

# Education

by **R A D I O**

A Bulletin to Promote the  
Use of Radio for Educational,  
Cultural, and Civic Purposes

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## The Educational Broadcasting Conference

**T**HE FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING, held in Washington, D. C., December 10-12, was definitely successful as an overview of current practises in educational broadcasting. It reflected what seems to be a general approbation of the present system of broadcasting, but introduced enough criticism to indicate that room for much improvement still exists. It avoided, in accordance with the wishes of the eighteen sponsoring organizations, any attempt to pass resolutions or to agree upon conclusions. It moved with a smoothness which reflected great credit upon its managers.

During the course of the conference two separate and distinct areas of interest developed. One included the general sessions, which dealt with subjects of widespread interest. The second was composed of section meetings devoted to specialized interests.

The general sessions were designed to create a broad background of information and understanding about radio. One meeting was given over to a description of basic engineering facts and an interpretation of their importance. Other meetings took up questions of the use of radio in politics and in education. Certain speeches dealt with the social significance of this new medium of mass communication. It may be said that the conference came to a climax around the great topic assigned to the banquet evening, "The Influence of Radio on the Comity of Nations."

Several of the speeches at the general sessions were thought-provoking and highly worthwhile. A number of the others were largely descriptive rather than analytical. These related what was happening, with apparent acceptance of the assumption that current practise is a satisfactory answer to problems for which some people are still seeking a solution. In one or two instances speakers raised straw men which had been felled for years.

The only one of the general sessions in which interest lagged was that dealing with engineering facts. Four highly reputable radio technicians failed to simplify sufficiently for a lay audience the complicated charts and mathematical formulas of their profession. This should not be taken to indicate that engineering facts cannot be simplified for public consumption. In this particular instance, however, that very desirable contribution to public understanding fell short of accomplishment.

The general sessions, taken as a whole, contributed little towards a solution of the problems which sooner or later must be faced in broadcasting. This suggests that whether another conference is to grow out of the recent one or is called *de nouveau* at some future time more emphasis might well be placed on analyzing specifically the remaining problems. In this connection it might be suggested

**A**NY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM on the air would be but a hollow thing if it were not fundamental in it that those participating in the program were free at all times to seek the truth wherever it might be found, and, having found it, to proclaim it. Unless the people in their might stand firm to protect educational broadcasting from the witchhunters, then it had better not be undertaken at all. Freedom of the press, freedom of assemblage, freedom of speech, and that academic freedom which is implicit in freedom of speech, constitute the piles driver to bedrock upon which our institutions securely stand. These rights must, as a matter of course, extend to and be inseparable from any program of educational broadcasting that is worth the snap of a finger. While the radio should not be subjected to abuse, neither should it suffer from the strangulation of either standardization or censorship. —HAROLD L. ICKES, U. S. Secretary of the Interior.

**E**DUCATIONAL BROADCASTING, like commercial broadcasting, must not only obtain the halls and classrooms, that is, the time on the air; it must also induce people to come, as a voluntary audience, to the programs given in these classrooms. In neither field does it follow that, given a powerful station and a favorable hour, a large audience automatically tunes in.—HENRY C. LINK, secretary, Psychological Corporation.

**T**ITLE PAGE, Table of Contents, and Index for *Education by Radio*, Volume VI, 1936, will be supplied free on request for the use of persons who wish to bind or preserve permanently sets of this publication. *Please send stamped, self-addressed envelope* to Room 308, One Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y. Missing issues to use in completing sets for binding or filing will be supplied free while they last.

**A**LL QUOTATIONS given in this issue of *Education by Radio* are from addresses made before the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting held in Washington, D. C., December 10, 11, and 12, 1936. Complete proceedings of the conference will be published in book form by the University of Chicago Press.

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MY PREDICTION is that the major future developments in broadcasting lie with local broadcasting service rather than in the field of national broadcasting service. National broadcasting thru chains of stations is well advanced toward saturation. . . Obviously national program service either by telephone, wire, or by transcription will turn to national sources for educational programs. . . On the other hand, stations with predominantly local service objectives will turn to local educational and other civic agencies for public service programs. . . Here is the opportunity for educational institutions! If the present American plan of radio is maintained by the Federal Communications Commission then there will be ample opportunity for schools to use these local outlets. Then the problem becomes one of whether educational institutions can build programs able to compete with national programs for listener interest.—WILLIAM DOW BOUTWELL, director, Educational Radio Project, U. S. Office of Education.

GREATER SAFEGUARDS for the freedom of the air are desirable. No abuses have developed which would justify an effort at this time to take control of the broadcasting business out of the hands of the broadcasting companies and station licensees, but arrangements should be devised by means of which the radio listeners of the country may be better protected against unwise use of the power of editorial supervision by the managers of the great chains and the proprietors of local stations.—ARTHUR N. HOLCOMBE, Harvard University.

that the fruitfulness of such a conference could be enhanced by applying the recognized forum procedure and allowing the immediate and direct questioning of speakers.

This point of view could scarcely be accommodated within the limitations under which the recent conference was planned. Its primary design was to secure for the program maximum prestige thru outstanding personalities in the fields both of scholarship and of practical experience in broadcasting and its uses. It is an accepted custom that distinguished speakers such as these are accorded wide latitude in the matter of speech preparation. It was unavoidable, therefore, that a sharply contrasting program built around current radio issues which might have been discussed with timely advantage should have to wait its turn at some later date.

None of the comments so far made are particularly applicable to the second area of the conference's interest, namely, the special sections dealing with specific problems. In this area there was more sureness of touch and more definite accomplishment. Indeed, the general impression gained from attending a number of the section meetings was that these gave a true reflection of the extent to which a mastery of radio had been achieved by the educators. They followed very closely the pattern of the Institute for Education by Radio conducted annually at the Ohio State University.

If there are such things as stages of development in the mastery of a subject, the educators, judging from the frequency with which they used the word, were in the stage of "technics." "Technic" seemed to be on the lips of everyone. It made its appearance under one guise or another in most of the sessions. It seemed to reflect a fixed conviction on the part of a large majority of conferees that the important thing in educational broadcasting at present is the development of special skills which have a practical application to the specific business of broadcasting.

In the first of the conference sections listed on the program, namely, "Broadcasting as a Community Enterprise," the discussion centered around technics by which the broadcasting station could make itself more a part of its community. A representative of a local commercial radio station in Peoria, Illinois, outlined what is perhaps the outstanding example of successful technic for this purpose. In Peoria several years ago the local station found itself with a very small listening audience and with little acceptance as a community institution. Its managers decided to make the station a champion of certain local reforms, being careful both to avoid questions of political controversy around which prejudices had become established and to select problems having a rather obvious solution. They began to editorialize on the air. In a surprisingly short time they had made their station a vital force in their community and had won a growing public support which, incidentally, meant an audience highly salable to advertisers.

Another device of the same station was to have its news commentator break into any program which might be on the air whenever he received news of particular interest to the listeners. The result has been that people leave their radio sets tuned to that particular station lest they miss some especially interesting item of local news. Since no other station is in a position to supply the same kind of information, the local station in Peoria has a definite advantage over its most severe competitors, the chain broadcasting stations.

By applying these technics this particular station has convinced its listeners that it is operating in their public interest. It no longer has to court the favor of public officials or to beg for the support of educators and other leaders whose names will make a "front" for



the renewal of its license. It has made a place for itself not only in its community but also in the broadcasting spectrum.

In some of the other sessions such as those dealing with the radio workshop, measuring the audience, and labor's experience in radio, other special technics with which to achieve specific purposes were discussed. The judgment seemed to be that if the proper technics could be developed, almost any purpose could be achieved.

In the section on radio workshops the technics discussed became so numerous as to be confusing. If it was not clear at the beginning just what constituted a radio workshop, it was even less clear when the session ended. This was not surprising because both the name and the concept are very new. In this discussion the term was stretched to include everything from the preparation of radio programs within a single department of a college or university to the radio project of the U. S. Office of Education, which gives full-time occupation to many people and puts out a considerable variety of scripts and broadcasting materials. However, in spite of all the confusion it was evident that radio workshops have become a vital part of educational broadcasting and that no agency can afford to undertake putting programs on the air without benefit of the technics which they represent.

The emphasis on technics was so completely dominant in the various sections that almost for the first time it overshadowed the complaints of educators about the lack of money with which to take advantage of the opportunity offered by radio. The lack of money still exists. Educational stations are struggling along on budgets totally inadequate to the proportions of their task. Special educational projects in broadcasting are suffering from the scarcity of funds. But in this conference there was evidence of a definite conviction that with the development of technics and the increased application of intelligence much more effective educational broadcasting could be done within the limits of present finance.

In the section on labor and radio there was a particularly interesting contribution. This group represented what was admittedly a special economic interest. Those present emphasized that radio is no more than a medium of communication and that its effectiveness depends first and last upon the program any particular group can prepare to further its purposes. The speakers emphasized the need for a sequence of steps, *viz.*: first, preparing a program which would tell the labor story; second, reshaping that program until its script had the qualities of intrinsic excellence; third, selling the program to its own supporters; and, finally, seeking the opportunity to put the message on the air in the best radio form.

Two rather definite conclusions seemed to represent the consensus of opinion in the section on classroom broadcasting. One was that broadcasting for classroom use must be more closely integrated with the curriculum. This seemed to imply that the broadcasting must be done by local stations for particular school systems and could not be done effectively by national broadcasting systems for general school use. The second conclusion seemed to be that classroom broadcasts should be more carefully controlled and more exactly evaluated. Technics for this purpose appeared to involve a more careful formulation of objectives, a more precise determination of changes induced in pupils by the broadcasts, and a scientific evaluation of the results achieved in terms of the accepted objectives.

The impression must be avoided that every section was concerned primarily with technics. In some sections, indeed, the thinking of the participants had not advanced to the point where they had devel-

**I** OFFER for your consideration six goals for the use of radio in the service of education during the next ten years:

*First:* the vigorous development of educational radio producing groups. I should like to see several thousand competent school and college student radio producing groups by 1946. I should like to see them presenting highgrade programs regularly on both local commercial and educational stations.

*Second:* Further cooperation between educators and broadcasters thru the Federal Radio Education Committee. This will require faith on the part of all concerned and adequate finances for investigation and research definitely planned to clear away the obstacles which now thwart our progress in the development of education by radio.

*Third:* Further experimentation and demonstration in educational radio by the Office of Education and expansion of its service to aid national, state, and local agencies interested in the problem.

*Fourth:* Development of practical training facilities for educators responsible for creating educational radio programs or in using such programs for instructional purposes.

*Fifth:* Establishment of shortwave stations by many local school systems to serve rural areas as well as urban centers.

*Sixth:* More adequate support for existing educational radio stations with an increase in their power and time to enable them to serve a large clientele.—JOHN W. STUDEBAKER, U. S. Commissioner of Education.

**I** AM ADVOCATING no lessening in the effort to make the finest and best of classical music an actual and necessary part of the daily lives of all kinds of people. I am simply presenting to you as a problem the necessity of awakening in our people such a sense of discrimination and appreciation of workmanship that, whatever the music—classical, semi-classical, or purely popular, they will demand the most careful preparation and impeccable performance as the price of their listening and praise. Given this as an accomplished fact, an increase in the national interest in the highest and noblest treasures of music must follow.—JULIUS F. SEEBACH, program director, Mutual Broadcasting System.

**T**HE COMMISSION is sincerely interested in and is wholeheartedly supporting the movement looking toward the development of a comprehensible plan for education by radio. We believe it can be done.—ANNING S. PRALL, chairman, Federal Communications Commission.

**R**EQUESTS for the special supplement to *Education by Radio*, which was published in connection with the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, have been so numerous that it is being included in the January mailing.



IT WOULD PROBABLY BE good counsel to the educators of the United States to advise them to keep fully informed on the technical and industrial developments in the ultra-high-frequency domain and to study carefully in advance what may probably be accomplished by the use of the radio and visual broadcasting services which can be established in this domain. It would also be well if carefully planned broadcasting of educational material were carried out using these new frequencies and the novel forms of transmission such as facsimile and television which they render possible. However, if education is to derive its full benefit from these new instrumentalities of science it will involve much sober thought, cooperative effort, and systematic planning on the part of educators.—ALFRED N. GOLDSMITH, consulting industrial engineer.

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IN DISCUSSING the results of radio research, may I start with a statement that has become almost axiomatic in the radio industry; namely, "The program makes the audience." This basic fact regarding programs, early discovered, holds true to the present, and it must be borne in mind that any data presented in studies of listening time, ebb and flow of audience at different hours, variation in listening habits among income classes and various inconsistencies of the radio audience, result from, and are not the cause of, listener reaction to various programs. In short, the program is the key to radio's success. Good programs build audiences and popularity; poor programs deflate the audience and the effectiveness of radio as a social and economic force.—SAMUEL E. GILL, director of research, Crossley, Inc.

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MAY I URGE the consideration of one more problem. In some respects it is the most important of all, and yet it seems to have received the least attention. That is the problem of how to use the programs that are broadcast. Of what avail is it to devise better educational broadcasts if the schools are not prepared to take full advantage of them? Program presentation is a problem that broadcasters and educators both can grapple with, but program reception in the classroom is one with which broadcasters are not competent to deal. So we toss it hopefully into the lap of the educators.—ERNEST LAPRADE, National Broadcasting Company.

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GOVERNMENT OPERATION of a necessary enterprise should exist only where private management has shown an absolute inability to give the public satisfactory service. It is unthinkable that in the matter of education in broadcasting, the professional educators and the radio interests have not the ability to work out policies adequate to the situations. All that is needed is a spirit of cooperation, of mutual confidence and concerted approach.—WILLIAM MATHER LEWIS, president, Lafayette College.

oped technics which they could discuss. This seemed to be particularly true in the sections on listening groups and propaganda.

There were some splendid reports on listening groups showing that great achievement could be wrought by mere enthusiasm and much effort. But no formulas had been developed on the basis of which the successful organization of additional listening groups could be predicated. Rather, the impression seemed to be that at present no formula is possible. It may be, as was suggested in the report on the labor section, that the effective organization of listening groups must wait until programs more specifically designed for the service of such groups are being produced. It may be that when such special programs have been developed they will constitute the best impetus toward organizing listening groups and maintaining the interest of participants.

In the section on propaganda the failure to reach any consideration of specific technics was not that technics were lacking but that limitations of time prevented the discussion from getting down to them. The discussion started with questions and definitions as to what was education and what was propaganda. From that it progressed to a recognition that there can be no complete freedom of the air so long as radio stations have to be licensed, and that, inevitably, certain individuals must exercise control as to what is or is not to be allowed on the air. The question was raised as to who should exercise this control. Before the possible answers to that question could be explored the audience began deserting the conference room to listen to the abdication speech of King Edward VIII and the meeting had to be adjourned.

In contrast to the majority of the sections, which were concerned with technics or did not reach the stage of discussing them, there were some sections which seemed to be pointing the way to the next and future stage of radio development. These sections accepted the inevitability and, no less, the desirability of the widespread use of technics. Indeed, most of those in attendance upon these sections were already successful users of many of the technics. They had reached the stage where they were faced with the problem of creating a framework of organized cooperation within which the various technics and the people interested in using them could function with maximum effectiveness.

This was particularly true in the section on state planning for radio. There the representatives of a number of states reported on the devices already being used in an effort to secure cooperation. While the details of these reports differed considerably, they indicated that the trend was toward some version of state boards or their equivalent. Attention was more or less focussed around the public radio board plan which has been described at various times in these columns.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the plan gained new acceptance, which seems to promise that it will be an increasingly important factor in future discussions of cooperative enterprise in radio.

Thruout the conference friendliness and good will prevailed. Representatives of government, commercial broadcasting interests, and educational groups recognized their common responsibility for the improvement of broadcasting. They saw together the social values of this great instrument of communication. They realized that its potentialities are yet to be achieved. Many of them were convinced anew of the necessity of closer collaboration to the end that broadcasting may attain its widest social usefulness.

<sup>1</sup> "New Mexico Plans State Radio Service." *Education by Radio* 6: 2-3, January-February 1936.  
"An American Public Radio Board Plan." *Education by Radio* 6: 13-15, May 1936.  
"A Basis for Cooperation." *Education by Radio* 6: 45-48, December 1936 Supplement.