

# 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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## Is Radio Living up to its Promise?

THE FIFTH INAUGURAL PROGRAM of the WEVD University of the Air, broadcast from the auditorium of the College of the City of New York on December 18, 1936, suggested a new perspective from which to view the problems of educational broadcasting. Its point of departure was the question of whether or not radio was living up to its promise. It led to a consideration of fundamental social values in broadcasting, with a minimum of disturbance to those ancient issues which have been the cause of endless controversy.

The program consisted of a series of four addresses followed by a panel discussion. The addresses were delivered by Dr. John W. Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education, Hon. George Henry Payne, member of the Federal Communications Commission, and S. Howard Evans, secretary, National Committee on Education by Radio. Hendrik Willem Van Loon, historian and author, acted as chairman and master of ceremonies.

The panel was composed of: Dean Ned H. Dearborn, New York University; Mark Eisner, assistant superintendent of schools, New York, N. Y.; Dr. Henry Pratt Fairchild, New York University; Dr. Frank Kingdon, president, University of Newark; Dr. Sandor Lorand; Prof. Robert Morss Lovett, University of Chicago; and Dr. Levering Tyson, director, National Advisory Council on Radio in Education.

The discussion started with a narrowing of the subject and a definition of terms. It was readily accepted that the speakers were to be concerned only about broadcasting. While there was not so much agreement when it came to determining the promise by which broadcasting was to be judged, most of the speakers seemed to feel that there was a promise of social service inherent in the public nature of this great medium of mass communication. However, one panel member expressed the opinion that radio had made no promise to him and that he had no right to make demands upon the program makers.

What is the promise of radio broadcasting? There is no definition upon which people commonly agree. That may be one of the reasons why so much misunderstanding is rampant and why, in the past, so much suspicion has existed.

It would be very interesting to have their interpretations of the promise of radio written by representatives of the different factions within the governmental regulatory body, by the broadcasting industry, including both the independent stations and the chain systems, and by different citizens' groups. Such a procedure might pave the way for a *rapprochement* and for the establishment of a real basis of cooperation between the different groups.

None of the speakers at the WEVD Inaugural attempted to make

CARLTON H. LARRABEE, in an address before the National Council of Teachers of English in Boston on November 28, 1936, reminded English teachers that listening to the radio is one of the chief interests of high school children and that many phases of English work can be vitalized by correlating them with the radio. He suggested:

"Take letter writing for example. A study of over three thousand New York City school children by I. L. Eisenberg disclosed that 73 percent of them had at some time voluntarily written to a radio station. Ask your pupils to write such a letter, and they will gladly write and rewrite until their letters are perfect.

"A renewed interest in composition writing will result from an assignment like this: 'Listen tonight to such and such a program. Pretend you're a radio critic for a newspaper. After the drama has been given, write a review of it.'

"Original material for pretended radio presentation can take the form of plays, forum talks, book reviews, dialogs, and news items, and many scenes from literature can be dramatized and vitalized by adaptation to broadcasting. If your school has a portable loudspeaker system, or if your pupils can borrow or even construct one, you have an excellent means for motivating good speech. If high school pupils stand before a real microphone connected to a loudspeaker, they will take all the pains they would if actually broadcasting.

"According to a doctor's dissertation recently submitted to the University of Michigan by Paul T. Rankin, listening constitutes 45 percent of our life communication but receives only 8 percent of school emphasis. This leads to the conclusion that schools should provide more training in systematic listening, and radio may be one of the chief means. Pupils can be encouraged to build well-rounded vocabularies thru the addition of words heard over the radio.

"Even outside reading will take on a new interest if pupils are encouraged or allowed to read and report on radio books and periodicals."

THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY broadcasts daily, Monday thru Friday, over station WHAS, Louisville, a 50,000 watt clear-channel station which can be heard over a large midwestern territory. The University publishes a free booklet giving a complete list of its programs. For copies of the booklet write to Elmer G. Sulzer, director, publicity bureau, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.

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S. HOWARD EVANS, *secretary*

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## Committee Members and Organizations They Represent

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AT IOWA STATE COLLEGE a course in radio is being presented, sponsored jointly by the department of technical journalism and the department of public speaking. Special attention is paid to continuity writing and the young people enrolled in the class, insofar as their voices will warrant using them, are having some experience in broadcasting news items over the college radio station, WOI. The course is being administered by Prof. Blair Converse, head of the department of technical journalism.

WHEREAS radio offers such vital opportunities for serving parents, teachers, and pupils, and the country at large, therefore

*Be it resolved* that the Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers urge that definite plans for educational broadcasting for the public school system of Texas be further developed;

*Be it further resolved* that they cooperate with other agencies in education by radio.—Adopted by the Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers, Fort Worth, Texas, November 1936.

THE MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE OF THE AIR, broadcast over WKAR, Michigan State College station, reports that its enrollment during the present term is more than double that of the comparable period last year. Seven courses are being offered, including a weekly period from the Michigan State Capitol in which the various departments of state government are visited.

any thorough analysis of the promise of broadcasting. They chose rather to rest upon the clause in the Radio Act of 1927 which says that all radio stations licensed by the federal government must operate in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity." Then they proceeded to discuss the questions of whether or not stations were operating in the public interest and what ought to be done about their present practices.

Commissioner Payne was very frank in admitting that from his point of view broadcasting had not fulfilled its promise. He indicated a willingness to join his fellow members of the Commission in accepting their share of the blame. He seemed to feel, however, that the lion's share of guilt rested with the so-called radio lobby. He said:

A more disagreeable aspect, and a more sinister one, deterring radio from living up to its promise, is the fact that the radio lobby in Washington has filled the radio "industry" with the novel idea that they control the government.

For two and a half years I have watched the operations of this lobby which has endeavored to dictate the actions of the Federal Communications Commission.

When I speak of its contemptuous attitude toward educational and cultural matters I am not hazarding any guess. I am speaking from facts. An important broadcaster, a man who has acted as an official of an organization, sat in my office one day arguing about the perfectability of the radio program. We were naturally at different ends of the question—he declaring that the programs as given today were perfect. Finally I drew out some letters and extracts from letters of many college presidents throughout the country and showed him that they were far from satisfied with the present set-up.

His answer was, "What the hell do them college presidents know!"

Other speakers took up different aspects of the problem but none of them spoke with the directness of Commissioner Payne. Likewise, none of them saw fit to specify reasons why radio had not fulfilled its promise with anything like the exactness of a report, *4 Years of Network Broadcasting*,<sup>1</sup> made public recently by the Committee on Civic Education by Radio of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education and the American Political Science Association. Dr. Thomas H. Reed, chairman of that committee, announced the report at the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting held in Washington, D. C., last December. While that report has nothing to do with the WEVD Inaugural Program, it so effectively tells the story of the difficulties encountered by Dr. Reed's committee in its efforts to cooperate with commercial broadcasters that it merits inclusion at this point. The two passages which probably will be most widely quoted and which will have the most bearing on the future of educational broadcasting are as follows:

Nevertheless the relations of the Committee with the NBC have not been entirely satisfactory, and we are about to recite them in some detail because to do so will shed considerable light on the whole relation of educational broadcasting and the radio industry. Our experience has demonstrated a conflict between the commercial interests of the broadcasting company and the educational uses of radio which threatens to become almost fatal to the latter. Educational broadcasting has become the poor relation of commercial broadcasting, and the pauperization of the latter has increased in direct proportion to the growing affluence of the former. . . .

It is our contention, therefore, that the NBC had neither the will nor the power to provide the "You and Your Government" thirteenth series with a satisfactory network. Nor did it seem able to tell us just what network it had provided so that we might adjust our merchandising to it. In the case of an educational program of long duration it is not so important to have a long list of stations as it is to have an accurate and permanent list. Twenty stations, if you knew what they were and could rely on them, might prove as profitable a field for promotional activity as forty shifting and uncertain stations. Imagine the devastating effect on the usefulness of radio in education when classes which have begun listening to a series in good faith are cut off because the time is sold.

During the discussion at the WEVD Inaugural the question was directly raised as to whether or not government ownership and opera-

<sup>1</sup> *4 Years of Network Broadcasting* will be reproduced in full in the proceedings of the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, to be published by the University of Chicago Press.



tion of broadcasting facilities would insure a greater degree of fulfillment of the promise of radio. Dr. Studebaker gave an answer which is one of the most complete and probably one of the most acceptable to educators which has ever been given. Because of its great significance it is quoted at length. He said:

The greatest danger inherent in the present system of broadcasting is the tendency to lose sight of the fact that ownership of the air waves is vested in the people themselves and not in the hands of those who have the financial means necessary to the control of the daily use of these air waves. To quote from the Federal Radio Commission's views as formally expressed in 1928, "While it is true that broadcasting stations in this country are for the most part supported or partially supported by advertisers, broadcasting stations are not given these great privileges by the United States Government for the primary benefit of advertisers. Such benefit as is derived by advertisers must be incidental and entirely secondary to the interests of the public. Since the number of channels is limited and the number of persons desiring to broadcast is far greater than can be accommodated, the Commission must determine from among the applicants before it which of them will, if licensed, best serve the public. In a measure perhaps, all of them give more or less service. Those who give the least, however, must be sacrificed for those who give the most. The emphasis must be first and foremost on the interest, the convenience, and the necessity of the listening public and not on the interest, convenience, or necessity of the individual broadcaster or the advertiser."

Imagine for an instant the howls of indignation that would have gone up from the public if the *New York Times* on the morning of December 11 had come out with the entire front page devoted to an advertisement of a department store while the story of Edward's abdication was buried, say, on page 15. This may be an extreme example, but to a degree it parallels some radio programs which obviously devote more time to the advertiser's story than to the presentation of the program itself. Indeed the financial life of the *Times* is just as dependent upon classified and display advertising as is the life of the commercial station dependent upon sponsors for its programs.

In radio as in the press, the program and the story are the sought-for objectives, while the advertising is but the means to these ends. Once we begin shoving our ads further and further toward the front page in radio we compel the people to protest, and thru their voice—the government—eventually to bar advertising altogether. If broadcasting ever becomes too largely a soliloquy of merchandising ballyhoo, the Federal Communications Commission may be forced to deny additional commercial licenses on the grounds that the public interest, convenience, and necessity are not being properly served by commercial stations. Should this occur, then the government *must* assume the responsibility of serving the public interest, convenience, and necessity. Once the profit motive is discredited thru poor management, then government ownership and operation become the more favorable alternative.

I think it is true that the great majority of educators do not now want government ownership and operation of radio. They want to work out their problem with the broadcaster under the present system. This problem can be worked out. It is inconceivable that we cannot sit down together and work out our plans in harmony for the greatest benefit to all concerned. If this problem is not solved, and I think a failure to solve it is a remote possibility, then the educator will be forced to favor operation by a government which would recognize the duties of the educator to disseminate knowledge and develop civic enlightenment over the air.

There was no discussion of the kind of cooperation which might be effected. However, there was mention of the Federal Radio Education Committee as a means for bringing together the different groups concerned. This occurred in the address of Mr. Evans, who concluded his remarks with the following words:

At present there is no satisfactory basis for cooperation between these two groups [broadcasters and educators]. A sincere effort to secure such cooperation is being made thru the Federal Radio Education Committee, of which Dr. John W. Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education, is chairman. If that committee receives the unqualified support of the Federal Communications Commission and can maintain the confidence of both the commercial broadcasters and the educational and cultural interests, it will become the greatest single factor in the constructive evolution of broadcasting.

I am not implying that even the Federal Radio Education Committee can make radio fulfill its promise overnight. Should that committee be able to secure complete cooperation of all the agencies concerned, there are still so many difficulties to be overcome and so many problems to be solved that only as those of us interested in making radio a culturally constructive force maintain an eternal vigilance, can we have any real hope for the future.

EVALUATION is an important and necessary part of the whole process of school broadcasting. If the radio is to become a generally accepted educational tool, and if the methods and materials of school broadcasting are to be improved, it is clear that there must be abundant evidence of its effectiveness in accomplishing educational purposes. The present dearth of such data is one major cause for the reluctance of teachers in adopting this new instrument. Those interested in radio education can address themselves to no more important task than that of developing a careful program of evaluation. . . .

Expressing in clear terms the variety of changes to occur in boys and girls as a result of listening to a school broadcast series is the first and indispensable step in a program of evaluation.

The second step consists in gathering evidence which will indicate whether the anticipated changes are actually taking place. . . .

The third step in a program of evaluation consists in the interpretation of the data. . . .

There are three observations which can be made regarding a practicable plan for carrying on a program of evaluation. First of all, the formulation of objectives and their clarification will have to be a cooperative effort among the schools, the broadcasters, and the radio educator. . . .

A second observation is this. The gathering of evidence of the changes taking place in boys and girls as a result of school broadcasts will, like the foregoing, be a cooperative venture. . . .

The third observation is that this program of evaluation requires a central staff to administer it.—I. KEITH TYLER, in an address before the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, Washington, D. C., December 11, 1936.

THE EDUCATIONAL RADIO SCRIPT EXCHANGE, a new project of the U. S. Office of Education, is a long step in the direction of coordinating the creative efforts of educational institutions and radio stations. The Exchange is collecting, editing, and duplicating for distribution scripts collected from all parts of the country. Single copies of the scripts and aids to production will be sent free of charge to any producing unit, providing the material is to be used for non-commercial purposes. A free catalog listing 53 scripts is now available. Address your requests to the Educational Radio Project, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C.

MOUND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, Columbus, Ohio publishes a weekly *Radio Program News* announcing to teachers and students the worthwhile programs during the coming week. Kenneth W. Povenmire, chairman of the department of history and civics, is in charge of radio education for the school. A careful study revealed that 82 percent of the students have receivingsets in their homes. Mr. Povenmire is attempting to develop in the students a critical sense of discrimination regarding the programs to which they listen. Credit is given in history and civics classes for well written reports on approved programs.



WAYNE UNIVERSITY, Detroit, Mich., is instituting during the spring semester a radio technics course, "Principles Underlying Effective Radio Broadcasting." Garnet Garrison, director of the radio division, department of speech, will be the instructor.

Analytical studies of modern programs thru examination of the actual scripts; critical reviews of programs as presented on the air; audience surveys of program popularity; and reports of current radio research will be some of the topics considered.

"Radio Technics," a survey of the broadcasting field, was held the first semester and will be repeated again this spring. Two additional courses, "Preparation of Radio Programs," and "Radio Speech," are planned for the following school year. Actual work in program planning and participation is given the students thru the Wayne University broadcasts over Detroit stations.

MAYOR F. H. LAGUARDIA of New York City, at the annual meeting of his Municipal Art Committee on January 12, announced his plan for a national chain of noncommercial radio stations. According to Mayor LaGuardia's plan, the stations would be connected by short-wave radio, thus avoiding the excessive wire charges which heretofore have prevented such cooperation.

The Mayor's public announcement calls attention to a project in which educational broadcasting stations have been interested for some time. However, it does not mean that all difficulties have been overcome or that the project has received the final approval of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. Until the plan has passed muster with this body, it has no prospect of immediate and widespread application.

BEGINNING IN JANUARY, the thousands of listeners to the Smithsonian Institution's radio program, "The World Is Yours," receive each month *The World Is Yours* magazine, an innovation in educational broadcasting. The magazine contains maps, drawings, and other visual aids to complement the scientific articles written by Smithsonian authorities; a rotogravure section; a Smithsonian scientific story-of-the-month; and other valuable material to supplement the weekly programs. "The World Is Yours" is one of the five educational programs presented regularly over national networks by the Educational Radio Project of the U. S. Office of Education.

THE INSTITUTE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS has completed arrangements with station WIXAL, Boston, operated by the World-wide Broadcasting Foundation, to present a series of broadcasts on Pacific affairs which will be heard not only in this country but also in the Orient. Preparations have already been made for listening groups in China and other parts of the East.

## Dr. Tyson Retires from the Radio Field

ON JANUARY 19 the Board of Trustees of Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pa., elected Dr. Levering Tyson to the presidency of that institution. Dr. Tyson will retire from his present position as director of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education and will assume his new duties about July 1.

Muhlenberg is indeed fortunate in securing Dr. Tyson. Born in Reading, Pa., in 1889, he received an A.B. degree from Gettysburg College in 1910 and an A.M. from Columbia University in 1911. In 1930 Gettysburg College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Litt.D. *Who's Who in America* reviews his career from 1912 to 1930:

Gazetteer editor, *New International Encyclopedia*, 1912-15; alumni secretary and managing editor, *Columbia Alumni News*, 1914-20, editor, 1920-30; also served as secretary and president, Association of Alumni Secretaries; organizer, 1919, and first president, Alumni Magazines, Associated; appointed fellow, 1927, American Alumni Council [combination of Association of Alumni Secretaries and Alumni Magazines, Associated], also chairman, aims and policies commission; associate director university extension, Columbia University, 1920-30, organizing home study department; conducted study of radio broadcasting in adult education, 1929, for American Association for Adult Education and Carnegie Corporation of New York.

In 1930 Dr. Tyson became director of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education. One of the principal purposes of that organization was to cooperate with commercial broadcasters in bringing to the American people the best educational programs obtainable. To this end Dr. Tyson organized committees of outstanding individuals in various areas of educational experience. Programs were prepared and broadcast without sponsorship on both chain and independent radio stations. This experiment was highly significant. If successful it would have done much to solve the problems of education on the air.

In spite of all Dr. Tyson's efforts, the experiment failed. The story is dramatically told in the report, *4 Years of Network Broadcasting*.<sup>1</sup> Altho the outcome was disappointing to most educators, the experiment was eminently worthwhile. All those connected with it are to be congratulated for the sincerity of their efforts and the frankness with which they stated the reasons why it failed.

Quite apart from his efforts to cooperate with commercial broadcasters, Dr. Tyson made notable contributions to education by radio. Thru the Advisory Council he published numerous pamphlets on many aspects of broadcasting, held annual meetings which constituted a public forum on radio problems and which were reported in a series of volumes entitled *Radio and Education*, and organized committees to canvass special areas of educational interest.

He was liberal in the time he gave to cooperation with other agencies. He held a conspicuous place, which it is hoped he may retain, in the Institute for Education by Radio, conducted each year at the Ohio State University, and in the Federal Radio Education Committee. He was one of the organizers of the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, held recently in Washington.

Dr. Tyson's retirement marks the end of an epoch in broadcasting. Had any way existed for education to cooperate with commercial broadcasters on the latter's terms, he would have found it. To many people his withdrawal can mean only that, if the cooperation in radio so much desired by educators is to be achieved, a new basis for it must be found. While the way out is not yet apparent, Dr. Tyson's efforts have done much to clear the path.

The National Advisory Council has not yet determined how its program will be affected by Dr. Tyson's retirement.

<sup>1</sup> *Education by Radio* 7:6, February 1937.