

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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So They Don't Want Educational Programs?

IN THE NEXT FIVE HUNDRED WORDS I will describe the puncturing of a myth of modern broadcasting. This myth, a frustrating fantasy, is worth killing because its execution may encourage the assassination of some of the more hideous monstrosities that crawl out of our loudspeakers.

What is this myth? You will find it wearing various guises. You will find both broadcasters and educators accepting it. You will find it cropping out in many of the speeches delivered at the recent National Conference on Educational Broadcasting. You will find it in the report of *4 Years of Network Broadcasting*.

Briefly, the myth asks you to believe that, "The majority of the American people want entertainment from their radios—they do not want education." Sometimes you find it couched differently. Prominent educators will say, "Of course we realize that educational programs can never be as popular as 'Amos and Andy' or Rudy Vallee, but they appeal to the minority and that minority should be served."

That myth, that conviction, that assumption is now dead. It has been slain in the last nine months; murdered by the combined strength of 300,000 American radio listeners.

Little did these 300,000 listeners realize that they were killing a modern myth when they wrote to the U. S. Office of Education. They thought they were writing in response to broadcasts presented by the Educational Radio Project, but their letters, flowing into Washington in an ever-increasing flood—ten thousand, fifteen thousand, twenty thousand *per week*—have introduced a new fact in American broadcasting, namely, that the public for education on the air is probably as large as it is for entertainment!

By what right can this claim be made? Three hundred thousand is small beside 4,200,000 letters recently received on a soap series. It is small beside the other records established by many commercial concerns. Yet 300,000 letters is probably more listener mail than any sustaining educational program not created by network broadcasters has yet rolled in. Considering the fact that prizes were not offered, it is very heavy. Few if any sustaining programs on NBC, CBS, or MBS can show listener response anywhere near that of the five network programs now being presented by the Office of Education.

What does this prove? It proves that millions of Americans want educational programs prepared to meet public tastes and interests. To those who have examined this flood of letters, there is clear evidence that educational programs, adequately financed and skillfully produced, can compete with any entertainment programs on the air. This evidence challenges the moss-covered assumption that the public demand is solely for entertainment and issues a clarion call for a new definition of "public interest, convenience, and necessity."

A SUGGESTED SYLLABUS for a course in radio education has been completed as a cooperative project of the National Committee on Education by Radio. A tentative draft of the syllabus, prepared by Dr. Cline M. Koon, U. S. Office of Education, I. Keith Tyler, Bureau of Educational Research, The Ohio State University, and S. Howard Evans, secretary, NCER, was subjected to criticism by a considerable number of competent reviewers. The final draft should be available shortly and will be sent without charge to interested persons. Address requests to: National Committee on Education by Radio, Room 308, One Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THE RADIO WORKSHOP of New York University is now accepting registrations for its summer session, July 6-August 14, 1937. A maximum of sixty students will be admitted and registration will close when that figure is reached. Requests for admission should include data concerning the applicant's training, experience, and present occupation, and must be accompanied by a \$5 registration fee. The cost to each student will be \$50 for the complete course. Applications should be addressed to: Dr. Carl E. Marsden, Radio Workshop, Division of General Education, New York University, 20 Washington Square North, New York, N. Y.

DR. LESTER K. ADE, superintendent of public instruction for Pennsylvania, foresees a day when every well-planned school will have a radio coach as well as an athletic coach. The radio coach would be expected not only to write and produce effective educational radio programs but also to instruct pupils in the art of radio.

EVERY ADDED POTENTIAL LISTENER adds to the responsibility which always follows the broadcaster, the responsibility of seeing that the program is worthy of its audience.—FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

WILLIAM DOW BOUTWELL, chief, editorial division, U. S. Office of Education, and director, Educational Radio Project, is the author of the article in the adjoining column.

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA the activities of the various schools and colleges on the campus have been correlated with the work of a radio staff. Musical programs, interviews, lectures, and dramatic presentations bring the various departments to the public. The present organization was set up in 1932. By actual participation in writing, announcing, and in operating equipment, as well as in producing programs, students secure knowledge of radio which they can gain in no other way while in school.

THE FIRST INDIANA RADIO CLINIC was held at the Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute, on February 13. The purpose of the clinic was to bring together representatives of high schools, colleges, radio stations, and others interested in educational radio broadcasts to consider mutual problems. Similar meetings might well be inaugurated in other localities and should not fail to foster a closer cooperation for the most effective use of the radio as an educational device.

G. W. RICHARDSON of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has made what seems to be the best study to date on the legal status of broadcasting in Canada. It appeared under the title, "A Survey of Canadian Broadcasting Legislation," in the *Canadian Bar Review* for February 1937. He concludes that while broadcasting is a business, it falls for obvious reasons within the public service type of organization.

Radio at the New Orleans Convention

THE DISCUSSION OF RADIO at the meetings of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association held recently at New Orleans, Louisiana, was restricted to a single session of that great convention. That session was very significant, however, because it was the third of a series of meetings for the consideration of a public relations program for schools. The first meeting considered the question, "What Is the Public?" The subject of the second was, "Technics by which the Relations of School and Public May Be Clarified." To give radio special consideration in such a series was important recognition.

Dr. Arthur G. Crane, president of the University of Wyoming and chairman of the National Committee on Education by Radio, presided over the section on radio. He was assisted by a panel consisting of: William Dow Boutwell, director of the Educational Radio Project, U. S. Office of Education; I. Keith Tyler of the Bureau of Educational Research, The Ohio State University; Judith Waller and Franklin Dunham of the National Broadcasting Company; and Edward R. Murrow of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

A. Helen Anderson, chairman of the series of public relations meetings, had prepared the following questions for the consideration of the radio session:

[1] What essentials have educators failed to consider in preparing radio broadcasts?

[2] What is the place of the student forum in radio?

[3] Are educational programs, designed as propaganda, justifiable?

To these questions Dr. Crane added two more:

[4] Can programs of school business be made good publicity?

[5] Can broadcasts of instruction to the classrooms be made helpful in establishing good public relationships?

These questions created a framework broad enough for the admission of discussion on many general problems. They also opened the way for a pertinent and detailed recital of experiences which schools have had in the use of broadcasting.

After lengthy discussion, in which many people participated, it was agreed that radio has tremendous possibilities as a medium of acquainting the public with the schools. It was emphasized particularly that the picture of school work should be given realistically. This might be done in two ways: [1] by programs designed for classroom use but listened to by parents, and [2] by programs put on by the schools and designed specifically for parents.

There can be little doubt that the most penetrating and entertaining contribution to the discussion was made by Mr. Boutwell. Disclaiming all personal responsibility for statements made, he undertook to define some of the terms of educational broadcasting in accordance with the facts as they must appear to a disinterested but analytical observer. His remarks were so challenging that they are quoted at length:

To lay the basis for discussion I propose to present some definitions of the terms and names which I presume will be dealt with during the afternoon. I propose to define radio station, wavelength, school, publicity, public relations, and similar terms.

In offering these definitions I have tried to put them as a man from Mars might do. I ask you to consider these definitions not as coming from me as a member of the staff of the Office of Education, not as from a friend and associate of all the members of this panel. This is an attempt to attain an objective view of what we are about to discuss. Here are the tentative definitions of the man from Mars who is oblivious to the loyalties, emotions, and attitudes of humans:

Schools: Services, largely to youth, which society has decided to buy cooperatively, instead of thru the dividend-bonus corporation method; this service consists of implanting in newcomers sufficient of our curious habits and customs to warrant the admission of these newcomers to the great American social and pleasure club.

Propaganda: Organization and distribution of material and acts undertaken to bias public attitude and reaction to problems facing society.

Publicity: Use of various channels of information to familiarize the public with some plan, product, or activity, for example, a bond issue which a school board wants passed.

Public relations: Concerns the operations of an institution or organization to accomplish its objectives with utmost internal but more particularly external harmony. Sometimes those who engage in publicity call themselves public relations counsels in order to charge more for their services.

Radio station: A speculative, and to date, generally a profitable venture in real estate. Having obtained a public utility license to a wavelength by purchase or vague promises to the Federal Communications Commission, the speculator rents some rooms, caretakers, and some wires to advertising agencies which handle accounts for merchants. Time, which the station owner cannot sell to an advertiser, he fills with records and educational programs for which he pays little or nothing and cares less.

Exception: Some stations are acquired by newspaper proprietors in order to stifle the radio so it will not compete with the newspaper business.

Wavelength: A curious electromagnetic impulse, limited in variety, owned by the people of the United States. Wavelengths are given to commercial speculators by the Federal Communications Commission on condition that the speculators come back every six months and say, "Please, may I have it for six months more?" The Commission makes these six months gifts of public property on condition that the speculator use the gift in, as the law says, "the public interest, convenience, and necessity." But this is not as difficult a requirement as it may sound because neither the Commission nor Congress nor anyone else has decided what it means. Speculators take these gifts of public property and resell them to other speculators at handsome prices—sometimes more than \$1,000,000.

Radio broadcasting: This is one of the most absurd and inefficient methods by which sane persons have ever tried to communicate with one another. It is like trying to catch and hold the attention of a million blind persons, each of whom is occupied with something else at the time. It is such an inefficient method of communication that, as a rule, only a combination of skilled writers, skilled actors, and a large orchestra can effectively communicate with large numbers of listeners. And yet the unique distinction of radio, the ability to communicate with millions, instantaneously, in their own homes, is so desired by merchants and citizens themselves, that ways have been found to overcome the inefficiencies inherent in this form of communication. Limitations of radio broadcasting have compelled its use chiefly as a musical background for life and for short, swift, window-shopper units of information such as news, gags, and clambakes. Clambakes are variety programs. Radio broadcasting is particularly well adapted to the educational task of stimulating intellectual and cultural activities, but it has not been used for this purpose extensively for two reasons: first, because educators have not been able to collect or allocate sufficient funds to buy the skill necessary to use this queer method of communication; second, because advertisers don't want the thinking of listeners diverted into channels which might make them forget about the product advertised.

Local station: A radio station licensed to use a wavelength to serve the particular needs of local citizens, but whose owner has usually found it more profitable and a lot less trouble to be a chain store for a New York or Chicago distributor.

Network broadcasting: A scheme which was originally planned to promote the sale of tubes and radio sets thru the distribution to local outlets of programs created in New York and Chicago, which, it was thought, large numbers of people would like to hear. It soon became evident that assembling a network of stations for an advertising agency desiring national coverage was more profitable than the sale of tubes. Therefore the companies organizing the networks have become brokers between local distributors—radio stations—and national advertising agencies who create programs for the benefit of their clients. At present the scheme is so organized that local stations have to take an advertising agency program whether they want to or not and the advertisers take up practically all the time most adapted to communicating with the public. The local distributor, on the other hand, is under no compulsion to take a non-advertising program, such as an educational program, so when national education programs are offered to him the local distributor frequently sells that time to a local advertiser if he can. This is called operating radio stations in the public interest.

Those, my friends, are the definitions of the man from Mars who tries to be exact and truthful. You will at once recognize that his unfamiliarity with earthly affairs and his lack of proper background have led him to make some definitions with which you and I cannot agree. But if we don't accept his definitions, we can proceed to make our own.

A BILL has been introduced into the State Legislature of California for the construction of two 50,000 watt broadcasting stations to provide adequate radio broadcasting facilities for the extension division of the University of California. The bill provides that one station shall be located on the campus at Berkeley and the other on the campus at Los Angeles. Section 3 of the bill states that "the operation of said stations shall be under the supervision and control of the extension division of the university. The division shall prepare and broadcast a curriculum of education beneficial to those citizens who are unable to partake of the benefits afforded by actual attendance at a university. The division shall arrange to broadcast, directly or by remote control from various cities of the state, public debates and discussions on matters of vital interest to the people of the state of California. They may also arrange for the broadcast of such other matters and programs as they shall deem to be of educational or cultural value."

While no request for construction permits has been submitted to the Federal Communications Commission as yet, this expression of interest in educational broadcasting for Californians is timely and worthy of recording.

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION BY RADIO will be held in Columbus, Ohio, May 3-5. Features of the Institute this year will be a broadcast by Dr. Joseph E. Maddy, University of Michigan, on his weekly band lesson, an address on "Radio's Responsibility for National Culture" by Gladstone Murray, general manager of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the first American exhibition of recordings of educational radio programs, and an address by Dr. John W. Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education, on "The Governments' Responsibility for Educational Broadcasting." I. Keith Tyler of the Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University, Columbus, is in charge of arrangements for the Institute, which will bring together scores of leaders in radio, representing educational institutions and their radio stations, the chains, and commercial stations, as well as governmental agencies concerned with radio.

THE SCHOOL EXECUTIVE for March 1937 contains an article on "The Use of Radio in the Schools" by Dr. Arthur G. Crane. In his article Dr. Crane outlines a detailed program of experimentation designed to show school teachers and administrators how effective radio can be as a tool with which to improve teaching. Dr. Crane describes the kind of demonstration which he believes will do as much for education by radio as Lindbergh's solo flight over the Atlantic did for aviation.

ANNING S. PRALL has been reappointed by President Roosevelt to be chairman of the Federal Communications Commission for another year. His previous appointment expired March 11.

THE RADIO WORKSHOP of New York University, which is operated in cooperation with the Educational Radio Project of the U. S. Office of Education, will hold a two-day institute for classroom teachers, May 14 and 15. A unique and highly important feature of the institute will be a demonstration of radio equipment for school use. Those interested in further details should get in touch with Dean Ned H. Dearborn, Division of General Education, New York University, New York, N. Y.

WHERE THE NEWSPAPER and the broadcast station are separately controlled the listener may receive the full benefit of both. . . . He has more chance to decide for himself what is really happening, what its influence upon him, his family, his community, his country, is likely to be. Obviously the newspaper and the broadcast station cannot be checked against each other when both are under the same control.—IRVIN STEWART, member, Federal Communications Commission.

STATION WHAZ, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N. Y., has made broadcast tests for several weeks on 1000 watts power to demonstrate to the Federal Communications Commission that its present power could be doubled without disturbing other radio channels. Following successful completion of the tests, various commercial interests are reported to be coveting WHAZ's facilities. WHAZ is a pioneer college experimental station and has been on the air since 1922.

EDWARD R. MURROW, director of talks for the Columbia Broadcasting System, is to become European director for Columbia beginning about the first of May. His departure from the position which was equivalent to educational director is to be regretted because both by educational background and inclination he was the most sympathetic friend education has had in the network offices. No announcement has been made as to his successor.

THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL RADIO COMMITTEE, organized in 1934 to represent various women's club groups in dealing with radio, has now undertaken to make radio program analyses for commercial organizations and at commercial rates. *Variety* asks how the committee will be able to avoid embarrassment "with advertising clients and clubwomen members all in one family."

RADIO EDUCATION has traveled a long road since its early pioneering. It has broadened its field and has slowly grown to a full recognition of its possibilities.—ANNING S. PRALL, chairman, Federal Communications Commission, in an address before the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, Washington, D. C., December 10, 1936.

Guideposts for Producing Educational Programs

PROPOS MR. BOUTWELL'S CLAIM for the mass appeal of educational programs, some readers may want to know the guideposts by which such programs are prepared. They are of two kinds: those which have to do with educational objectives, and those which are concerned exclusively with the problem of attracting and holding an audience.

The following tentative educational guideposts have been suggested to writers connected with the Educational Radio Project:

- [1] Does the program have unity; that is, do the parts contribute to a central idea which, in turn, is a logical sector of a program series?
- [2] Is the subjectmatter selected educationally important? A good test of importance is whether or not the facts or anecdotes would be included in the curriculum of a progressive school system.
- [3] Will the program effectively induce a considerable proportion of listeners to explore the subject more completely by reading, by discussion, or other self-educative activity?
- [4] Is there a summary at the close to fix in the listener's mind the major points brought out by the script?
- [5] Is the selection and presentation of the material such that the voluntary interest of the "students" [listeners] will be aroused?

The guideposts for attracting and holding the attention of a radio audience are more numerous and perhaps less tentative. They include and supplement good practise in playwriting, which is almost a prerequisite for scripwriting. They are as follows:

- [1] Listener attention should be caught in the first twenty seconds. Methods: novelty sound, theme music, interest-challenging statement, or provocative dialog.
- [2] The first minute of the script should arouse the curiosity of the listener in what is to follow.
- [3] Direct the program to the audience most likely to be listening on the station or stations being used at the time allotted. Are they women, children, men tired from a day's work, city people, country people? Keep in mind what a majority of listeners are likely to be doing while you are seeking their attention. Try to fit your program to what you think their mental state is at the moment.
- [4] Limitations of listeners both in terms of vocabulary and experience should be kept in mind. Don't ask listeners to make mental expeditions too far beyond the range of their power.
- [5] The subject of the broadcast must be potentially interesting to a majority or a reasonably large proportion of listeners reachable at the time and thru the outlets available.
- [6] The presentation should include listener participation, if it is nothing more than keeping time to music, laughter, using paper and pencil, or even more important, an emotional response, a desire to "do something about it."
- [7] Visualize scenes and people before beginning action; that is, "set the stage."
- [8] Each voice or sound should be clearly established; that is, listeners should not be left wondering who a speaker is or what a sound is. All future behavior of a character should be motivated beforehand.
- [9] Each line of dialog should be as short as possible and to the point, without hurting characterization or dramatization.
- [10] The script should "flow." Even more essential than on the stage or in a moving picture, because of the limited time and holding power, the lines of a radio script should advance the plot or the subjectmatter steadily toward the climax.
- [11] Variety is essential. No actor or group of actors should be asked to carry a scene longer than interest in a particular situation can be maintained—about two minutes.
- [12] The script should continually remind listeners of others present in the scene even if they are not speaking.
- [13] Sounds and action should be properly prepared for in advance; that is, if the Indians are coming, anticipation of the sound of hoof beats must be built up in advance.
- [14] Characters should speak in character; residents of a particular place should speak like residents of that place.
- [15] If an address to which mail is to be sent is used, it should be repeated at least three times. The same holds true for the name of the school, agency, or company. Any offer used at the close of a broadcast should be prepared for at the opening.
- [16] Directions for the production director and music director should be ample and clear.