

WTVS apologizes

Jewish leaders satisfied

By CARL STODDARD

The flap over the appearance of two Nazis on Channel 56 apparently has been resolved by station managers and Jewish community leaders.

But it's still not clear if continued resentment among some members of the Jewish community will harm the public television station's 18th annual TV auction next month.

Last Thursday, Channel 56's general manager James Christianson met with representatives of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the Jewish War Veterans of Michigan.

"I sincerely regret the mental anguish which this program caused some Channel 56 viewers," Christianson said following the meeting.

The Jewish organizations, in turn, called Christianson's statement "acceptable as acknowledgement of the offense to Jewish sensitivities which the program created."

The meeting was intended to quell criticism of the station and allow Channel 56 to get about the business of raising donations for its auction—the largest money raising activity of the year.

SINCE THE statements were issued, there has been no sudden outpouring of support for the station, but auction manager Honey Friedman admits it may be too early to judge the reaction.

"We certainly have had some donors come back," said Mrs. Friedman, a West Bloomfield resident. "They say they are very happy the problem has been resolved. We'll have to see a lot more of that."

The public television station hopes to raise \$600,000 during the week-long auction that begins April 7. To raise that amount, in contributions, Mrs. Friedman said, the station needs about

\$300,000 in donations of products and services. By the start of this week, she said, the station had not raised half that amount.

"We're four weeks from the auction and we have to start rolling," she said. "We're about where we were six weeks from the auction last year."

During the 1977 auction, Channel 56 raised about \$334,000.

Mrs. Friedman said she hopes that as word of the settlement between the Jewish leaders and Channel 56 spreads, more businesses and individuals will come forward with donations for the auction.

"We're hoping for a ripple effect," Mrs. Friedman said. "Once the word gets out, there's a good feeling. The vibes are good. People are smiling. (But) our phones are still a little quiet."

THE AUCTION is operated almost entirely by unpaid volunteers, who play a large role in soliciting auction items. This year, because of the Nazi program, fewer individuals have offered to help. But most of the 2,000 auction volunteers are still on the job, Mrs. Friedman said.

Trouble began at Channel 56 following the Jan. 12 appearance of two Detroit Nazis on "Detroit Black News," Jewish community leaders called the program offensive and irresponsible programming.

Some also called for Christianson's resignation. And while all groups denied calling for an economic boycott of the station, some spokesmen admitted they would not discourage such action.

Fuel was added to the protest by a confusing change in programs concerning the Nazis.

Originally, the Nazis were to appear on a program entitled "It's Your Turn." That program was cancelled after the Nazis violated a station



HONEY FRIEDMAN

guideline concerning incitement of violence. No portion of that program was broadcast.

Christianson, in fact, held a press conference to announce that the Nazis would not appear on the air in "It's Your Turn." But when the two Nazis were interviewed on "Detroit Black News," there were charges that the station had cheated on its promise and "sneaked" the Nazis on the air.

IN AN EFFORT to smooth out differences, Christianson presented a statement to representatives of the Jewish community.

"The management and the board of directors of the station assure the community that there was no duplicity intended, and we regret anything that might have given that impression," Christianson said in the statement.

"The station erred in neglecting adequately to communicate with community members of the community. This oversight gave rise to the charge

of deception leveled at the station. The board of directors and management of Channel 56 assure the community that no deception was intended and we apologize for the breach in communication."

"The management and board of directors of the station re-affirm their commitment to ongoing communication with all segments of the community and seek to re-examine their own mechanism to assure that the process works and even improves."

"This is our pledge," Christianson said, "and our acknowledged responsibility."

Later, a joint statement was issued by leaders of various Jewish organizations in the Detroit area.

"The officers and the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and of the Jewish War Veterans Department of Michigan have received and reviewed the statement of Channel 56 regarding the Jan. 12 appearance of Nazis on 'Detroit Black News,'" the statement read.

"We find the statement to be acceptable as an acknowledgement of the offense to the Jewish sensitivities which the program created and we believe the statement to be forward looking in its approach to relationships not only with the Jewish community, but with all segments of the general community."

"We hope that the friction which this incident caused between the Jewish community and Channel 56 can now come to an end and that the entire Jewish community will continue to give its generous support to public television as it has in the past."

"To this end," the statement read, "we specifically urge everyone, including members of the Jewish community to continue their memberships in Channel 56 and to continue their support of the forthcoming auction."

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