

# A Congressional Investigation of Radio

RADIO IN THE UNITED STATES will be investigated by a committee of Congress created for that purpose. When that will come, is a matter of conjecture, but the rumblings of discontent continue louder and more insistent. Persons not connected with the industry or depending on it in any way for a livelihood are beginning to see that a "new deal" is the only solution. The Federal Radio Commission itself sees the handwriting on the wall as is evidenced by the exhortation of one of its members, Harold A. Lafount, delivered to the National Association of Broadcasters at their recent Saint Louis meeting. A few of Commissioner Lafount's most pertinent remarks were:

Everybody knows that the operation and maintenance of a radio broadcasting station is an expensive undertaking. Somebody has to foot the bill. *In the end, under any system, it is my belief that it is the public who pays.* The manner in which it pays differs in accordance with the various systems in use. In England the public is taxed directly. In the United States money for the operation of stations is obtained thru . . . advertising. The public wants service; the advertiser wants the public's attention and is willing to pay for it. He, in turn, adds the advertising expense on the price of his goods, so *in the end the public pays* indirectly for its service. . . . *the danger of over-commercializing is a real temptation for which many stations have fallen.* Instead of operating primarily "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity," they are operating mainly for the profits they gain thru excessive and uninteresting advertising. In so doing, I warn them, they are "selling their birthrights for a mess of pottage" and their judgment day will come. *Already an irate public is besieging their representatives in Congress for drastic action.*

. . . public interest should not be construed to mean entertainment only. An intelligent presentation of educational material is, in my opinion, imperative, and will increase the listening audience, consequently the demand for time by advertisers.

. . . I am convinced that the day of cleared channel stations on either the Atlantic or Pacific Coast has about gone, regrettable as it is to me.

There are four recent occurrences in the radio field that make a Congressional investigation especially opportune at this time.

First: Six agencies prominently mentioned in connection with a better utilization of radio, have just completed a thoroughgoing survey of the use of radio by the 71 land-grant colleges and separate state universities. This study contains the following chapters: Objectives of College Broadcasting as Viewed by College Executives; Financial Aspects; Existing Facilities; The Control and Operation of Broadcasting as Viewed by College Executives; Administrative Aspects; The College Radio Program. As a joint project, the survey will be of especial value in making an accounting of the stewardship of the colleges and universities in respect to the relatively insignificant portion of the radio spectrum allotted to them. The National Committee

on Education by Radio financed the study, furnished the services of its research director to direct, and its staff to tabulate it. One member of the staff from the federal Office of Education and one from the Department of Agriculture served as as-

sociate directors of the survey. The Association of Land-Grant Colleges, the National Association of State Universities, and the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education were the agencies in addition to those previously named that cooperated in the study. It is being printed and will be ready for distribution in a short time.

Second: The Federal Radio Commission on June 9, 1932, transmitted to the Senate its answer to the Couzens-Dill Resolution No. 129. This was not a fact-finding document but a defense of the present radio system. It neglected a number of fundamental principles of research and avoided two fundamental considerations concerning radio itself: [1] The economic basis of radio broadcasting is unsound. The rate structure is based on a capitalization of supposedly publicly-owned channels. [2] The radio audience is in reality composed of a group of minorities. To serve the interests of these minorities is in direct conflict with the demands of advertisers whose continued support can only be had by collecting the largest possible audience.

Third: Canada has recently decided to nationalize radio. This came following an exhaustive study made by a royal commission headed by Sir John Aird. Among its recommendations were the elimination of direct advertising, financing thru license fees, and provincial control of programs. After giving the people ample time to consider the Aird report, the House of Commons last spring held hearings on the question and concurred in the principal findings on May 11, 1932. Their decision was, no doubt, influenced by their experience with and close proximity to the so-called American radio system.

Fourth: The Ninth International Radiotelegraph Conference which opened in Madrid, Spain, on September 3, has considered a number of questions of vital interest to the United States. The widening of the broadcast band, an equitable division of the North American frequencies, and provision for the representation of public interest in future conferences are among the questions at the forefront at this time.

It is for these reasons that the National Committee on Education by Radio adopted a resolution at its meeting, November 21, urging upon Congress the need of a thorough investigation of the whole field of radio broadcasting by a Congressional committee created for that purpose.



ELMER S. PIERCE, principal of Seneca Vocational High School, Buffalo, New York, and director of radio station WSVS, one of the two broadcasting stations operated by public-school systems. Graduated from Alfred University in 1908, he received the Ped. D. degree from the same institution in 1927.



## Suggestions for Radio Teachers

[1] Radio talks should be typed double space on one side of paper. Papers should be numbered consecutively. Papers pasted on cardboards will prevent rustling.

[2] Any pause to be made by the speaker should be indicated on the paper thus: pause—six seconds.

[3] Do not time your pauses with a watch as the tick can be heard over the radio. A finger-action for counting seconds is better.

[4] Introduce the subject of your talk by making a clear, brief, and selfexplanatory statement.

[5] The radio talk should sound like informal conversation rather than a lecture.

[6] Present the talk on the level of pupils with a mental age of thirteen years.

[7] Make suggestions, state facts [from a reliable source], but do not give advice or preach to your audience.

[8] Informational details are better than mere generalities.

[9] Practise your talk a number of times, both silently and aloud, for the benefit of familiarity and time.

[10] Speak in a natural conversational tone directly into the microphone.

[11] Do not change the distance from the microphone or turn your head during the presentation of the broadcast.

[12] Use easy, non-technical words that may be instantly recognized by your audience.

[13] Avoid, whenever possible, words containing the high frequency letter "s"; substitute words having similar meaning; namely, instead of the word "scare" use "frighten." Avoid breathed consonants.

[14] Avoid, whenever possible, words ending in "p" or "t." They may sound similar over the radio; for instance, such a word as "suit" might sound like "soup."

[15] The average rate of speech is suggested from 130 to 160 words per minute. When speaking to elementary children the rate should be less than 130 words per minute.

[16] Pause—"phrase your topic" to interpret clearly its meaning.

[17] Repeat pertinent directions or facts that may not have been understood the first time.

[18] Try to anticipate the reaction of your listeners. Experiment with a small group, if possible, before attempting to broadcast on a large scale.

[19] Keep up the interest of your listeners by being interested in your own presentation and maintaining an enthusiastic dynamic rendition. Try to develop a pleasing radio personality.

[20] A well-sounding topic is no indication that the listeners have fully benefited from it. A radio presentation is no better than its "follow-up." This may be accomplished by: first, having the radio speaker suggest questions for further study; second, having printed material available upon request of the listener; and third, having the classroom teacher continue after the presentation by [a] asking carefully-prepared questions, [b] further discussion of the topic, [c] assigning reference material to pupils, and [d] distributing printed material that will further enrich the lesson and tend to make it more worthwhile.—M. R. Klein, Nathan Hale Junior High School, Cleveland, Ohio.

## Iowa Psychology Series

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA on October 14, began a series of 25 radio talks in psychology over its own broadcasting station, WSUI. These talks are all given by members of the faculty of the Iowa institution and are under the direction of Dean Carl E. Seashore.

Realizing that academic instruction thru the medium of radio is destined to play an important rôle in the near future, these lectures are in the nature of a trial series for the purpose of determining [1] the appropriate level and style of radio address in an academic subject, [2] means of recording the address for reproduction by other radio stations and by phonograph, and [3] ways of utilizing the printed address in the follow-up for extension of the service.

A new recording device has been developed in the WSUI laboratory which makes it possible to make very satisfactory phonograph records of each lecture. The records of this well-organized series will be made available to other radio stations desiring to carry the program. Broadcasting from a record furnishes a good substitute for expensive chain broadcasting from a single station.

The results of this experiment at WSUI will be watched with interest by both psychologists and educational broadcasters thruout the country.

## Backwardness of Movies

THE COMMERCIAL ORIGIN of the film was blamed by R. S. Lambert for its backwardness compared with the British non-commercial radio system. Mr. Lambert, who is director of talks of the British Broadcasting Corporation, expressed this opinion in an address entitled "The Changing Audience," given before the Annual Conference of the British Institute of Adult Education at Oxford, September 24. *The Listener* [London], in its October 5 issue p484 had the following comment to make on Mr. Lambert's talk:

... Mr. R. S. Lambert drew attention to the educational development of the sister art to broadcasting, that is the cinema. He attributed the backwardness of the cinema in exercising a cultural influence similar to that of wireless to its commercial origins and to the fact that the box-office standards of values prevailing in regard to films were incompatible with the recognition of and catering for the needs of minority interests. At the present time, however, the situation was changing: the film industry required new markets and must seek them among the large class of intelligent persons who hitherto had kept away from the picture houses. The best way to influence the film for good was to introduce a centralizing body, as had been done in the case of wireless. It was likely in the near future that such a body would come into existence in the form of a National Film Institute.

## WSVS Broadcasts Travel Talks

THE BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE is utilizing radio station WSVS on Tuesdays at 2PM in reaching listeners with its series of travel talks. The five travelogs presented during November were as follows: A trip to the Hawaiian Islands; A round-the-world Cruise [three instalments]; and The Florida Keys. WSVS is owned by Seneca Vocational High School, part of the public-school system of Buffalo, New York.

# Radio and the School

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**R**ADIO IS A NEW SCIENCE having intricate technical problems that only the specialist understands; it is a new art that only the expert can practise with perfection; and it is a new industry requiring the guidance of versatile men toward proper adaptation to finance, to law, to politics, and to the public welfare. Radio used to be a curiosity and a plaything; it has become a common instrument and an uncommon power in private and public life.

Radio as an instrument and as a method of scholastic teaching is an actuality, tho its systematic employment on an extensive scale is still a dream. It is forever to the discredit of American educationists that the prompting of commercial interests was required to bring them to a realization of its educational value and classroom usefulness.

**School uses**—What can be taught in the classroom by radio? Almost every subject in the curriculum, including penmanship, drawing, and manual art. The most popular subjects are geography, history, music, English, literature, arithmetic, travelogs, stories, dialogs, dramalogs, health, civics, current events, foreign languages, nature study, character education, art appreciation, physical education, vocational guidance, domestic science.

There is, of course, no good excuse for the employment of radio in school unless it can accomplish something that cannot otherwise be accomplished, achieve a certain result better than by other means, or serve some administrative purpose. Under some subjectheads the radio can do remarkable things; for example: in literature, it can bring to hundreds of classrooms in scattered towns a talk or a reading by a living author; in current events, it can, thru the description of an eyewitness, make the school the very scene of a distant civic function; in foreign language, it can bring to a poor or remote school a lesson by a noted native teacher.

**The teacher**—What advantages does the classroom teacher gain? He has the opportunity to listen to a model lesson given by a master—for such the radio lesson should be. He is free to observe carefully the attention and the reaction of his pupils. His pupils are constrained to learn to withhold their questions until the end of a discourse. He may be made familiar with a new viewpoint. The radio instructor himself has the privilege of teaching a large and receptive group; perforce he takes pains to be wellprepared; he strives to be clear and concise, for he feels that he is under critical scrutiny.

**The pupil**—What advantages does the pupil gain? The novelty and variety in teaching personality, in subjectmatter and in presentation stimulates and pleases him. He is taught by an expert. The teaching of certain subjects is more vivid and vitalized. The material is frequently fresher than that of the textbook. In order to follow the relentlessly proceeding radio teacher, the pupil must be prompt and precise. Lastly, the pupil learns to become more "earminded."

**The public**—Do parents and the public gain anything? Obviously the taxpayer at last has an easy opportunity to exercise some supervision over the schools, while parents may readily become acquainted with modern methods.

**Objections**—There are some objections, more or less valid, to the use of radio in the classroom. Effective radio teaching requires two teachers. The radio instructor cannot help the individual pupil. The uninterrupted lecture becomes tedious for the young pupils. The radio teacher is elusive—he is almost a phantom; in many cases the pupils never behold him in the flesh. But these and similar defects would seem to be outweighed by the advantages.

One of the main objections to radio education is the expense it involves and the many practical difficulties it entails. My answer to the objection is: "Where there's a will, there's a way." The question in our minds should be, "What will we do?" not "How shall we do it?" Clear thoughts, determined plans, courageous vision will be followed by action, performance, achievement.

**The future**—I foresee a fair future for radio education, but that future can be prepared only by the thought and the labor, the sacrifice and the perseverance of educationists themselves. *Commerce cannot conduct radio education.* It would be sheer neglect of duty, sheer folly and sheer perversity to permit commerce to gain complete control of all broadcasting. Let commerce receive full recognition for the technical development of radio; let it be given all praise for making the good fruits of radio a repast for all the people; and let it have the gratitude it deserves for whatever beneficent favors it has bestowed upon the schools thru radio. But men and women with a measure of refined taste, of serious interests and of noble aspirations will agree that there has been a detrimental dominance of commerce in the art of broadcasting. It is palpably plain that the business of commerce is commerce—its concern is material profit, or at best the accumulation of eventually profitable goodwill; it has no substantial and sincere interest in such supposedly abstract things as religion, education, and culture, or in any set of moral principles, in any philosophy, or in any liberal science as such. A commercial radio station, regularly broadcasting educational material, is as anomalous as a machine factory maintaining and conducting a free school of engineering. On the other hand, let it be said in all fairness that an educational radio station, regularly broadcasting commercial material, is as monstrous as a theological seminary selling church goods. No! A permanent alliance between education and commerce for broadcasting purposes is out of the question. Education must be untrammelled, unentangled. Whether on the earth or in the air, whether under secular auspices or under sacred, education can achieve salvation only thru freedom, thru independence, thru regulated liberty under reasonable law.

Abstract of speech delivered at the 1932 Convention of the National Catholic Educational Association, Cincinnati, Ohio.



## Polluted Air

POLLUTED AIR, filled with smoke and noxious gases and bacteria, is a recognized peril to health, which hygienists have found very difficult to fight. Once in the atmosphere it is impossible to keep it out of human lungs—the open gateway of infection and disorder. While this danger is still unconquered another looms on the horizon, more subtle in its attacks and no less devastating in its effects. No one who pays much attention to radio broadcasts can have failed to note the lowered standards of the material that is “put on the air.” Sermons there are with millions of listeners. *Seth Parker* and *The Old Singing Master*, and other features still appeal to multitudes. But there is a progressive downhill trend. Certain stage and screen favorites who are notorious for their vulgar and *risque* expressions are heard—even on Sunday evenings—and the whole despicable choir of “crooners” offers its wretched drivel to every itching ear. Thus far the broadcast advertising material has been cleaner than some of that with which the cigarette makers have defiled the billboards. But we have heard enough to be forewarned as to what may be expected if and when the prohibition dam goes out and the flood of wine and beer pours in. In *Broadcasting*, September 15, 1932, the organ of commercialized radio, a representative of the sales department of one of the stations confidently predicts new business in these terms:

Breweries and wineries are polishing up their apparatus against the day when Congress lifts the embargo against the sparkling beverages that exhilarate or damn according to one's personal lights. . . .

Thus far, the managers of major stations have been reluctant to declare their position as to whether they plan to carry commercial programs setting forth the merits of the several brews and wines. It is known, however, that certain independent stations, including WOR, are studying the problems involved. . . .

There is no question that every famous rendezvous, or at least its modern counterpart, will spring into existence with the repeal of Volsteadism and they will want to get on the air. And the consensus of opinion in broadcasting circles is that they will get on the air; that the breweries will broadcast, and the distilleries as well, if the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment is accomplished.

The British do these things better. There you can listen all day without hearing, “Drink a quart of Sap's Beer twice a day and visit your neighborhood whiskey shop at least twice a week.”—Editorial in *The Christian Advocate*, October 27, 1932, p1139-40.

PUBLIC EDUCATION of both children and adults is the major function of radio broadcasting. Advertising and entertainment are by their very character minor functions.

## Education and the Drama

IF THE BROADCAST PLAY is to be developed, if its possibilities are to be realized and exploited, if it is to attain the place in the world of radio that it deserves, it can only be as the handmaiden of education. There is no promise or hope that the commercial broadcaster will ever experiment with it or develop it. Today it is an orphan awaiting adoption. It is for the educators to adopt. No one else wants it. Embrace it, nurture it; and it will grow to be one of the most powerful aids that education has ever known.—Merrill Denison, author Canadian history series, Canadian National Railways, speaking at the Institute for Education by Radio, Columbus, Ohio, June 6, 1932.

## Debate Government Ownership

NINE UNIVERSITIES in the Western Conference are debating the question: “Resolved that radio broadcasting stations in the United States should be governmentally owned and operated.” The debates which are to be held in February will be participated in by the following universities: Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Purdue, Northwestern, and Illinois. The many recent occurrences make it probable that some form of the radio question will be the debate subject in all parts of the country in 1933-34.

## Nationalization Urged

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY, it [the radio] has often been degraded to the level of a purveyor of untruth about products and parties and programs and people. We believe that nationalization would purge the radio of these and other anti-social features. Until that takes place, we urge stringent restrictions upon its commercialization.—Action taken at Pittsburgh, October 26, in Methodist regional conference as reported in *The Christian Century*, November 9, 1932, p1383.

## Correction

ERNEST R. HAGER, author of “Making Good Use of Radio,” which appeared in the September 15, 1932, issue of *Education by Radio* writes that thru an oversight the NBC was listed as including commercial programs in its Educational Bulletin. Franklin Dunham, educational director of NBC gives assurance that he does not list as educational a single commercial program.

EDUCATION BY RADIO is published 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:  
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