

ELECTRONIC SOAP BOX

A Bay Area audience of 2 million and 112 thousand watched and heard programs produced by your local Jewish community during December.

That figure was based on the regular audience measurements used by TV and radio advertisers. Translated, it probably means that over a million *different* individuals saw or heard at least one of the programs produced by this Jewish community's Mass Media Project in December. There were also the Hannukah greetings provided to local TV and radio by the Mass Media Project for an audience of millions, but they weren't counted.

In the substantive programs during December, there was a variety of educational messages: an interview with a Holocaust survivor, watched by about 300 thousand different individuals in the Bay Area ... an interview with a Soviet Jew, heard by about 170 thousand different individuals ... interpretations of the importance of Israel to the United States, watched by a cumulative local audience of about 750 thousand ... a specific program on the meaning of Hannukah, watched by about 75 thousand ... plus other programs on Hannukah, anti-semitism, Israel and Soviet Jewry.

The point is this: at one time, in order to get your message across directly, you would have had to set up a soap box in Union Square, or place a speaker at a Kiwanis lunch or hire a hall. At best, you could usually count on a crowd of a thousand or two. Today, the most modest radio program done by the Mass Media Project has an audience of 15 thousand; and the average audience for the dozen different programs during December was about 175 thousand.

A few years ago, this local Jewish community felt that it was not yet taking full advantage of the new era in communications, and set up the Mass Media Project. The Jewish Community Federation, the Board of Rabbis and the JCRC are the three partners in this venture, and from the beginning it has been coordinated by Sydnee Guyer. In terms of budget, she *is* the Mass Media Project for the most part. The TV and radio time, worth at least fifty times her salary, is secured without charge from the stations;

and most of the production costs are absorbed by the stations or various Jewish agencies.

The program production of the Project responds to different needs during the year. During the Lebanese conflict, there were more local programs (indeed involving larger audience figures than those of December) concentrating on an interpretation of that event, often using the people who were returning from visits to that area. During the High Holy Days, the program concentration was on *that* subject.

However, program production is *not* considered the prime job of the Mass Media Project. The prime job is to try to keep the local TV and radio management and personnel better informed. This is done with materials, regular meetings and special consultations. Recently, for example, a few stations showed an inclination to look for a Nazi spokesman to dramatize the Oroville story. The Project managed to convey to some of them why that didn't make sense.

The Mass Media Project follows in the footsteps of other ground-breaking local projects started by the Endowment Fund of the Jewish Community Federation. The Council of Jewish Federations annually gives Schroder Awards for local projects which provide national models. San Francisco has received two: one for a Holocaust-education model in the public schools; and the other for instigating the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, to watch our concerns in Sacramento, which has served as a model for Jewish communities in other states.

Our local Mass Media Project should now be a model for a more strongly organized and tightly coordinated media effort on the national level, where it seems to be needed.