

'... too preoccupied with reggae



"We are too pre-occupied with one aspect of our culture — reggae, and that has caused us to lose sight of the other sophistications of our culture." The speaker was Charles Hyatt, popular Jamaican actor, comedian and JBC personality.

He was replying to a question as to whether we were making the best use of radio in Jamaica today.

"There is so much more that needs to be done than trying to seduce the radio listener by playing reggae 24 hours a day. We need to educate the people," he said. "I am not thinking only of the type of education that JAMAL is giving. There is the two-thirds of our population who are under 15 years old. Who is going to teach them all the things we have acquired since our first liberation? They do not know what we have achieved since days of slavery, and if they don't learn soon, we won't know where we are going."

Charley showed me a pile of 45 rpm records on his desk. "Everybody needs to express. I'm all for that, but I wish the producers who send out this kind of rubbish would stop. We need a strong Music Union and a Performing Rights Society. When performers respect the Music Union, then we will have a better standard of Jamaican music."

Let's go back where we started Charley, because I think we began with a very important point.

"Have you ever thought that the responsibility of being independent is one of the biggest

burdens in the world today? Especially when you have not been educated into it? Our young people need to be educated into the things that have made us. Much of our culture today is from Toronto, or Birmingham or London or New York. We don't know enough about ourselves and that is where radio should be making advances."

What are some of the major

faults you find in radio, Charley?

"People in radio treat the country people with scant courtesy. You would think that Jamaica is Kingston. Even the newscasts speak of places in Kingston as if the whole Jamaica should know where that one little place is. Me, I try to talk to the people outside of radio can give. The man in his banana field, the fisherman, the children in the rural areas."

Anything else?

"Yes, you know. Too many middle-class people take the working class for granted. They tend to use words and ideas that are totally erroneous to the working class. It is time this sort of thing stopped."

How can people in radio help to change the attitudes of presenters and listeners?

"Any change has to be gradual. We need to cultivate the listening habit in people. As it is now, people just have their radio on. The needle is stuck at one place on the dial. Radio is a sort of background sound. What we need to do is train people to listen and while they are listening let them be educated,

informed and entertained."

Charley remarked quite emphatically that as a result of this pre-occupation with reggae some people will become damaged — physically.

How do you find your work at JBC as compared with what you did at BBC?

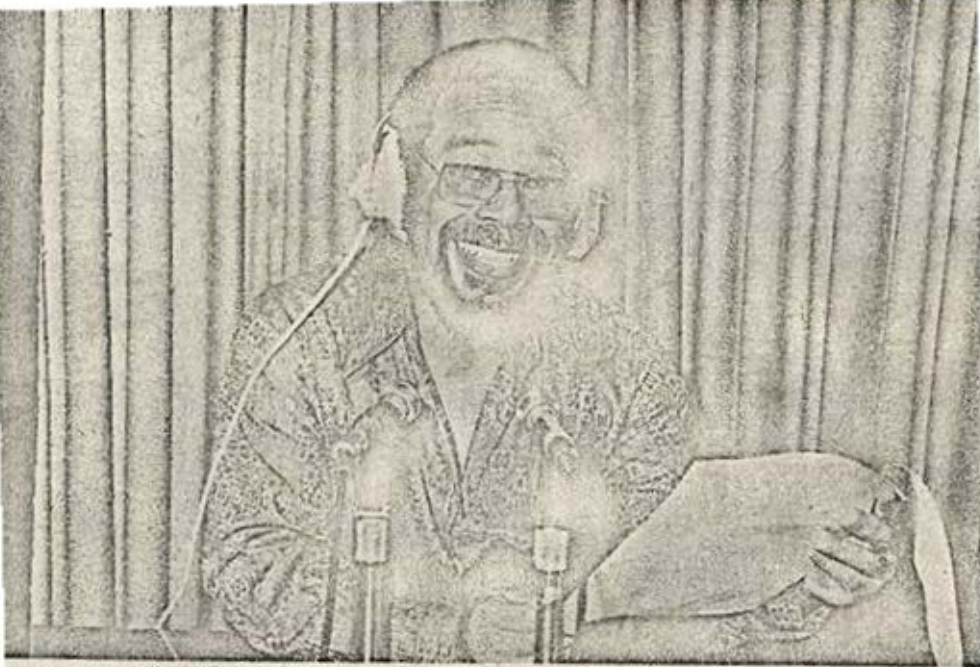
"This is the hardest job I have had in my life," he replied.

Charley explained that while he was at the BBC much of the actual — planning and preparation of the work was done for him by a team of workers.

At JBC Charley plans every single part of his one-and-three-quarter hour daily show. Included in the format are Word for Today, Island wide, As A Man Thinketh, a Music Feature, and Getting To Know You.

"I plan the programme myself and I try to remember all along the privacy of the medium. It's just me talking to one individual out there."

Charley continued: "Radio is my first love. I enjoy it. It is the media that Jamaica needs now, at this stage of our development. It should be given a chance to improve our people. What is more, it should take the chance."



Charles Hyatt