

# 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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## Social Values in Broadcasting

**W**HAT DO THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INTERESTS of the nation want from broadcasting? This question is asked frequently by commercial broadcasters, and with reason. Many radio station owners are sincere in their desire to cooperate with educational groups and are eager to learn the basis on which cooperation will be forthcoming. So far they have had no complete answer.

Perhaps there is no complete answer. However, some kind of a response to the question has to be made as a matter of common courtesy. Therefore this effort. While it does not represent an opinion with which all educators will be in agreement, it constitutes a challenge for those who take exception to it to formulate a more comprehensive statement.

To break the subject wide open at the outset, it is suggested that the educational and cultural interests must be concerned in seeing to it that the total program output of all the broadcasting stations in the United States constitutes a socially constructive force. This assertion will cause surprise in many quarters and will raise immediately many questions, such as: "Why should educators be concerned with programs which are not designed to be educational?" and "What is the meaning of 'socially constructive force'?"

The only reason for this broad concern on the part of educators is the fact that, regardless of the intent of their producers, all radio programs have some educational effect. They impart information. They tend to condition attitudes and influence judgments. This fact has been proven to the satisfaction of advertisers, else they would not continue to sponsor programs in the hope of financial gain. As the cultural implication of the situation is driven home to educators, they recognize that they must be vitally concerned.

The extent of educational influence of present day radio programs has never been determined. That must wait until some agency comes forward to finance scientific studies such as those made a few years ago in the field of motion pictures. In that area a group of eminent scientists, working in universities from Yale to Iowa State, did a piece of cooperative research in which they analyzed thoroly the influence of motion pictures on children and youth. The results, published in eight volumes, summarized under the title, *Motion Pictures and Youth*,<sup>1</sup> indicated that this great medium of communication actually affected children in the following ways: physically, as reflected in sleep; emotionally, as recorded by the psychogalvanic technic; mentally, as shown by records of learning from movies and by changes in attitude brought about by them; and behavioristically, thru patterns of conduct molded by movies.

It is likely that when equally comprehensive radio studies are

**N**EW RADIO BILLS introduced into the House of Representatives include the legislation proposed by Representative Celler of New York for a government-owned shortwave station, a resolution by Representative Connery of Massachusetts, and a bill by Representative Wearin of Iowa. Mr. Connery's resolution calls for the appointment of a committee of seven to investigate monopoly in radio broadcasting and the effect of such monopoly on radio programs, advertising rates, and the public in general. Mr. Wearin's bill calls for the complete separation of radio and newspapers. See page 11 for a more detailed statement of Mr. Celler's bill.

While little important radio legislation has been introduced into the Senate to date, it is expected that Senator Wheeler will soon introduce a bill to separate newspapers from radio stations.

**M**EN WHO MADE HISTORY, a weekly educational series designed for schoolroom listeners, was inaugurated over the NBC Blue Network on February 4 and may be heard every Thursday at 2PM, EST. This series was originally developed as part of the Ohio School of the Air by Meredith Page, supervisor of the Radio Workshop at the Ohio State University. Network acceptance of this program constitutes another recognition of the quality of some of the educational broadcasting now being done by school groups.

**T**HE CIVIC LEADER, a publication of the Civic Education Service, 744 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C., recently contained a series of three articles which should be very helpful to teachers and others desiring to make use of the radio for educational purposes. The articles and the issues in which they appeared are as follows: "The Use of Radio in the Schools," January 18, 1937; "The Use of Radio by the Schools," February 1, 1937; and "Sources of Information on Radio," February 8, 1937.

**S**TATION WHA, University of Wisconsin, Madison, is conducting a short course for "mike-shy" legislators. H. B. McCarty, program director of WHA is in charge of the course, which includes "Radio Speaking," "Radio Writing," and "Your Voice in Wax!"

<sup>1</sup> Charters, W. W. *Motion Pictures and Youth*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933.

# EDUCATION BY RADIO

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made, the influence of this medium will be found similar to that of motion pictures. If so, parents will have to be especially concerned about it because of the unique way it enters the home. In motion pictures the child has to leave home, go to the theater, and pay a price of admission. In many states there are laws which prevent children's attending theaters unless additional conditions are met. In radio there are no such barriers. A child in any home with a radio need only turn a switch to become a member of the audience, regardless of whether or not the program deals with experiences for which he is prepared. Against the expressed wishes of his parents he can listen in on conversations never intended for his ears.

It would be easier to ignore this influence. Parents, educators, and socially-conscious persons in general would find their problems simpler if they could be concerned only with those segments of human experience which bear the formal labels of education. Such an avoidance of reality is now impossible. Exploratory studies have gone far enough to indicate that certain out-of-school influences, of which radio is one, have a tendency to undermine and interfere with the results which schools are striving to achieve.

Dr. Vierling Kersey, director of education for the state of California, authorized a study in 1931 of the out-of-school influences in the lives of children. As a result of this study, it was pointed out that the chief of such influences were motion pictures, radio, books, magazines and newspapers, playgrounds, and comic strips. It was suggested that the combined influence of these media was probably equal to the influence of the schools themselves. In the face of such findings there can be no substantial support for the argument that those interested in education and culture are going outside their field when they give voice to their concern over the sum total of radio programs available in this country.

Unfortunately the evidence of need for concern about programs does not give any equally clear indication of what should be done about them. Of course, certain types of programs are clearly acceptable, while others are obviously not desirable. There is a great middle ground, however, where programs are neither good nor bad and where no one can be sure of what should be done about them. There is no possibility of securing educational scrutiny in advance for these programs because a word which is perfectly innocent in the script may be given an emphasis in its delivery over the air which changes its meaning entirely. There is no possibility of eliminating this condition by giving prizes for excellent programs because many of the users of radio are more interested in financial returns than in winning medals of merit.

The uncertainty as to the course of procedure does not mean that nothing should be done. Educators rightly look to government to develop program standards which will take into account the educational influence of radio as one of the factors which determine whether or not a station is operating in the "public interest, convenience, and necessity." They look to frequent conferences among those interested in educational and cultural affairs as a fertile source for ideas of what should be done. To the extent that they can demonstrate their competence, they also look to an increasing share in the preparation and production of the programs which constitute the output of this great educational instrumentality.

This expressed intention to prepare and present programs should not be confused with the question of who should own and operate broadcast transmission stations. The so-called American system of commercial radio has demonstrated its value and is apparently here to stay. Educators want to improve, not undermine, that system.

THE WISCONSIN COLLEGE OF THE AIR, thru the facilities of state radio stations WHA and WLBL and the National Youth Administration, inaugurated on August 26, 1936, a radio group listening project. Since the project was organized there have been established 118 listening centers consisting of 306 listening groups with a total of more than 8,500 listeners. Of this number about 5000 are located in school centers, 2,500 among the youth of the NYA projects, and 1000 in community centers.

While the specific or central objective of the group listening project is to bring a high grade, educational opportunity to thousands of out-of-school youth who cannot continue their preparation, and to the adult population who desire to form listening groups, the educational possibilities for the classroom are not neglected, and a large number of schools thruout the state are receiving helpful assistance from the broadcasts.

The procedure for organizing radio listening groups is quite definitely set forth in two bulletins, which are sent to the organizer or sponsor wherever a listening group is being established. Where the groups are large enough to warrant it, an instructor is appointed from the list of available teachers in the Emergency Educational Division.

In addition to the information given thru the bulletins regarding procedures for organizing and conducting radio listening groups, carefully prepared study aids or lesson previews of all the College of the Air lectures are mailed to the group sponsors each week to guide them and their teachers in directing the discussions. At the end of the course an examination is provided for those who care to qualify for the certificate of achievement which is granted for satisfactory work.



They want to make their contribution to it in a way which will leaven the whole and make it more socially constructive.

As part of the present system of broadcasting there are stations owned and operated by educational institutions. These are used largely in the extension services of colleges and universities. They bring to extension education an increased effectiveness and a wider range of serviceability.

It is the purpose of education to keep these stations and to secure new ones whenever opportunity offers. Dr. John W. Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education, has requested already that a portion of the shortwave bands, which are now being made available, be reserved by the Federal Communications Commission for the exclusive use of educational institutions. This is an outstanding recognition of the social value of broadcasting to schools. In addition to Dr. Studebaker's blanket request, there are at frequent intervals requests by educational institutions for facilities with which to accomplish specific purposes. The number of these requests may be expected to increase with the growth in appreciation of radio's possibilities and with the removal of education's present financial stringencies.

Quite apart from any question of educational ownership and use of station facilities for specific educational purposes, there is the great problem of what share educational and cultural interests should have in the general program service of the nation. That they should have a share is a matter of common agreement. The Communications Commission has accepted them as an important factor in determining the extent to which commercial stations are meeting the requirements of "public interest." Commercial stations proudly declare the amount of time given to education. Audience reactions have justified this interest.

A careful distinction should be made between a program designed for specific educational use such as broadcasting to schools and a program of informative or cultural content designed for a general audience. It is probably to be expected that programs on commercial stations, particularly those with chain affiliations, will be predominately of the latter character.

Perhaps, with these understandings, it may be easier to return to the question of what the educational and cultural interests of the nation want from broadcasting. It may now be possible to list a few of the safeguards which seem essential if the total program output of all the stations in the United States is to represent a socially constructive force.

In the first place, educators want some assurance that radio programs will be planned to serve a broad social purpose. Up to now they have been largely haphazard. Some subjects have been greatly overemphasized. Others have been ignored. There needs to be some comprehensive planning to avoid the present excessive duplication, to insure that, so far as possible, all subjects are given consideration in accordance with their importance, and to maintain the opportunity for the continuing use of radio in the service of education.

In all fairness it must be said that many aspects of the present general program service have been improved. Thru the self-interest of advertisers, the evening's program on almost any important station represents a carefully planned and varied program. There is no consideration, however, of the educational effect of such a program and cultural considerations are for the most part subordinated to commercial ends. Indeed, there is a real scarcity of periods among the more salable hours of the day when anything can be heard which is not primarily commercial.

REPRESENTATIVE EMANUEL CELLER of New York has introduced a bill authorizing the construction in Washington, D. C., of a high-power shortwave government broadcasting station to be known as the Pan-American Radio Station. In connection with his bill, Mr. Celler made the following statement: "The U. S. Commissioner of Education is instructed to provide programs of national and international interest. There is to be appropriated \$750,000 for the construction of such station. . . .

"The plan and purpose of such legislation has had the approval and encouragement of responsible officials of the Department of State, Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, Federal Communications Commission, National Committee on Education by Radio, and the Pan-American Union. Also, such project has already had the approval specifically of President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Hull, and Secretary of the Navy Swanson. It grows out of the radio resolution adopted January 1932 at Montevideo by the Seventh International Conference of the North, Central, and South American countries forming the twenty-one sister republics of the Pan-American Union.

"Each American nation participating at the Conference agreed to set up shortwave broadcasting stations and to broadcast such programs as to cement bonds of friendship and cultural understanding between the peoples of the twenty-one countries of the Pan-American Union. . . . In all the world there are no more unassigned or 'empty' channels for new shortwave broadcasting stations—except one; that is the channel pre-empted at the Montevideo Conference for exclusive use of Pan-American republics.

"President Roosevelt, in pursuance of such pre-emption, and in accord with our sister nations, issued Executive Order No. 6472, dated December 2, 1933, making available for the U. S. Government the following frequencies: 6120 kc., 9550 kc., 11730 kc., 15130 kc., and 21500 kc.

"In pursuance of such Executive Order, a station was to be set up in Washington, D. C., under the joint control and auspices of the State Department and Navy Department. The station was never set up. Many obstacles were thrown across the path of this much needed reform by misguided and selfish persons. It is feared that this would be the entering wedge into governmental control of radio. That is ridiculous. . . . One Pan-American shortwave station, set up in pursuance of the treaty in an unassigned channel on a non-competitive basis, will not in the slightest militate against private initiative. It will not lead to government monopoly. . . .

"Because of the pressure against carrying out the President's Executive Order I have introduced my bill. . . . Every nation in the world has a broadcasting station except the United States. . . . There are two million shortwave receiving-sets in this country and the number is mounting daily by leaps and bounds. Such increasing short-wave receptivity might well command a federal station.

"Such a federal-controlled station could be used [1] to create good will between this and other nations, [2] to eradicate international misunderstandings, and [3] to develop two-way trade between the United States and other nations."

THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION, according to *The Listener* for January 20, 1937, is making an experiment to see if it is possible to find out what the listening public thinks of radio dramatic productions. Two hundred people have been asked to listen with special care for about two months. They are being sent a list of questions about each production and an analysis of the answers will be made. The listeners chosen are of all types and from all parts of the country and it is hoped that the replies will reflect the ordinary man's reasons for enjoying or not enjoying a radio play.

THE COMMITTEE has on hand a limited supply of the following free publications:

Tyler, Tracy F. *An Appraisal of Radio Broadcasting in the Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities*.

Tyler, Tracy F. *Some Interpretations and Conclusions of the Land-Grant Radio Survey*.

Requests will be honored in the order in which they are received. Address them to the National Committee on Education by Radio, Room 308, One Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

WALDO ABBOT, director of broadcasting service, University of Michigan, is the author of a *Handbook of Radio Broadcasting*, to be published this month by the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New York, N. Y. This handbook is written for students and teachers of speech and of broadcasting, for the teacher receiving educational programs in the classroom, for those who are in the radio profession, for the radio listener, and for the person who is or who may be a radio speaker or writer.

COMMANDER T. A. M. CRAVEN, chief engineer of the Federal Communications Commission, who has already made a report on the engineering aspects of the reallocation hearings held last October, is expected to report soon on the testimony concerning the economic and social aspects of broadcasting which was developed in the same hearing. This report will be the first of its kind to be prepared within the Commission.

LET FREEDOM RING, a new series of weekly educational radio programs dramatizing the struggle of the human race to win civil liberties, is being presented by the Educational Radio Project of the U. S. Office of Education. "Let Freedom Ring," the seventh series to be presented over the networks by the Educational Radio Project, began on February 22.

ALLEN MILLER, director of the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago, has been granted a fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation for observation and training in network procedure at the NBC studios in New York.

In the second place, education, when it goes on the air, wants to be assured of a real opportunity to reach an audience. This is a fundamental problem, so far as chain broadcasting is concerned. Educators, told that they are to have a nationwide network, have checked up to find that their program was being carried by less than a dozen stations. The best report on the experience of educators in the use of networks for educational programs is contained in the pamphlet, *4 Years of Network Broadcasting*.<sup>2</sup> It justifies fears which many educators have had with respect to education on the networks.

In the third place, educators want for themselves in the use of radio the same kind of freedom which they enjoy in the classroom. This does not mean that they want to be free to follow any whim which may come into their minds. They are not free to do that in their teaching. They are used to subscribing to established policies. A professor of chemistry would not undertake to speak with authority on matters of psychology. In radio they are willing to accept reasonable limits within which to confine their discussions. However, they expect these limits, once set, to be respected by all parties to the agreement. They expect to feel as secure in the exercise of their rights as are the broadcasters in the exercise of theirs.

At the present time such freedom does not exist. The contract under which education is allowed to approach the microphone is largely unilateral. The broadcasters may stop the program at almost any moment on any one of a number of grounds. They may take exception to the script or to particular passages of it. They may take exception to the way in which it is presented. Furthermore, there is no effective recourse against their judgment.

Conceding fully that there are countless instances in which the criticism of broadcasters has helped to improve the quality of educational programs, educators can produce ample evidence that the broadcasters are not infallible enough to warrant arbitrary power in the exercise of their judgment. One significant and not particularly subtle bit of evidence comes from a contrast between the often reiterated statement that educators must put more showmanship into their programs and the comments which the officers of the Columbia Broadcasting System had to make when the Republican National Committee asked to buy time for the dramatization of politics. The following quotation appeared early in the correspondence between these two principals:

Our reasons for not allowing dramatizations are as follows: Appeals to the electorate should be intellectual and not based on emotion, passion, or prejudice. We recognize that even the oratorical discussion of campaign issues can be to a degree stamped with the aforementioned flaws, but we are convinced that dramatizations would throw the radio campaign almost wholly over to the emotional side. Then, too, we believe that the dramatic method by its very nature would tend to over-emphasize incidents of minor importance and significance, simply because of the dramatic value. While we realize that no approach to the electorate is absolutely ideal, we believe American voters have long been trained to discriminate among the assertions of orators whereas we do not believe they could discriminate fairly among dramatizations, so that the turn of national issues might well depend on the skill of warring dramatists rather than on the merits of the issue debated.<sup>3</sup>

It may be that the educational and cultural interests of the nation want from radio more than they have any right to expect and more than they have any possibility of getting. If so, these groups will be the first to make concessions, so long as there is no attempt to make them compromise on the fundamental proposition that broadcasting must constitute a constructive influence and that social values must be paramount in radio.

<sup>2</sup> *Education by Radio* 7:6. February 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Columbia Broadcasting System. *Political Broadcasts*. New York: CBS, 1935.