

HEINL RADIO BUSINESS LETTER

2400 CALIFORNIA STREET

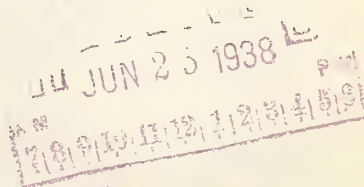
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No. 1136



FCC MAY ISSUE RULES ON POLITICAL BROADCASTS

Rules for broadcasting stations to follow in the distribution of radio time among political candidates may be issued shortly by the Federal Communications Commission, Chairman Frank R. McNinch disclosed this week after receipt of a petition from the WTAR Radio Corporation of Norfolk, Va..

Chairman McNinch said he would lay the matter before the Commission within a few days with the idea of promulgating rules for the guidance of stations during the approaching campaigns. The rules, rather than handicapping stations, are expected to help broadcasters solve many perplexing problems in the allocation of time to political speakers.

Although the campaign is still young, it was said at the FCC that many stations already are having trouble observing the provisions of the Communications Act which require that a station which allocates time to one candidate must afford equal opportunity to all rival candidates.

A broadcaster may, however, refuse all political candidates time or may censor their prepared speeches if he believes that any statement may make his station liable for damages or punitive action under the Communications Act's ban on obscene or indecent language.

The WTAR Corporation filed a petition citing that Section 315 of the Communications Act requires the Commission to draw up such rules. The section does not require a station to allow political candidates use of its facilities, but provides that if the privilege is given to one it must be given equally to others under such rules as the Commission shall make.

"Although the Communications Act became law on June 19, 1934, no such rules and regulations have been promulgated, and the stations to which the law applies have, therefore, been compelled to follow their own interpretation thereof", the petition said.

Although the Communications Act provides that the Commission shall make such regulations, Chairman McNinch said the group had never taken any action. The question is one of the most delicate to confront the politically-conscious FCC.

It was pointed out that the regulations will require considerable study and careful wording, as no matter what line is drawn for the broadcasting stations to guide themselves, political repercussions are inescapable.

Not even any tentative rules have been drawn up, but suggestion has been made that the Commission might find it necessary to draw rules which would assure all candidates desiring to buy time an opportunity to get the space.

A case was cited where a station had offered time to a candidate and he had refused to take advantage of the offer. Subsequently, an opponent entered the field and bought all of the available time on the particular station. The first man complained of his inability to get time, whereupon the station showed he had been offered air space and declined. The candidate countered by saying that at the time the space was offered he did not have any opposition.

It is such cases that will require careful study. Stations, it was pointed out, have time to sell, and if they cannot sell it to one person they must sell to others if they are to survive. The question has been raised as to whether a station must keep political time available, to be used whenever a candidate desires it to serve his own ends, without any consideration of the operation of the station as a business concern.

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COMMDR. WEBSTER GIVEN FCC ENGINEER POST

The Federal Communications Commission this week appointed Commander E. M. Webster as Assistant Chief Engineer, effective July 1st, as successor to Lieutenant E. K. Jett, who was appointed Chief Engineer last January. Commander Webster has been Acting Assistant Chief Engineer.

Commander Webster is a retired officer of the United States Coast Guard. He completed 25 years of active service in the Coast Guard on November 1, 1934, at the time he was relieved from active duty and accepted appointment in the Engineering Department of the Commission. Fifteen of those years he devoted to participation in communication problems, the last eleven years being on duty as Chief Communications Officer of the Coast Guard and having complete charge of the communications system of that service.

For many years he has been active in coordinating communication activities within the government and is one of the original members of the Interdepartment Radio Advisory Committee. He has assisted the State Department in the preparation of material for ten international conferences relating to the various phases of communications and has attended nine international conferences as a representative of the United States.

Since his appointment to the Federal Communications Commission, Commander Webster has been administering in the Engineering Department all matters relating to record communication by wire, radio, or cable. The radio services involved include aviation, experimental, point-to-point, emergency, agricultural, geophysical, marine relay, mobile press, fixed public press, amateur, and ship to shore. The work also includes administration of the matters affecting radio operators including their qualifications and classifications.

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COX ASKS PAYNE TO RESIGN; FCC CHARGES EXPLAINED

A demand for the resignation of Commissioner George Henry Payne from the Federal Communications Commission was made on Capitol Hill this week as Mr. Payne denied in a letter to Boake Carter that he had directly charged his colleagues on the FCC with being tools of the radio lobby and accused a Congressman of giving a "biased" report on an executive session of the House Rules Committee.

The demand for Commissioner Payne's resignation was made by Representative Cox (D.), of Georgia, in an extension of remarks in the Congressional Record published Thursday. Congressman Cox, who criticized Mr. Payne during the House debate on the radio probe resolution, is a member of the House Rules Committee that heard Commissioner Payne's accusations.

Representative Cox charged that Commissioner Payne had "convicted himself as being entirely irresponsible and wholly unfit" for his position on the FCC. He said the FCC member had failed to substantiate his charges that the Commission was susceptible to influence of radio lobbyists.

"It is my opinion - and, I am sure, shared in by other members of the Rules Committee", he said, "that the restoration of confidence in the Communications Commission and the proper discharge of its functions would be aided if Payne were separated from the Commission, and the Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Frank R. McNinch, and the Commission be given as free a hand as possible in the performance of their labors.

"With the Chairman given associates who will cooperate with him, there can be no question but that the Commission will quickly overcome the injury done the Commission in the public mind by Mr. Payne, who has convicted himself as being entirely irresponsible and wholly unfit for a place on the Commission."

Commissioner Payne later issued a formal statement in which he said, in part:

"Congressman Cox's attack is so obvious an attempt to befog the issue of radio reform that it deserves little notice. The question of veracity I am perfectly willing to leave to those who know Cox and those who know me.

"He has made an invidious attempt to shake an official in his strivings to protect the public. He has built his whole case upon misrepresenting what I said. He, Cox, is trying to make out a case for monopoly and abuse in radio. I am sure he will fail."

Answering statements made by Mr. Carter following the House rejection of the radio inquiry resolution, Commissioner Payne said he was told following his testimony before the Rules Committee that the discussion would be regarded as confidential.

"Ten minutes later an antagonistic Congressman on the Rules Committee was not only revealing what had taken place but placing on it his own biased interpretation", Commissioner Payne said.

"I did not charge two, or any, of my fellow Commissioners 'with being under the tumb of broadcasters' lobbies'", he added. "These are my exact words: 'In my opinion the Federal Communications Commission has been susceptible to this outside pressure.' The Commission staff, as you know, consists of over 500.

"You are right in saying that I do not favor Government ownership of broadcast stations, but you are wrong in saying that I 'left the broad hint that it might be well for the Government to do the broadcasting business and entertaining of 130,000,000 citizens itself.'

"I do believe that the Government should own and operate its own short wave Pan American station. The Government is qualified to operate such a station, whereas private individuals and companies have been operating such stations with dubious success.

"I have made a constant fight against the horror programs for children on the radio, and that the thoughtful of this country are behind me is slightly indicated by the enclosed extracts from the many letters that I have received.

"Of course, I never intended to imply that people who listen to Ed Wynn, Eddie Cantor, and other such comedians are 'morons' or anything of the sort. I realize that the Ed Wynns and the Eddie Cantors have a place in radio, but I hope you do not mean to imply that such entertainment should be our whole fare to the exclusion of programs which are on a higher or a more cultural level

"Not one single broadcaster has ever protested my attitude or right to criticize - a right that every American citizen has. Many indeed have come to me or written that I was right. It was the radio lobby here in Washington, a lobby as vicious as it is arrogant, that had the impudence to say that I should 'mind my own business'. In the four years that I have been with the Federal Communications Commission I have seen a vast improvement in the amount of superior material on the air. To their credit be it said that some of this was the outgrowth of the natural desire to improve, but much of it resulted from the criticism that insisted on reform."

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LEAGUE URGES FACILITIES FOR RADIO REPORTERS

Radio reporters abroad should receive the same facilities as newspaper correspondents, according to the League of Nations committee of experts on broadcasting in the interests of peace, the Geneva correspondent of the New York Times reports. The Committee wants an international convention to this effect.

As regards apparatus radio reporters need in their work, it recommends a liberal system for transport and customs formalities subject to international reciprocity.

The experts also recommend that the League study how to train the public taste in radio, with a view to improving international understanding. It proposes that each country form panels of speakers who might be called on to broadcast together in countries on national non-political topics. It also suggests that an international service be formed for the exchange of documentary and educational phonograph records.

The eighteen experts included A. R. Burrows, Secretary General of the International Broadcasting Union; Dr. Max Jordan, Continental Director of NBC; Edward Murrow, Columbia's European Director; Professor John Whitton, of Princeton, Director of the Geneva research center, and Sir Alfred Zimmern of Oxford.

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In terms of volume, Greek radio equipment imports in 1937 were 21 percent smaller than in the preceding year, although imports from the U.S.A. were reduced only 3.4 percent, according to a report to the Department of Commerce from the American Commercial Attache at Athens, Greece.

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REGIONALS FIGHT SUPER-POWER FOR CLEAR CHANNELS

The National Association of Regional Broadcast Stations this week argued against super-power for clear channel stations but at the same time asked a 5 KW. top for regional stations as hearings continued before a three-man committee of the Federal Communications Commission.

John Shepard, 3rd, Presidently of the newly-formed association and of the Yankee Network, told the FCC that the authorization of super-power or 500 KW. for stations on 25 clear channels would ruin the rest of the industry.

"My firm conviction^{is} that the change in the proposed rules limiting power to 50 KW.", he said, "as advocated by the Clear Channel Group would have a far-reaching effect and probably upset the whole present structure of the broadcasting industry and its services to the public."

If the Clear Channel Group gets 500 KW., he added, it would be only fair that regional stations be allowed 100 KW. power and locals 10 KW.

"Inasmuch as this is obviously impossible", he said, "without causing ruinous interference, it would seem evident that the lifting of the power limit of 29 stations out of 629 would assign to the owners of these 25 stations a most unfair percentage of the facilities available."

He further pointed out that the 29 clear channel stations last year earned \$8,469,603 of the total net revenue of the broadcasting industry, amounting to \$18,260,003. That meant, he added, that the other 600 stations had an aggregate net return of \$9,790,400.

Paul D. P. Spearman, Washington attorney, opened his case with considerable technical testimony and exhibits presented by G. W. Picard and Paul E. Godley.

Asked by Commissioner T.A.M. Craven just what the NARBS was asking for, Mr. Spearman said:

"The thing we are proposing is that enough flexibility be left in the rules to permit the operation of regional stations in general with 5 KW. if such operation will not interfere to a greater extent than at present with other services and if in operating with an increase in power they give a better and more reliable service to their listening audience."

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U.S. DEVELOPS HYGROMETER FOR USE IN RADIO METEOROGRAPHY

A new type of humidity-indicating unit which operates electrically without appreciable lag, solely for use in radio meteorographs which, when carried aloft by free balloons, constitute an important method for determining upper air weather conditions, has been designed by Francis W. Dunmore of the Radio Section, of the Commerce Department's National Bureau of Standards.

The new device is a special type of electrical resistor made up of the roughened glass surface between two separate coils of bare wire, space-wound on a very thin-walled glass tube. The glass surface may be coated with a diluted solution of lithium chloride which aids it in absorbing moisture. Experiments at various humidities in the temperature range between 86° to -4° F show a correction for the effect of temperature on the unit must be made, but since, in radio meteorography, it is customary to measure temperature when making humidity measurements, this correction may be applied.

In actual use, two glass hygrometer units with different percentages of lithium-chloride coating may be alternately connected to the transmitting instrument by a fan or motor-operated switch. Each unit may be made to function over a different temperature range, while covering the full humidity scale on the graphical recorder connected to the receiver on the ground. In addition to the two humidity units, a temperature unit and photo-electric cell may be connected into the circuit, emitting audio notes that give temperature and light brightness (cloud height and thickness), in addition to humidity.

Flight tests have been made up to 50,000 feet using the new dual-coil electrical hygrometer in conjunction with the old type of hair hygrometer, the only instrument previously available for this service. These tests showed that the new unit responds almost immediately to changes in humidity, even at high altitudes. The hair unit registered humidity changes some 2 minutes later than the dual-coil units. An ascent rate of 1100 feet per minute was used which caused the hair unit to indicate a humidity change some 2200 feet above the point where the real change took place.

Mr. Dunmore points out that considerable work remains to be completed to the calibration of these units, particularly at low temperatures.

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HUMAN NATURE HAMPERS RADIO, SAYS ENGINEER

Ever since 1896, when the British issued a patent to Marconi for an "odd device", radio receivers have been seized by occasional fits of howling, purring and squealing.

Not a Utopia of perfect reception is nearing - if human nature doesn't trip up science. So thinks Peter L. Bellaschi, delegate to the Summer convention of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers meeting in Washington this week. But he is cynical about the human nature.

About five years ago he and his fellow scientist C. V. Aggers plunged into a metal-sheathed room in Sharon, Pa. They have come out bearing sheets of statistics and a new word. The word is "microvolt".

"It would take 110,000,000 microvolts to make the light in that bridge lamp burn", said Bellaschi. "We use the term in measuring the amount of interference entering your radio, and we can measure within two units. With our instruments we have made a great scientific advance, for we can now determine radio noise quantitatively as well as qualitatively."

Radio whoops and hollers come from three sources, he said. There is "true static", due to lightning and "the little flashes of light you can see on a Summer night if you look closely." There is transmission distortion, which comes from the bouncing together of the waves which shoot up to the heavy-side layer in the upper air and those which stream along the ground. Then there are the noises due to appliances in your home and near it - the special field of study of Aggers and Bellaschi.

These can be cured by using special filters, having appliances properly designed, and by increasing the strength of the signal to be received through super-power radio stations and better antenna.

"But all this will require cooperation", Mr. Bellaschi remarked.

He said that the spark gap transmitter is being used extensively in Europe in propaganda warfare. While one nation sends out programs, another is engaged in making an intolerable roar through the entire wave band of the region. Still more effective sabotaging machinery may be developed, unless the situation can be cured by international agreement, he thinks. On a smaller scale, he said, neighbors can be "pretty unpleasant" if they are careless - or want amusement.

"With an electric razor you can produce 90,000 microvolts, and 1,000 are enough to be troublesome. For real results, however, use a sun lamp. They are very high in wave frequency, and can ruin short-wave reception for blocks."

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NEW RADIO DEVICE TYPES LETTERS AUTOMATICALLY

A new development in high speed business communications by radio was demonstrated to members of the Federal Communications Commission during a public hearing this week.

Walter S. Lemmon, radio engineer and General Manager of the Radiotype Division of the International Business Machines Corp., testified to the many new radio developments as aids to business and industry now being developed in the research laboratories of his company.

To illustrate what might be accomplished for the business office of the future by these new radio devices. Mr. Lemmon rolled into the hearing room a radiotype machine which automatically types letters, orders, invoices, and other documents directly over the air from a similar typewriter keyboard located several miles away in another part of Washington.

The new radiotype machine, which will shortly be placed on the market in many countries throughout the world by the IBM organization, looks just like a standard office typewriter mounted on a small modernistic desk. The keyboard is identically similar to that of thousands of office typewriters now in use. The secret lies in the electrical circuits located beneath the machine which automatically convert the radio wave impulses sent by the distant stenographer into "graphic intelligence" clicking the typewriter keys with machine-like precision at speeds of 100 words per minute. This remarkable speed of the radiotype is almost double that which has heretofore been obtained with machines now utilized over wire circuits.

Mr. Lemmon heads the staff of engineers pioneering this new radio device and has had a long experience in the field of radio development. He is the founder of an educational short-wave radio station WLXAL in Boston which is operated in connection with Harvard University and other New England colleges.

Mr. Lemmon told the FCC that to assign large quantities of these new ultra high frequency radio waves at this time exclusively to unknown services like television would tend to stifle American radio experiments in other fields. He urged that the FCC keep open many of these new avenues through the "ether" for these developments as free highways and not shut the door to American pioneering.

"The experiments in television for a single locality at present seem to require a tremendous band width of 600 kilocycles", he said. "On such a single wide 'ethereal' boulevard the FCC could provide the facilities for hundreds of new local broadcasting stations or facilities for thousands of radio equipped business offices throughout the country when engineering knowledge in this young art of micro-wave transmission is further advanced."

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TRADE NOTES

The Federal Communications Commission this week designated Chief Engineer E. K. Jett as its representative on the Interdepartmental Radio Advisory Committee, succeeding Commissioner T.A.M. Craven, who was named to that post by the Commission when he was appointed Chief Engineer November 20, 1935, and has served in that capacity since that date. This action was taken on the recommendation of Commissioner Craven.

The new five-studio broadcasting headquarters at Schenectady of WGY, will be opened officially on Saturday, July 9th. Embodying the most recent technical and structural developments, the building stands on a triangular plot at the junction of two main highways and overlooks the main East-West Highway through the Great Western Gateway.

A landscaped open-air theatre where popular radio programs will be staged will be included in a group of buildings of modern design to be erected at the New York World's Fair by Standard Brands, Inc., according to Thomas L. Smith, president of the company.

Work will begin soon on a new \$50,000 antenna and transmission plant for Station WOL, Washington. It will be located on Ager Road, Prince George County, in the Chillum section and only a few hundred yards from WOL's new tower.

An indication of the expectation among leading advertisers of an early business upturn is shown in contract renewals by 11 sponsors for 23 programs received last week by the National Broadcasting Company. The total time involved is 19½ hours a week. Eighteen of these programs, or shows which they will replace, are now on the air and will continue through the Summer.

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BRITISH END RADIO TRADE AGREEMENT

"The Financial News" (London publication) is informed that, following a meeting of the radio manufacturers concerned in the Radio Wholesale Trading Agreement of 1931, the radio wholesalers have been informed that the agreement is to be terminated as from the end of this month, and that they will then be free to make their own arrangements with individual manufacturers regarding the British material content in the sets offered to the public, the U. S. Commerce Department reports.

The agreement which is being terminated fixed the British material content of the sets at a minimum of 95 percent, and at the same time, the Radio Manufacturers' Association made observance of this percentage a condition of entry to the show at Olympia.

Recently, however, the wholesaler has found it increasingly difficult to satisfy the needs of the public on a 95 percent British material basis, and it was suggested that some of the manufacturers were not adhering to this percentage.

Lately therefore, the wholesalers gave notice of their desire to terminate the agreement, and almost immediately some of the largest wholesalers, it is believed, made individual agreements for the sale of the products of a company with United States connections.

Discussions have been in progress between the wholesalers and the manufacturers, and the latter put forward as a basis for a new agreement the formation of a register of British Radio Wholesale Distributors and suggested that those of this register should adhere to distribution terms similar to those of the old agreement. This suggestion was not acceptable to the wholesalers, and after further discussions a deadlock arose so that the manufacturers had no alternatives to holding up supplies or releasing the wholesalers from the agreement.

The RMA told the "Financial News" that at the moment there was no suggestion that the conditions governing exhibition of sets at Radiolympia should be modified in any way.

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