

# The Weakness of American Radio

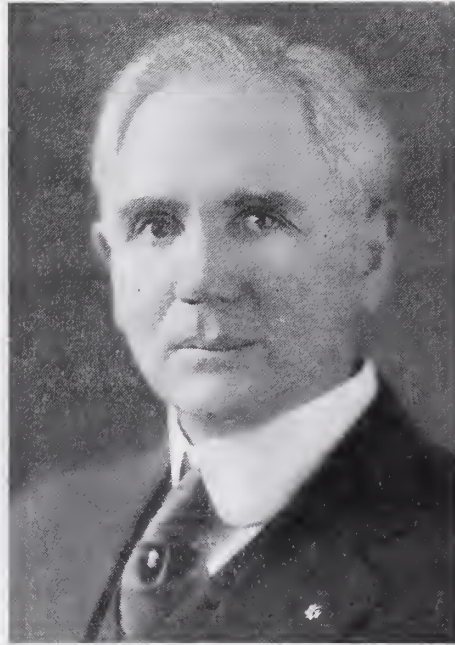
SENATOR CLARENCE C. DILL on his return from Europe last year decried the weakness of American radio in materials of an educational and informational nature. He was convinced that several European countries are far ahead of the United States in broadcasts of this type.

In a recent interview the Senator related his experiences with the Federal Radio Commission in attempting to secure higher power and better frequencies for educational radio stations. He was given to understand that educational authorities did not have the money to finance high-powered stations. This was clearly a subterfuge to cover up their activities which favor commercial broadcasting interests, since the Senator called attention to the fact that in his own state one of the educational institutions was prepared to build a ten kilowatt station, but was denied authorization by the Commission.

The specific questions he has given the Federal Radio Commission [Dill amendment to the Couzens Senate Resolution 129. See *Education by Radio*, Vol. 2, No. 3, p9], if answered by impartial evidence, should clearly indicate one reason why American radio programs are weak. To quote Senator Dill's own statement concerning the questions:

I am anxious to ask the questions covered by the amendment in order that we may have the record of the Commission as to what it has done in the way of permitting educational stations to be built up in this country. American radio is weakest on the educational side. The Radio Commission in interpreting the words "public interest"—and some one has called them the "magna charta" words of the radio law—has interpreted those words too narrowly by overemphasizing the part played by advertising over the radio. Judging from their grants of licenses and their refusals of licenses, the Commission seems to take the view that the "public interest" is best served when stations whose owners have large amounts of money and are able to put on popular programs are given the cream of the radio facilities. I am sure the answer to these questions will show that again and again educational stations have asked for better wave-

lengths, for permission to use more power, and to have time upon wavelengths that would be desirable in the states where it was asked for, and that the Commission has refused these applications.



HONORABLE EWIN L. DAVIS, *United States Representative from the Fifth District of Tennessee, chairman of the House Committee on Merchant Marine, Radio, and Fisheries. Representative Davis is sponsoring important radio legislation. He believes the air is too cluttered with advertising which the Federal Radio Commission might have cleaned up under existing radio laws had it not "fallen down" on its job.*

It has given as the reason, generally, that the educational station is not prepared to give programs that the public desires, and similar reasons, when it seems to me that the Commission should have taken into consideration the fact that there is a large percentage of the public that would welcome more education by radio. It might well do something to develop a love of educational programs. The Commission should divide time upon cleared channels which it has created in order that more people might hear educational programs. It could do this by permitting state universities and colleges and even public-school systems to use wavelengths for certain hours when they are desired, and then allow commercial stations to

use the remaining time for commercial and sponsored programs.

I hope that the information that will come from the Commission will be such as to make the public realize how the Commission has discriminated against educational stations and stations that are ready to put on educational programs, and that thereby we will build up a public opinion in this country that will induce the Commission to take a proper view of the words "public interest" from the standpoint of education. If we can do that, it will be far better than attempting to legislate, by provisions of a statute, the priorities of different services to be granted by the Commission.

Education over the radio should be free from commercial interests. It should be independent and free, just as our systems of public education are free and independent.

A program sponsored by a commercial client cannot be classed as truly educational. A year ago, when the Commission attempted to compare the relative amounts of educational programs broadcast by commercial and by educational stations, a serious fallacy resulted. The educators were scrupulously particular in classifying their program material, while in a great many cases, programs no responsible educator would class as educational were so classed by commercial operators.

These conclusions, based as they were on such unscientific procedure, were used many times in attacking the standing of many of the fine radio stations operated by educational institutions.

In any attempt to secure facts called for in the senatorial radio investigation, scientific principles of investigation must be rigidly followed. Terms must be so accurately defined as to leave no opportunity for individual opinions to bias the results. Any samplings made must follow acceptable scientific procedures.

The people have a right to a fair and impartial survey of the radio situation in this country. From the dissatisfaction expressed on every hand with things as they are now, they will certainly not be content with anything that endeavors to whitewash those in whom the responsibility for the present state of affairs rests.

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Senator Clarence C. Dill.

# Going Over the Heads of Parents

THE ADJACENT ADVERTISEMENT appeared on page twenty of the January 16, 1932 issue of *National Broadcast Reporter*, a comparatively new radio magazine, published in Washington, D. C., and an outspoken representative of commercialism in radio.

Look again at the advertisement. Keep looking at it until the full force of its damnable message sinks in! That innocent-looking little girl, standing in the center, is *your* daughter. That boy with the violin, and the straightforward look on his face—he's *your* son. Will you have them the pawns of commercial hawkers of merchandise? It's true that the United States shelters the ablest businessmen the world has known. It also is true that these men are fathers of sons and daughters. Shall the children be sacrificed on an altar of dollars-and-cents? Let's rid ourselves of this kind of thing once and for all. Let's keep the integrity of *children first!*

Here's how Bart E. McCormick, secretary of the Wisconsin Teachers Association, feels about it. Writing in the latest issue of the *Wisconsin Journal of Education*, he said:

There is no source from which so much sugar-coated propaganda comes to the desk of the editor as from commercial radio. The commercial aspect is usually in the form of good-will advertising, nicely coated with an *educational frosting*. And the promoters expect the *Journal* to advertise these programs free of charge and urge schools to use them. Why not?—the newspapers donate hundreds of thousands of dollars in space a year. But the *Journal* believes there is a principle involved and refuses to advertise them. *We believe that school people should refuse to permit the school to be used as a medium for advertising, by refusing to tune in on so-called educational programs prompted by and promoted for commercial purposes.*

That kind of spirit will kill child exploitation. That kind of spirit is needed in the homes and schools of America. Boycott all child exploiters!

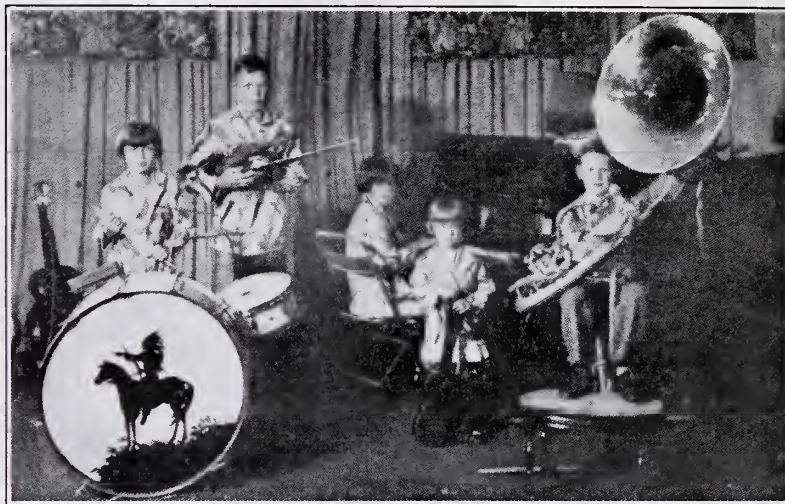
## WNAX

YANKTON

SOUTH DAKOTA

526 Meters

570 Kilocycles



ROSEBUD KIDS ORCHESTRA—Kiddies' Hour

Certificates of Merit were issued in 1931 to sixteen hundred grade school children for bringing average grades up to ninety or better. The competition was keen for a gold medal offered to the one showing the greatest average increase from month to month. Teachers and parents were enthusiastic.

In this way, WNAX of Yankton, S. D., has built up a Kiddies Hour from 5:30 to 6:00 P. M. daily that has a regular audience of tremendous proportions.

Have you ever considered the importance of the "Kids" recommendations to Ma and Pa on your product?

**SELL the KIDS and you have SOLD the PARENTS.**

This period is open at present.

WRITE

**WNAX, Yankton, S. D.**

For Details

THE COMMON SCHOOLS belong to the people. They are managed by the people thru carefully chosen representatives. They are in charge of teachers licensed by public authority. They are financed by public taxation. Every effort to misuse the schools for selfish ends is a menace to their integrity and success. These efforts have been particularly pronounced during recent months. Radio advertising both direct and indirect is making great efforts to get into the schools. Of course it will be kept out of the schools just as advertising has been kept out of textbooks. But just now teachers, parents, and citizens need to be alert to protect the classrooms from this vicious tendency.—J. E. M.

# Radio Lawsuits—Another American Monopoly

A. R. BURROWS, secretary-general, International Broadcasting Union, reports:

There have been no lawsuits, either of a national or international order, in Europe over the allotment or use of radio channels. Should disputes arise between two countries and these disputes not be settled amicably [as has been the case hitherto], the preliminary efforts at settlement would be an affair of the postal and telegraphic administrations concerned. Should this fail, then the matter would be one for an arbitration committee such as is foreseen in article twenty of the Washington Convention. . . .

I think it can honestly be stated that the existence, for nearly seven years, of this Union where the directors of European broadcasting organizations meet as friends and realize the responsibilities which exist one towards the other, has enabled an early and friendly settlement of wavelengths problems likely to be of a really serious character. Even now, when the European wavelength situation has been taken up officially by the administrations, our Union, acting as an expert advisory body, is repeatedly arranging minor adjustments which avoid international troubles.

In the United States, on the contrary, 1096 cases were set for hearing before the Federal Radio Commission between September 1930 and June 1931; 430 were answered and docketed; 666 withdrew; 343 were heard—258 by examiners, 28 by the Commission, and 57 were still to be reported; 212 were decided by the Commission. Thirteen appeals from decisions of the Commission were pending in the courts at the beginning of the period. Twenty-five new cases were appealed by broadcasters during the period and in one case the Commission appealed from a decision by a court.

The securing of evidence in some cases costs more than \$5000. Then there are lawyers' fees and other expenses. Estimating the cost of each case heard at \$2000, the broadcasters paid \$686,000 for defending their rights or attacking

the rights of others. The expenditures of the Commission for the fiscal year were \$444,179.94.

It is adding insult to injury to compel

**S**O I BELIEVE that, after all, this question of radio channels is merely a part of a much larger issue of which you and I will hear much more in the next ten years than we have heard in the past ten years. And that question is the question whether we, as an American people, can rely upon any monopoly to maintain its kindly attitude and its fair treatment of us, and whether or not we should supinely set ourselves in a position of taking only the crumbs from the table, or set aside radio channels as we set aside, thru the Northwest Territory, a certain section of land, forming the basis of the success of the schools in all that territory.—Benjamin H. Darrow, director, Ohio School of the Air, before the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education in New York, May 21, 1931.

the American radio audience to pay this legal bill in order that broadcasters may continue to fill the air with advertising—the bill for which is also charged to the public. The manufacturer pays the advertising agency to prepare its broadcasts, and pays the broadcasting company for time. Mr. and Mrs. John Smith reimburse the manufacturer whose ad-

vertising bill has been figured into the cost of the product.

The absence of lawsuits in Europe is due not only to the good work of the International Broadcasting Union but also to the fact that broadcasting there is administered for the public benefit and not for the benefit of advertisers and broadcasters who wish to exploit the public. Advertising by radio is negligible.—Armstrong Perry.

**R**CA TO OBTAIN CONTROL of RKO's capital—By completing arrangements to advance ten million dollars to the Radio-Keith-Orpheum Corporation to meet payment of its maturing debenture bonds, majority control of RKO's capital will pass to the Radio Corporation of America, it was revealed today.

Other stockholders of RKO, it was stated, failed to exercise their rights under a refinancing plan announced several weeks ago. As a result, they were penalized 75 percent of their stock equity, under the plan. By advancing the necessary money, Radio Corporation will increase its interest in RKO from 9 percent to 66 percent of RKO's capital stock.

The \$127,000,000 Radio-Keith company is one of the largest four motion picture and entertainment companies in this country. To meet financing needs, the company on December 12, 1931 offered \$11,600,000 of its debenture bonds and 1,740,000 shares of new common stock to its stockholders. Only \$1,500,000 of the debentures, it was stated, were absorbed by stockholders other than Radio Corporation, which consented to absorb the balance of approximately ten million dollars.—From an Associated Press news report of January fourteen, as published in the *Christian Science Monitor* of that date.

**E**DUCATION BY RADIO is published weekly by the National Committee on Education by Radio at 1201 Sixteenth Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C. The members of this Committee and the national groups with which they are associated are as follows:

Arthur G. Crane, president, the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, National Association of State Universities.  
R. C. Higgy, director, radio station WEOO of Ohio State Univ., Columbus, O., Association of College and Univ. Broadcasting Stations.  
J. O. Keller, head of engineering extension, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pa., National University Extension Association.  
Charles N. Lischka, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D. C., National Catholic Educational Association.  
John Henry MacCracken, vicechairman, 744 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C., American Council on Education.  
James N. Rule, state superintendent of public instruction, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, National Council of State Superintendents.  
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Joy Elmer Morgan, chairman, 1201 Sixteenth Street Northwest, Washington, D. C., National Education Association.

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# **You Pay**

## **FOR POWER TRUST ADVERTISING**

Some day tune in on all radio programs sponsored by gas, electric, and service companies—the power trust group whose efforts to corrupt the schools and misinform the public were revealed by the investigations of the Federal Trade Commission. You will be amazed at the extent to which these “goodwill” sales talks fill the air. Then ask yourself why you, as a helpless user of gas or electricity, should have to pay for these sales-talk radio programs and thus to preserve the commercialized radio domination of free speech. Is not the power trust still paying your money for highpriced public relations racketeers in an effort to fool the people?