

Conference Increases International Difficulties

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NO BROADCASTING STATION in the United States has any protection against interference from any other country except Canada. That was the situation at the end of the Mexico City conference, held July 10 to August 9, 1933.

The danger was great before. It is greater now. Latin Americans have seen the United States boldly maintain her right to use as many channels as she wants. They maintain that they have the same right.

Canada based her national system on the minimum needs for service to the listener—not the advertiser—and long ago she voluntarily limited herself to a reasonable number of channels. Like Canada, the Latin American countries consider public service the major function of broadcasting. They protect their publicly-owned stations. They will not let rampant commercialism monopolize the air. They are ready to answer the bombardment of advertising from American stations with programs from more powerful stations.

Commercialism overreached— Every dollar invested in American broadcasting is in jeopardy as a result of an overreaching by greedy commercialism. The American delegation unsuccessfully tried to defend an indefensible position forced upon it by the same commercial group that has demanded uncontrolled censorship of everything broadcast; denied the right of governments to control education by radio; attempted to take channels away from the navy, army, shipping, and aviation; interfered with the service of government laboratories necessary to the defense of the country; and fought the idea that it should pay for the public radio facilities which it uses for its own purposes.

The representative of a radio trade association stated, in defense of the American position, that if the other countries were granted all that they asked, the United States would have had only one clear channel. On the other hand, if the United States broadcasters had been granted all they wanted, nine other countries never would have had one clear channel among them. The failure to work out a continental allocation on the basis of service to listeners has caused the loss of all clear channels to all countries. Any American station, at any moment, may encounter a powerful interfering wave from some country that refused to sign away its birthright. This wave may cut down or destroy the station's coverage, stop its revenue. Plans are underway in Latin America for the erection of stations so powerful that they will be heard thruout

the greater part of the continent and will interfere with reception everywhere. American stations could shoot back at them, but while our stations were doing a thousand dollars' worth of damage in Latin America their stations could do a million dollars' worth here.



WI. GRIFFITH, director of radio station • WOI, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. Under his competent direction this noncommercial station has become not only one of the most powerful but also one of the most effective of the educational stations. It is an additional tribute to Professor Griffith that WOI is rated as one of the most popular of all the Iowa stations.

Latin Americans offer cooperation—The conference opened with the Latin American countries willing and anxious to cooperate in working out a scientific allocation for the whole continent, based on service to the citizens of all the countries. They recognized the fact that there are not enough radio channels to satisfy the demands of all who wish to exploit the listeners. They were willing to negotiate on the basis of minimum needs. The conference closed with the United States standing alone, her one ally having withdrawn to a neutral position. The demands of her delegation were considered entirely unreasonable, out of harmony with recently expressed desires of President Roosevelt for friendly trade relations, and contrary to the attitude of the American people.

An outside story—This is an outside story of the conference. Only officials of the participating governments were permitted to attend its sessions. Some of the statements are unofficial but all are believed to be substantially correct, since the report was submitted to all governmental delegations for cor-

rections, yet no inaccuracies have been reported.

Representatives of commercial radio concerns and of the National Committee on Education by Radio had been invited by the United States Department of State to attend the meetings preparatory to the conference. At the suggestion of a government official our Committee had provided the services of Commander T. A. M. Craven, who served with distinction thru the long series of preparatory meetings. These representatives were referred to as "outsiders." It was not until after the "outsiders" had purchased their railroad and pullman tickets that they were notified that the Mexican government deemed it inadvisable for anyone except government officials to attend. There is evidence that the Mexican government yielded, somewhat tardily, to the point of view of the United States government in this matter. The "outsiders," altho not invited, went on to Mexico City. On invitation, they attended the opening session of the conference, but were dismissed after the response to the address of welcome and were outside the rest of the time.

Nations participating—Of the 16 national governments, dominions, colonies, and possessions in North and Central America and the West Indies, only Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and the United States participated. The United States delegation represented Alaska, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Canal Zone, as well as the mother country. The Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica were not represented. Newfoundland and Nova Scotia did not send delegates, their interests being in the hands of the Canadians.

An American representative of a company associated with the Radio Corporation of America came to the conference as an official delegate of one of the countries. After unsuccessfully trying to secure control of three national votes by telling how much he disliked American greed, he became affected by the altitude and was unable to attend any more meetings.

After the committees had solved a few technical matters about which there was little disagreement, the rumors indicated that difficulties had been encountered. The big question was the allocation of broadcasting channels to the participating countries.

The United States, by an agreement made with Canada long before the conference, without consulting the other countries concerned, limited herself to the use of 90 broadcasting channels. Canada limited herself to 18 channels. All the other countries, being bound by no agreement, retained the right to use the entire 96 channels in the broadcast band. Fifteen of the 50 Mexican stations were wedged between frequencies used by the United States and Canada. The rest are squarely in channels used by these and other countries. At least two stations which had been forced off the air in the United States by legal procedure had made long-term contracts with the Mexican government and established high-power transmitters close to the American border. Headed by a former vice-president of the United States, one of these had a staff of observers estimated at from eleven to fourteen in Mexico City during the conference. It was the belief of some that the main objective of the conference, from the point of view of the United States, was to eliminate this station.

The Central Americans learned, early in the conference, that representatives of the United States were holding secret meetings with representatives of Mexico. The object of these meetings, it developed, was to bring Mexico and the United States into agreement on a plan which would exclude the other Latin American countries from having any share in the allocation of cleared channels. Just as the United States and Canada divided the channels, ignoring the rights of Latin America, the United States had been trying to bring Mexico into the deal [because Mexico had become troublesome as her broadcasting developed] and was ignoring the rights of the rest.

United States proposal—The United States, it was reported, proposed: [1] that broadcasting stations be limited to the amount of power needed for national coverage—one kilowatt in the case of small countries—that no channels be open for international service; [2] that stations be permitted to broadcast only in the official languages of their respective countries; [3] that no one who had been refused a station

license in one country be granted a license in another country without the consent of the country which had refused a license.

From the moment that these proposals were made it was safe to predict that there would be no agreement unless they were modified. It was not believed that the United States would abide by any restrictions on power or languages. The arguments centered on the number of channels that the United States would be willing to surrender. Someone pointed out, it is believed, that New York City was served by 34 stations and that in numerous other cities there were many more stations than were required to meet the needs of the listeners.

Costa Rica first—Costa Rica was the first country to list her requirements. She not only wanted channels enough for national coverage but advocated the principle that every country should have a number of clear channels for international programs proportionate to her commercial and educational needs. She pointed proudly to the fact that Costa Rica, with half a million inhabitants, has 2700 schools and only 150 soldiers in her army. She has not had one revolution during the past 65 years, which accounts for the fact that the Carnegie Association decided to build the Central American Peace Palace at Cartago.

Widening the broadcast band—The question of widening the broadcast band by including frequencies below and above the present limits is believed to have been discussed, but no agreement was reached. American broadcasters and the Radio Manufacturers' Association are known to favor the use of frequencies between 160 and 220 kilocycles. American manufacturers are interested in the fact that the estimated cost of new apparatus to enable American listeners to hear programs on these low frequencies would be about half a billion dollars. Army, navy, shipowners, and aviation interests of the United States are opposed to the allocation of these frequencies for broadcasting because, they say, that would displace necessary mobile services which cannot be accommodated elsewhere without prohibitive expense or loss of efficiency.

Use of broadcasting—Altho not scheduled for discussion the question of the purposes for which broadcasting stations were used did come up, it is reported. Latin American countries declared that they needed channels and stations to use in making education and culture more easily available to their people. Mexico and Guatemala, among other countries, have stations operated by their national departments of education exclusively for educational and cultural purposes. At least one other country has plans for a high-power station for educational purposes.

Reach Central America—It is reported that an engineer in the American delegation tried to justify the limitation of power in other countries by stating that stations in the United States were not heard in Central America. This statement, unfortunately, created a most unfavorable impression. The delegates of these Central American countries hear United States stations regularly. Also they knew that the Federal Radio Commission had authorized the erection of a 500-kilowatt station and they assumed that the \$400,000 investment in this station was not made exclusively to give engineers an opportunity to experiment between midnight and morning

with amounts of power which were never to be put to practical use. In short, the Latin Americans concluded that the United States wanted to retain possession of its neighbors' air but was unwilling to give neighboring countries an opportunity to reach American ears.

How shall an allotment of North American broadcast channels be made? If divided equally among the 16 countries and other large political units, there would be six channels for each. If divided on the basis of area, the United States, including Alaska, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Canal Zone would have 40.1302 channels. If divided on the basis of population we would have 72.2848 channels. The United States now has 79 channels, plus 11 shared with Canada.

Canada appears to be satisfied with the 18 channels she now uses. If the channels were divided on the basis of area she, with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, would receive 41.2961. If divided on the basis of population they would receive 6.1889. Basing her national system on service to listeners rather than service to advertisers, Canada does not use as many channels as might be required under our broadcasting practise.

Chain announcement wrecks proposal—At the very time when the United States delegates were arguing for limiting each country to the use of its own official language, an American chain released an announcement of ambitious plans for broadcasting to all parts of North and South America in the official languages of all the countries on both continents. Some Latin Americans concluded that the American radio delegation, while officially representing the American government, actually represented only the point of view of a certain American commercial group, a point of view with which Latin America could not agree.

In justice the Latin Americans cannot be criticized if they use channels, even the best ones, claimed by Canada and the United States. All channels clearly belong to any sovereign

country within its own territory. Canada and the United States left no channels open for the other countries and it is not known that they make any serious effort to keep their waves at home.

A false accusation—Two representatives of the broadcasting industry accused the representative of the National Committee of "dealing with the enemy" because, in performing his routine duties, he mailed to the delegates who had not seen it before, certain information on the financial results of broadcasting in various countries which had been published in the United States in 1932. What these gentlemen particularly objected to was information concerning the United States which one of them himself had prepared and published in an official document of the United States Senate, and testimony given at a public hearing by an official of his own organization. They said the data were out of date and inaccurate, but when they were invited to provide more recent or more accurate information for circulation to the same delegates, they said it was not available and that they would not give it to the delegates if they had it. This raises two fundamental questions: [1] Should any country in North or Central America or the West Indies be looked upon as an enemy of the United States? [2] Do the Latin Americans have rights equal to those of the United States?

There seem to be urgent reasons why commercial broadcasters in the United States ignore and try to suppress the fact that broadcasters in many countries with sound systems enjoy assured incomes and profits, guaranteed for periods of twenty to thirty years, while every American broadcaster continually faces the possibility of being put out of business by some covetous American competitor or by a foreign station.

In spite of failure to solve the extremely important problems referred to, the conference made some valuable contributions to North American radio. A reasonable share of credit for these accomplishments is due the American delegation.

Broadcasting in the United States

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Member of the Federal Radio Commission

UNDER THE RADIO ACT OF 1927, as amended, the United States government retains control over all forms of radio transmissions and communications within this country and its possessions. That Act provided for the creation of the Federal Radio Commission, which is charged with the responsibility of administering it.

By international agreement frequencies are allocated to different services—broadcast, ship, coastal, fixed, point-to-point, amateurs, aviation, and the like. The band between 550 and 1500 kilocycles is designated as the broadcasting band for use in the United States, and covers the frequencies indicated upon the dial of an average receivingset. It is the use of these frequencies that I shall particularly refer to here. We should bear in mind, however, the fact that the President, in an Executive Order, selected a few hundred frequencies for the use of the army, navy, and other departments of the government. All facilities not so allocated by the President come

under the supervision of the Federal Radio Commission. That body licensed, as of June 30, 1932, 34,741 stations, 606 of which were broadcasting stations. Licenses issued for the operation of these stations are for different periods of time varying from ninety days to three years. In the case of broadcasting stations the term is six months. Under no circumstances does the government make permanent grants.

The Act requires that the operation of broadcasting stations must be in the public interest, convenience, and necessity. Consequently, applications for renewal licenses are very carefully scrutinized and are often designated for hearings before the Commission when it is not satisfied they are operating in the public interest.

The Commission may also revoke any existing license for cause, providing, however, it does not act in an arbitrary or capricious manner. The courts have sustained the Commission's decisions that licensees have no vested rights in the

air. The Act denies the Commission any power of censorship. It is, however, duty bound to take into consideration programs or service previously rendered in considering applications for renewal of licenses.

Service to the listeners is the paramount consideration. That service has gradually developed from crude phonograph records and speeches to programs covering the whole gamut of human knowledge and human emotions. The evolution of radio broadcasting in the United States is one of the outstanding marvels of this wonderful age. Program directors vie with each other in providing interesting, instructive, and varied programs. Hundreds of intelligent persons are devoting all their time and talents to the study of the needs and requirements, the whims and fancies of various communities, providing the listeners with valuable information and worthwhile entertainment. An opportunity for expression is provided to every reputable and substantial class or group. Earnest efforts are made to give the people what they want and not what some one in authority may think is good for them.

National unity has been promoted, musical culture and appreciation widely extended, messages of men and women of outstanding achievements and mentality are now heard by millions thru the networks, geographical provincialism is being banished rapidly, thus preventing the disintegration of our vast population into classes.

Common sources of entertainment, common economic interests, common ideals, problems, and dangers constitute bonds for making our people homogeneous.

This new means for nationwide communication is proving a valuable adjunct to the government at this critical, changing era, informing the people concerning the economic readjustments being made designed to restore prosperity.

Our plan has developed, in all citizens, a deeper consciousness of the functions of our national government and the manifold and complex problems confronting it.

Educational programs are provided daily on many stations. Special efforts are made by the Commission to provide radio facilities for educational institutions. Emphasis is put on agricultural programs by many stations which are designed to aid farmers in rural sections.

The late Edwin A. Alderman, president of the University of Virginia, in an official report on the American system of radio broadcasting said:

Already many of the problems have been solved. Entertainers have achieved fame and fortune by furnishing amusement for millions of homes. Great musicians, freed at last from the limitations of the concert stage, have found in radio a national Peoples' Theater, and the works of immortals belong no longer to the few.

Government officials, statesmen, and political candidates now can and do address the whole people directly. The church has carried its message of faith far beyond its own doors. A death blow has been dealt to isolation and exclusiveness—whether geographical, cultural, or social.

Dr. Alderman added that if one evaluates current programs "it is surprising to find how many of them possess real educational merit."

The President's Research Committee on Social Trends [which served under President Hoover] composed of noted economists and sociologists, after an exhaustive study of the use of radio in America, found 150 different ways in which

it has contributed to the progress of the nation and the social habits of the people, adding much to their comfort and happiness.

In creating the Radio Act, Congress, in effect, ordained that the operation of radio stations would entail no expense to listeners, that no taxes should be imposed on the listening public for the support of stations or their programs. Proposals for taxing receivingsets, made during the debates on the proposed law, met with strong opposition from the general public.

The phenomenal growth of American broadcasting and of the radio audience in this country is tangible evidence of the soundness of our system. It is estimated that we have an audience comprising more than seventeen million radio families, representing 45 percent of all the radio families in the world and constituting a higher per capita set-ownership than that of any nation except the small country of Denmark. This, I believe, would not be so unless our system were fundamentally sound.

Six years after private enterprise had developed the radio broadcasting industry, the soundness of the system was recognized by Congress when it formulated and passed the Radio Act of 1927. At that time, as today, Congress had the power to create any system of broadcasting which it saw fit to bring into being. Congress, however, chose to continue the system of broadcasting already established.

Advertising furnishes the needed revenue just as it supports our magazines and newspapers.

Radio broadcasting in this country has been criticized because of this method of support. Personally, I see no objection to this plan providing the advertising is carefully regulated and intelligently presented. Advertising itself is a constructive force.

It would require vast sums to provide radio service to the American people under any other system which might be devised. Under the present plan, according to a recent survey made by the Commission to supply data for the United States Senate, it was disclosed that the investment of stations as of December 31, 1931, totaled approximately forty-eight million dollars. Since then considerable sums have been added.

That survey also shows that in 1931 the gross receipts of all radio broadcasting stations amounted to \$77,758,049; gross expenditures to \$77,995,405, which included \$20,159,656 for talent and programs; \$16,884,437 for regular employees; \$4,725,168 for equipment; and \$36,226,144 for miscellaneous.

All except forty of the stations in the United States are privately owned and operated, the exception being stations owned directly or indirectly by states and municipalities. About two hundred stations buy part of their programs from companies engaged in chain broadcasting. These stations are for the most part independently owned and operated, and join the network at intervals to obtain programs of national interest. The chains also provide highclass programs to many rural communities lacking talent.

IT IS NOW WOSU since the Ohio State University recently secured permission from the Federal Radio Commission to change the call letters of its publicly-owned non-commercial radio station. The station formerly used the letters WEOO.