

# Should Advertisers Control Radio Programs?

WORDS WITHOUT END have been written in defense of the present "American Plan" of broadcasting. A few of these have been statements of honest opinion, but most of them have been inspired by the selfish interests of individuals who are now profiting from the present radio system and expect to continue to do so.

An advertiser who buys a fifteen-minute period or a longer one, whether it be on one station or on a nationwide network, uses that period precisely as he wishes unless he violates the laws of libel or obscenity. He knows that a tremendous protest must be registered against his program before he can be forced to discontinue the use of the time or improve that program. The reason is that the average individual is inclined to accept such a thing as a radio program without much question since it apparently costs him nothing.

However, certain advertising programs are calling forth loud objections from public-spirited groups thruout the country as is evidenced by recent articles appearing in the press. One variety in particular which has been protested against for at least a year, is the blood and thunder type of radio program. Programs of this type, if permitted at all, should be given so as to reach homes in the service area of each station after 9PM. The Washington *Evening Star* in its issue of February 3, reprinted an editorial from the *Chicago Daily News* under the heading, "The Children's Hour of Horror." It is such a good statement that it is given below in full text:

Parental complaint is heard against a surfeit of blood and thunder in commercial radio programs designed especially to intrigue juvenile interest. Many letters on the subject have reached the *Daily News* from disturbed mothers. Parent-teacher associations are discussing the effect of that sort of mental diet on child minds. An adult revolt seems to be brewing.

It is alleged that at the twilight hour, when eight-year-old Jimmy tunes in, the serenity of the home is assailed by raucous growls of desperate hoodlums, shrill screams of terrified victims, rattle of gunfire, and groans of the dying. In an atmosphere shivery with stealthy plotting and sanguinary with violent deeds, the temperature of Jimmy's imagination rises to fever heat. Later he kicks off the bedclothes and arouses his slumbering parents with yells of nightmare panic.

Girls of tender years, no less than boys, have developed a taste for the radio successor of the dime novel. They listen with gasps of creepy fascination to blood-curdling drama that, by vocal and imitative sound, carries intenser thrill and horror than does the printed word.

Theorists will differ as to the harmful effect such entertainment may have on the immature, beyond a temporary overstimulation and a crowding out of better provender for thot and emotion. It is certain, however, that altho it may profit the sponsors of the program, it contributes

nothing desirable to the mental equipment of the child; and if it alienates adult approval obviously it will not long profit the sponsors.

It is to be regretted that material of so dubious a sort should be used when there is so vast a reservoir of heroic deed and stirring adventure, of whimsical fancy and magic wonder, on which to draw for children's programs. In days when crime is a social problem of first magnitude, feeding crime thrills as leisure-time enjoyment to infant minds is surely to be deprecated, and good homes are justified in resenting an invasion of the undesirable, so easily made and so difficult to prevent. Moreover, to provoke such resentment scarcely can be wise business policy.



JOHN C. JENSEN, director of station WCAJ, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, Nebraska, whose appointment to the Federal Radio Commission was recently sent to the Senate by President Hoover. A radio engineer of note, an educator and an executive of considerable experience, and a member of a large number of learned societies, Professor Jensen is well qualified for this position. His appointment meets with the approval of educators and others who believe the Commission needs at least one representative of education.

If the advertiser fails to take appropriate action, the Federal Radio Commission is the next line of defense, since it has the entire responsibility of enforcing the principle of public interest, convenience, and necessity in the administration of radio.

If commercial stations overload the ether waves with sales talks or inappropriate programs, a proper balance can be maintained if a sufficient number of educational stations are provided in each state. As the Iowa Press Association comments in the *Iowa Publisher*:

If the advertiser wants to pay forty or fifty dollars a minute to have cheap stuff broadcast from Boston to San Diego, that's his business. But it is distinctly the public's business when the Federal Radio Commission denies a university the right to broadcast information of real value during the evening hours because the time after 6PM is all needed by commercial stations.

Ballyhoo interspersed with threadbare jazz and moronic dialog is forced into millions of homes during the evening, to the exclusion of worthwhile entertainment and information of

value. It is time that Congress kicks radio out of the morass of commercialism and enables better programs to get on the air.

If we read history correctly we would have made a careful study of radio long ago and adopted a plan which would protect the interests of the listeners and still be a distinctly "American Plan." Lawrence D. Batson in *Radio Markets of the World*, 1932, p11, gives a careful statement of a monopoly system which the British government operates as contrasted with the independent-station system employed in the United States. He says:

Listeners' interests, aside from their program dictation, are centered in the degree of service available. Under monopoly systems the density of population of an area is given only superficial significance in developing a system of coverage, the intent usually being to provide service to all areas indiscriminately. Under the independent-station systems, however, the interests of the broadcasters are best served by locating the station in heavily populated centers, resulting in a tendency to concentrate in such centers all of the broadcasting service which the available channel facilities will accommodate. Radio regulation of several countries limits the degree to which these facilities may be used in such centers.



## Shuler and Free Speech

THE NEWS that the Supreme Court has declined to support the Rev. Robert P. Shuler in his appeal against the Federal Radio Commission will be received with relief mingled with regret . . . grave questions of constitutional rights enter the case, and in its ruling upon this aspect of the dispute, the decision of the Supreme Court is unsatisfactory. . . . The Radio Commission sent an agent to investigate [Shuler's station] . . . and altho the agent recommended that the license of the station be renewed, the Commission disagreed with him, and voted that the license be withheld on the ground that Mr. Shuler's addresses were not, as a rule, "in the public interest."

This decision was appealed in the District of Columbia, but the District court upheld the Commission. Mr. Shuler's next move was an application to the Supreme Court of the United States for a writ of certiorari. This was denied, and the decision closes the Los Angeles station. Practically, too, it also closes the commercial stations to Mr. Shuler, since these corporations will hardly care to put their valuable licenses in peril. . . . The issue here is whether or not the constitutional guarantee of free speech is a reality or only a pretense. If a man can be deprived of his usual means of uttering his sentiments, or of any means in itself lawful, by the action of a federal agent, acting under the authority of a commission whose constitutional warrant is highly dubious, then it would seem that this constitutional right is not much more than a flimsy pretense. . . . The sole reason why certain rights are embodied in the federal and in the state constitutions is to protect them against this summary process by placing them beyond denial or dispute, saving always the authority of the courts to review cases of alleged abuse. To place these cases under the original jurisdiction of a federal commission, acting on information supplied by its agents, is to open the door to the possibility of the gravest autocratic abuses. . . . Are messages, lectures, discussions, and statements, on matters of philosophy, ethics, theology, economics, news reports, and any and all matters that can engage the attention of the mind of man, to be subjected to control by the federal government, on the ground that they fall within the purview of the interstate commerce or the general-welfare clause of the Constitution? In that event, the constitutional right of free speech becomes little more than the right to utter what is not offensive to a federal commission.—Abridged from an editorial in *America, A-Catholic-Review-of-the-Week*, January 28, 1933, p397.

## 1933 Ohio Radio Institute

THE FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING of the Institute for Education by Radio will be held at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, May 3-6. These institutes, which are noted for open and frank discussion of questions on radio education, have been attended by leading educators and broadcasters from all over the United States and foreign countries. Their contributions have appeared in the published proceedings under the title of "*Education on the Air*."

This year sessions will be devoted to the following subjects: use of radio in the schools; methods of presenting educational programs; ways in which the listener can be advised as to the educational programs on the air; studies of the audience response to programs and ways of measuring it. Many outstanding speakers have already been secured. As a special feature of this meeting broadcasters will bring sample recordings of programs already successfully broadcast. These recordings will be played for the members of the Institute and the broadcaster will explain why certain methods of presentation were used.

In addition to the regular sessions, roundtables will be held on the following special phases of educational broadcasting: commercial stations and educational organizations; college and university stations; school broadcasting; and research in radio education.

## Florida Begins Radio Series

RADIO STATION WRUF of the University of Florida began on January 6 a new series of twenty-seven broadcasts falling under the general topic, "Economic Conditions of Today." National problems which are being discussed are unemployment, agriculture, taxation and public finance, federal bank policies, and American education. The effects of the present depression upon foreign trade and Europe will form the second part of the series.

The first discussion was by Dr. M. D. Anderson of the college of commerce and journalism at the University of Florida. This broadcast was in the nature of an introduction to the series and covered "General Conditions Leading to, and Characteristics of, a Business Depression." The broadcasts are given each Friday at 4:45PM EST.

These programs are being arranged and presented under the direction of the Beta Eta Chapter of Delta Sigma Pi, professional commercial fraternity.

**WE BELIEVE** that radio is a most powerful agency of education; that the broadcasting channels should forever remain under public control; and that more adequate facilities should be available to the national and state governments.

The college broadcasting stations, correlated with the purpose and programs of our common schools, are the one hope we have of a better use of radio in the future.

We commend the action of the state board of higher education in continuing the operation of station KOAC and earnestly urge that more adequate facilities be provided for this radio station so that it may in the near future serve the citizens of the entire state.—Resolutions adopted by the Oregon State Teachers' Association, December 28, 1932.

## More Views on Madrid

THE ASPECT OF THE MADRID CONFERENCE which most impressed me was the attitude of forbearance, cooperation, and conciliation which was displayed by the representatives of the nations of the world and the fact that it was found possible in this diverse world of ours to obtain general international agreement on as complicated a subject as world electrical communications. In particular, I think it remarkable that general agreement should have been obtained on the laying out of radio wavelengths with respect to the various services.—Eugene S. Wilson, vicepresident, AT&T.

ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING THINGS to me was the willingness of all nations to rearrange facilities and make concessions to those services which protect human life at sea or in the air. Additional facilities were extended to the aeronautical services, and also for the extended use of the various types of radio beacons. Likewise, an improved situation was created for the short-distance maritime telephone which is adapted to small vessels, such as fishing craft, which have not formerly been equipped with radio apparatus. After returning there was some gratification in learning that the door had not been shut entirely upon the possibilities of a later conference to adjust the difficulties peculiar to broadcasting in North America.—Walter Evans, Westinghouse Electric Company, East Pittsburgh, Pa.

I AM DISAPPOINTED in the results of the Madrid Conference. The resulting convention has, I believe, defects which will embarrass and delay the sound development of radio in the interest of the public. No doubt it is an improvement over the Washington Convention of 1927 but it falls far short of what might have been accomplished. I do not blame the American delegates for what happened. The results were largely due to factors over which they had no control, including interference emanating from Washington. . . .

The chief defect is, I think, the failure of the treaty to give recognition to economic and technical facts in the allocation of the lower frequencies [long waves], with the result that, except in Europe, there is no allocation of such waves to broadcasting. . . . On the other hand, no provision was made which gives any better opportunity for meeting the broadcasting needs of North American countries [e. g., Mexico] than was already afforded. . . .

A second defect is the failure of the Conference to ensure the elimination of the spark transmitter nuisance on ships by 1940. . . .

A third defect, which is due to historic accident more than to anything else, is the fact that, in future conferences for the revision of radio regulations [including the allocation of wavelengths to different services], radio communication companies engaged in public correspondence will be permitted to participate, while no such provision is made for any other type of radio communication interest. . . .

The Madrid Conference was an interesting study in cross-currents. The fact is that on allocation matters, the same conflicting interests are to be found within every important nation—between the broadcasters, the mobile interests, aviation, and the military establishments. . . .—Louis G. Caldwell, representing National Association of Broadcasters.

## Radio Course for Teachers

A FIELD COURSE in the advanced technics of teaching, consisting of twenty-five half-hour lectures by Dr. L. John Nuttall, Jr., superintendent of the Salt Lake City schools, is being given by radio each Thursday at 10PM over station KSL. The series began on October 6 and with the omission of one week due to Thanksgiving, will end on March 30.

This radio course has been given as a part of the work of the extension division of the University of Utah with the cooperation of the state department of education and the Salt Lake City board of education. Those who register, pay the six-dollar fee, and satisfactorily complete the course, will receive five hours upper division university credit. More than 150 persons are actually enrolled for this work, while many others listen without formally enrolling.

The course has three aims: [1] that the teachers may know how the various types of classroom work may be built around the modern concept of "directing study"; [2] that the teachers may study in the natural classroom setting, the application of this modern technic of teaching to real teaching aims; and [3] to bridge the gap between theory and practise by a process of experimental teaching as directed in the course.

Course requirements: [1] careful consideration of the study sheets which are mailed to each student the Saturday prior to the lecture; [2] listening to the lectures by radio, using the outlines as guides; [3] carrying out in the classroom the twelve exercises given as assignments on the study sheets; [4] preparing and mailing to the university a careful description of the work done on each assignment, a statement of the success or lack of success of the experimental classroom work, and questions that arise and call for further discussion; [5] study of the criticism sheets mailed after these papers are read; [6] listening to the "report" lectures which are given by radio; and [7] an examination given in each locality under the direction of some responsible person.

The topics for the twenty-five radio lectures follow: [1] the definition of learning and teaching aims; [2] pre-testing in defining aims and teaching aims; [3] selection and organization of subjectmatter; [4] pupil interest—motivation in teaching; [5] report on classroom work on "learning aims"; [6] teaching an "ability to do"; [7] report on classroom work in "pre-testing"; [8] teaching information—the assignment; [9] report on classroom work in "motivation"; [10] individualizing instruction; [11] report on classroom work in "teaching of skills"; [12] teaching rules, definitions, meanings, and the like; [13] report on classroom work on "assignments"; [14] teaching facts by silent reading or lecture; [15] report on classroom work on "individualizing instruction"; [16] teaching by discussion—the socialized recitation; [17] report on classroom work on "teaching rules," and the like; [18] methods of drill and practise; [19] report of "use of silent reading and lecture in the classroom"; [20] use of visual aids; [21] report on use of the "socialized recitation"; [22] lesson for appreciation; [23] report on classroom work on "methods of drill and practise"; discussion of expression activities; [24] report on "use of visual aids in the schools"; [25] report on the lessons for "appreciation"; summary.



## Broadcasts for Chicago Schools

THE PUBLIC-SCHOOL SYSTEM of Chicago is continuing the sponsorship of half-hour daily broadcasts intended for classroom use. The present program schedule which began January 30 will continue thru and include June 23.

WMAQ, a Chicago commercial radio station furnishes the free use of its facilities for these broadcasts, but the program itself, as it should be, is in charge of members of the staff of the Chicago public schools. G. P. Drucek, principal of the Curtis Junior High School, is chairman of the committee in charge of the broadcasts. The excellent cooperation which has existed between the schools and the radio station is due in no small measure to the foresight and vision of Judith C. Waller, vicepresident and general manager of WMAQ.

The school broadcast period is from 1:30 to 2PM each school day. During each half hour, two fifteen-minute lessons are given. Programs are so arranged that some material is provided for pupils in all grades from the first to the ninth inclusive. The subjects for which supplementary material is given by radio include: music, social studies, geography, history, household science, science, stories in mathematics, poetry, art, guidance, current events, character inspiration, health, book club, prominent citizens series, primary story hour, and a series on the Century of Progress intended to give both pupils and teachers a better idea of this exposition.

Excellent material for school use is being broadcast in these programs, it was discovered by the research director of the National Committee on Education by Radio on a recent visit to Chicago. Pupils in classrooms he visited were intensely interested in the broadcasts and seemed to be profiting by what they heard. Not all schools are equipped to receive radio programs, nor are they required to use them, even if they do have radios, but the evidence school authorities have collected concerning the use of the programs convinces them of the desirability of their continuance.

## Demonstration by Radio

AN EIGHT-MINUTE SPEAKER on the subject of reading is followed by an expert teacher and a wellprepared class to prove what the speaker has said. This is the plan the New York city schools follow in using the radio for purposes of demonstration teaching. By the middle of May 1932, a series of twenty-four of these demonstration lessons had been given, using WNYC a noncommercial radio station belonging to the city of New York.

## Consent Decree Victory for RCA

WHILE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT sought to sever the interlocking ownership ties that bound RCA to Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company and to General Electric Company, and obliterate the exclusive cross-licensing agreements, aims to which RCA scarcely could offer a gushing welcome, nevertheless RCA's goodwill and financial condition are improved by the terms of the contracts. . . .

While any violation of law is denied by the defendants, and the decree is specifically clear about the reservation of any such admission, nevertheless radio in nearly all its branches was generally regarded by the public as being obviously bottled up in the combination of interests. . . .

One would expect, since RCA was the chief defendant, that it might emerge from the fray somewhat damaged in repute and purse, but in fact RCA's position is morally stronger. It is impossible to see any financial penalty to RCA in the generosity with which Westinghouse and General Electric have treated it in respect to the floating debt owed by RCA to these two concerns. As a side issue the RCA building was purchased by General Electric at book value, \$4,745,000, while \$4,255,000 in ten-year debentures were issued by RCA to the two companies, these transactions cancelling the \$17,938,733 debt to the two of them, the difference, \$8,938,733 being discharged in consideration of the new agreements.

Since RCA is to move into Radio City ultimately, it will have no need for the beautiful office building it recently erected, and it is a treat under such circumstances to have a creditor take over an asset at book value in a depressed market, and join with a co-creditor in virtually writing off a difference of nearly \$9,000,000. Then, too, RCA was under heavy commitments for leases in Radio City. . . . and since the requirements will be much less than previously anticipated, RCA pays some \$5,000,000 [a bargain according to Mr. Sarnoff] to Rockefeller Center for the privilege of withdrawing from the excess of the lease commitments over requirements. . . .

Since the terms of the consent decree require that General Electric and Westinghouse dispose of half of their stock holdings in RCA in three months. . . . On what terms the distribution will be made has not been stated, but as to the one-half required in the three-month period it seems reasonable that the RCA stock will go to the stockholders of the two companies as a gift, which would strike some consoling balance with the \$9,000,000 write off. . . .—Editorial in *Radio World*, December 10, 1932, p20.

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