however, the episode raises a fundamental issue having to do with the media and its influence in racial and ethnic affairs in a society which still has a long way to go to achieve harmony within its pluralistic make-up.

Haynes Johnson, writing recently in the *Washington Post* (June 14, 1978), notes that Alexander Solzhenitsen has made some penetrating comments regarding the American press. Quoting Solzhenitsen: "The press can both stimulate public opinion and miseducate it." Johnson goes on to point out that the well-known Russian writer views the press in the United States as ". . . an immature profession that misleads, confuses and shamelessly intrudes on personal privacy while operating under the slogan 'Everyone is entitled to know everything.'"

Arthur R. Miller, Harvard law professor, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* (April 16, 1978), "Reporters Have a Right to Know, but the Public Has a Right to Privacy," concludes his stimulating essay: "No one disputes the public's right to know," but like any platitude, this statement is a generalization. The more important question is to "know what" and "what practices are employed by the press to obtain the information." Professor Miller goes on to state that, as things now stand: "The press may publish demonstrable falsehoods, subject only to remote threat of liability. The media claim the right to publish any 'truth' no matter how private it may be or how prurient the interest to which it caters. Some journalists justify using improper and intrusive techniques in terms of the 'benefit' produced by their stories."

The public, including members of NAIES, have a right to know about a newspaper, or any other media, that displays incipient tendencies to character assassination, yellow journalism, misrepresentation, and further reveals through its own statements and stories the possibility of "hidden motives" faintly couched in racial overtones. Such is the case wherever this kind of thing occurs, be it La Crosse, Wisconsin; Boston, Massachusetts; or Seattle, Washington. Members of NAIES have a responsibility to bring these kinds of issues and matters to the attention of the Secretary who then has the duty to spread the message far and wide. Here enters the need for an active, effective communications network, the beginnings of which we have in place in the form of NAIES and, in particular, its publications. Let us hear from you whenever and wherever the forces opposed to better racial and ethnic understanding raise their heads. The ugly specter of racism can lift its banner in any corner of the country.

-- George E. Carter  
Editor