

October 27, 2010 (Article in The Daily Gleaner)

Chairman of the Media Association Jamaica Limited (MAJ), Gary Allen, said the Association is stoutly resisting the proposal to impose a five per cent levy on the gross earnings of radio and television stations.

The proposal has been mooted by Canadian consultants, Nordicity, which is assisting the Broadcasting Commission to develop a new media policy for Jamaica.

“Five per cent of gross revenues of most media, probably all except one or two, will immediately put them into losses, in bankruptcy territory,” he said.

“I encourage those persons who are thinking about a five per cent levy on gross revenues in the media to abandon the idea. It’s a bad idea. It will lead to the collapse of media.”

Allen, who was speaking at the Western Mirror’s 30th Anniversary Banquet and Awards at the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort in Montego Bay, St. James recently, said the levy was a sure recipe for a mass collapse of the electronic media.

The MAJ Chairman said several other recommendations have emerged from the proposed new media policy adding that broadcasters have been left in the dark.

“There have been discussions about fees for programmes and establishing a programming fund fees to support the Public Broadcasting Corporation Jamaica, spectrum fees, all of those are things that have been discussed,” he added.

“Are these a part of the policy mix that is being prepared and when are we going to hear what is really before us as a policy?”

Allen also made a call for the 95 year-old Official Secrets Act, which has left a legacy of secrecy in the Government service, to be repealed as it runs contrary to the Access to Information Act that allows for official information to be given, while the former has an obligation to keep it secret.

Former Information Minister, Colin Campbell, had announced in 2006 that the Official Secrets Act would be repealed. However, it still remains on the books.