

A viewer of our television or a listener to our radio programmes could quickly forget that a part of our population is made up of blacks.

There are no regular Aboriginal announcers, not even on stations serving the huge outback areas where part of the population is black.

Television uses Aboriginals only when the script calls for black trackers or a corroboree to be performed.

This is Aboriginal Week. A good time to look at the opportunities or lack of opportunities they have.

It is generally agreed that the media would benefit from a more representative injection of blacks into its ranks.

In other words, isn't it time to give the black tracker a holiday and think about employing more Aboriginals in non type-cast roles?

The argument that educated Aboriginals are not attracted to radio or television is constantly brought forward by producers and casting directors.

Currently on tele-

vision there is only one regular black actor, 18-year-old Ronald Jackson, who appears in the ABC's A Taste For Blue Ribbons (ABV-2, 6.25 p.m. Sundays).

Ronald plays a stable hand and horse lover.

Generally the actors obtain piece work and drift from acting into other occupations.

Ronald's role, and that of Bob Maza's as the law clerk in Bellbird before him have been the only two not type-cast in recent years.

The only recent role of any substance (not exactly typecast), offered was that of half-caste Aboriginal detective Napoleon Bonaparte — the character in Arthur Upfield's novels.

That was given to a part-Maori who had to be made up for the part.

Fauna Productions, who made the series, screened by HSV-7, say they did not even consider an Aboriginal for the part.

Not enough BLACK

JENNIFER BERRY REPORTS ON THE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINALS IN TV AND RADIO



BOB MAZA

Executive producer, Lee Robinson, said it was about time the myth of brilliant Aboriginal actors waiting to be discovered was exposed, "Why, 80 per cent. of them can't even read dialogue," he said.

According to Mr. Robinson a wide search was made of available half-caste actors in Australia.

"James Laurensen was chosen for the part in Boney because he is the best half-caste actor in the world. We never considered an Aboriginal for the part because there are no good half-caste actors that I know of," he said.

Mr. Harry Williams, director of the Melbourne Black Theatre Company, Nindethana and the administrator of the Aboriginal Advancement League, Mr. Stewart Murray, say the search was not long.

Both claim they were not contacted and asked to suggest suitable actors to audition for the part.

Bob Maza, was one of the few blacks who

to the recruiting officer for the Victoria Police Force, Sergeant Eddy, there are no Aboriginal policemen in Victoria.

There are some in New South Wales, but those who applied in Victoria failed to pass the educational entrance test.

"Of course we use many Aborigines in our series but they appear as black fellas — type-cast roles," Mr. Crawford said.

Type-casting blacks in

tracker and primitive roles was evidence of the racial prejudice in acting, according to the Advancement League's Mr. Murray.

"Blacks are never depicted as ordinary people. We are not all native trackers you know," he said.

Mr. Murray sees education as the greatest hurdle blacks have to master.

With eight children — two at tertiary level — he appreciates the need to give his children a "good start in life."

"That's the barrier they all face — in any profession. I'm making sure mine have good grounding because I'm living out my personal ambitions through them," he said.

He reckons the Americans waited 300 years before they started giving the Indians parts not type-cast as the losers.

"We don't intend to sit around and wait for the television, radio and acting world to give us parts. We are going to create our own," he said.

A \$50,000 grant already requested from the Commonwealth Government would aid this ambition but the Melbourne-based company Nindethana does not expect to hear from the Government until late this year.

"We would use this money to produce our

mers, will be produced later this year also.

Director of the company, Mr. Harry Williams, whose Bert and Bindi are well known Aboriginal actors, is optimistic about the future for would-be black actors.

"I don't think education counts. If you are determined, with talent and work hard you will get on," he said.

If the acting scene looks bleak the radio openings are even more disillusioning.

With the exception of two radio programmes by the ABC little is heard on the air-waves about blacks.

The only recent show was called Time To Listen and it was broadcast to mission and outback stations.

There are no black disc-jockeys.



AILEEN CORPUS as she will be seen in Basically Black, half-hour comedy show featuring members of Sydney's National Black Theatre. ABV-2 has still to announce the screening date.

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From

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spoke up when Laurensen obtained the part.

He said at the time "It may not have been good for my acting career but it had to be said."

Bob is currently working at Sydney's National Black Theatre.

He has recently played in an ABC production called, Basically Black, with other black actors, Ken Johnson, Gary Foley and Bindi Williams.

The show, expected to be a once-only effort, has still to be programmed.

An ABC spokesman said, "We don't have any regular Aboriginal actors, other than Ronald Jackson in A Taste for Blue Ribbons, in roles that aren't type cast."

Why no black policeman in our cops and robbers shows?

"We have considered

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