

The National Association of Broadcasters

1760 N STREET, N. W. * * * * * WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

No. 3

SPECIAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

June 25, 1943

How To Use Radio

(This report was given by Walt Dennis, NAB news bureau chief, before the New Jersey Federal-State War Conference on Social Protection on the theme "Venereal Disease—Saboteur of War Manpower." The report suggested the methods by which a campaign against venereal disease might be initiated via radio. It is presented to station managers in this form as pre-information of similar conferences to be held in all 47 other states this summer and fall.)

Under the American system of broadcasting, radio is licensed in the "public interest, convenience and necessity." This places every station manager in a position of public trust.

Since the courageous efforts of Doctor Parran to drive the clouds of bigotry and shame from the study of the prevention and cure of venereal diseases have born fruit in the last two decades, we should now dwell on the theory of how it might be possible to use radio as a weapon in conquering these diseases by education.

Public service is implicit in any means whereby the spread of venereal diseases may be stamped out and it is on this point that use of radio revolves.

You have a magnificent precedent in this field in the fact that one of the George Foster Peabody awards in 1942 for outstanding public service was made to radio station KOAC, Corvallis, Oregon, for its presentation of ten broadcasts on the topic "Our Hidden Enemy—Venereal Disease." These broadcasts were made by electrical transcription and originated from Dr. Charles G. Baker, syphologist of the Fayette county health department, Lexington, Ky. Stations WLAP, Lexington, and WHAS, Louisville, also have presented these lectures.

Generally speaking, however, access to a radio station on a matter of this kind is not simple. A station manager must be convinced that the source and authority behind such a campaign is

first-rate and carries the eminence of dignified respectability. For, speaking practically, we just cannot ride rough-shod over four centuries of tabus.

Getting down to cases, let us take a community as an example and work out a proposed means of campaigning.

Let us suggest any average metropolitan community. Any such campaign must embrace at least the newspapers and the radio station or stations. There is little point in using any one to the exclusion of others (and in this talk I am assuming that you wish me to tell you how best to use radio and how to obtain its cooperation). Although we know radio can do almost any given job of education or information alone, we also admit that the more media participating the more penetration obtained.

In a campaign against venereal disease—and I am suggesting that any such campaign might resolve into a permanent part of the civic endeavor—indispensable participants are the health agencies, doctors and nurses organizations, medical and health societies and associations and related groups. Highly important supplemental organizations are the churches, the women's clubs, civic and service bodies and all the constructive organized power of a community, including the full resources of the city government.

When this power is organized behind such an endeavor, then a plan of procedure must follow. Most important part of this plan is transmitting its purpose and information to the public through available media—a process sometimes known as publicity and in certain cases as news. In this case it would be both combined under public education.

When these steps have been taken and the plan made definite, then committees should be designed to contact the radio station manager or managers of other media to enlist their cooperation. Such a committee can demonstrate the organization behind their request and display the working plan and material they have assembled.

And now to the crux of the discussion—this is the point at which the radio station manager takes charge. He knows radio; he knows how best to present material over his station—he knows who should be able to prepare it and present it most effectively.

You show him the definite public interest involved—you show him the community organized to do something about it—you show him material and a plan—and he will take care of his end. He may call upon members of the community to serve; in this case he might wish to have an outstanding physician, or head of the city or county health department, make a talk or two—but if I know radio men, he'll do that and plenty more. He will pull out all the stops in his expe-

rience and lend the fullest production experience of his station to your purpose.

I have pointed out that precedent has been set. The stations which already have presented material on venereal diseases have received public and official acclaim. No criticism can come from public-spirited listeners on the worth of the fight—some may arise on the manner of its presentation over the radio. And it is here that I must inject a note of caution—do not attempt to impose the judgment of inexperienced but well-meaning non-radio people upon station managements. You certainly would not want a radio station manager to treat a syphilitic patient—nor is it logical to presume that a physician or layman with little or no radio experience can handle such a delicate—and I use the word in the presentation sense—subject on the air waves.

In closing let me summarize—don't send a boy to do a man's job. The fight against venereal disease is not only a clinical one, we also must eradicate forever the hush-hush mantle of shame which has impeded medical progress in this fight for centuries.

Therefore, when you approach a radio management for help, do not do so in the name of a small, but sincere, group which "wants to do something about this"—organize your community and plan the battle as a full-scale offensive. Then the cooperation of media is not only assured, but you will receive the fullest power of that cooperation in all its many phases.