

# The National Association of Broadcasters

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

No. 9

SPECIAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

Sept. 24, 1943

## Radio Newscasting and News of Radio

*(Herewith are presented two addresses given before the first meeting of the NAB Radio News Committee at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, Sept. 15-16. Because both talks contain information of interest to station operators, news personnel and publicity personnel, NAB is presenting the full texts below. Titles and identity of the speakers are listed with each address.)*

---

### "After 12,000 Newscasts"

**By Charter Heslep, News Editor, Broadcasting Division,  
Office of Censorship**

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

This meeting is not concerned directly with war-time censorship and I wish the record to show plainly that I am not here representing the Office of Censorship or the government. Some of these remarks may be critical and it should be understood that any opinions ventured or suggestions made do not in any particular reflect the views—official or otherwise—of Censorship Director Byron Price or of the Assistant Director who heads the Broadcasting Division, J. Harold Ryan.

In fact, the Office of Censorship not only has no criticism of Radio's handling of news but is proud of the record being made by the industry as a co-partner in the unprecedented experiment of voluntary, civilian censorship. As of last Saturday, this record showed only 177 confirmed violations of the Broadcasting Code in a total of 12,044 news shows heard or read by the Broadcasting Division's radio news desk. That's a batting average of 98.3 per cent for the radio news editors of the nation acting as their own

censors. It is convincing evidence that Radio, working with an equally alert Press, has succeeded so far in throwing up an effective security screen around our global war operations.

My only fear in telling this is that you may get overconfident, complacent or careless. Any violation—tho it may be the *only* one in a hundred broadcasts—can be tragic. Just last month, there was a serious breach of the Code which may have endangered the lives of a group of Army communications specialists. We must not relax our day-to-day, hour-to-hour vigilance for a single newscast, commercial or continuity. And the Code should be required reading for every new staff member as well as for the veterans. A veteran of today, according to *The New Yorker*, is an employe who has served loyally for a full six weeks!

#### Monitor Millions of Words

Walt Dennis asked me to talk shop with this committee from the viewpoint of an experienced newsman who has had an unusual opportunity to

observe news broadcasting. The topic assigned—"After 12,000 Broadcasts"—means that through the operation of two simple controls set up to check on Code observance throughout the country, the radio news desk of Censorship has monitored, reviewed or precensored every one of those 12,044 shows I mentioned earlier.

The two controls are a monitor of network programs which enables us to catch 400 to 600 shows a month and spot checking of selected groups of stations which brings us about the same number of news scripts every 30 days.

These uncounted millions of words include, up to now, the outgivings of more than a hundred network commentators and newscasters and at least one entire week's news production from more than a third of all the stations of the country. These stations include everything from 100 watters to 50 kilowatters. Some have been checked in every state in the Union.

These remarks may seem heavily slanted on the newspaper side. This is because of 15 years as a newspaperman and less than 3 years in Radio. And because I feel that Radio, to use a mixed metaphor, is today the world's widest read newspaper. And that Radio should live up to the opportunities and responsibilities that go with this newly acquired position in the life of our nation.

The National Association of Broadcasters is making a sound move in setting up this distinguished committee to formulate standards to be set before the industry that will improve the overall presentation of news on the air. And any apparent shortcomings that may be discussed here do not represent an indictment of all broadcasters. In most cases, the practices cited are found in relatively few stations. I may even be accused of fly specking. But if any points made here help this committee in its important task, the effort will have been worthwhile.

I had instilled into me by editors I almost worshipped, some high standards of journalism. Working the various beats, departments, news desks and finally as a managing editor, I tried to live up to these ideals. We realize that no paper or service ever achieves perfection. Sometimes my paper fell down miserably. There were moments when I felt cheap, mean and discouraged. But always there were these guiding standards, these goal posts, to give me a fresh start.

The standards that seem pertinent to this committee's discussions are ACCURACY, HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY. Let's start with ACCURACY.

## Accuracy

A well known newspaper buys a lot of spot announcements. The punch line of these messages has been: "When You Read It in The Star, It's TRUE." Some cynics scoff at this paper as dull and uninteresting. But I was part of its opposition for 12 years. I know that this insistence on accuracy built up a remarkable reader confidence—a blind loyalty that would cause me to boil when some of my friends just couldn't conceive that our paper could be equally as accurate as its older competitor. And advertisers have reacted to this prestige by making this paper the nation's lineage leader for more than a decade.

How can radio achieve such an enviable position? Especially when it must carry the burden of the careless listener. The records of Censorship do not reflect the hundreds of inquiries we have from listeners—sometimes including generals and admirals who are willing to take an oath they heard the Code being violated. Most of you in this room have had requests from us to check on such charges. And most of the time we find it was imperfect listening. How to deal with the careless listener is more a matter of style and technique of radio writing but Radio always can have one complete answer—the story as actually broadcast was ACCURATE. And—as long as the war lasts—didn't cross the Code!

No single move will do more to achieve accuracy than *copyreading*. I hope this committee will recommend that no broadcaster ever put a line of news on the air unless it has been read carefully by someone. Consider the care a well-edited paper exercises. Every story is read by the city editor, telegraph editor, or department head. Then a copyreader goes over it, word by word. The news editor gives it a look-see. The composing room proofreads it and the managing editor or some editorial executive checks the proofs before the paper locks up. That's five operations. No wonder bad bulls in the Press are collectors' items.

'Bust It, Bust It. . . '

What happens in some radio stations? The ticker buzzes merrily in a corner. Shortly before the next newscast, an announcer bounds over, measures up on his arm the amount of copy he needs or snips off the last roundup and rushes to the mike. Before NBC sent me to Censorship, I had a spot on a small station right here in New York. One afternoon, while mulling over some

stuff for the next day, I heard this: "San Francisco—The Western Defense Command today ordered the evacuation of all bust it, bust it . . . I beg your pardon." The announcer hadn't even glanced at the copy to notice that there had been a wire break.

This case, I hope, is an extreme one. But of the 340 stations spotchecked to date, more than half originate NO news. That means several million listeners get only what comes over the tickers and what is fed from the networks. It seems reasonable to conclude also that in many of these same stations there isn't a single person employed who possesses much newspaper experience. This situation places a terrific responsibility on the networks and the news services serving radio. Doubtless the manpower shortage explains some of this lack of enterprise by individual broadcasters.

Copyreading comes as natural as breathing to a newspaper. A \$40 a week desk man has no inferiority complex about cutting the stuff of a \$1000 a week columnist. Even a printer will come to the copy desk, holding a pencil smeared piece of copy of perhaps a famous writer and ask: "Isn't this dope all wet here or do you want it to go that way?" But in radio, there is too much reverence for big names, too much standing in awe of the name commentator or newscaster. One night a top news analyst violated the Code. When the originating station was called, the news editor on duty said: "Gee, Mr. Heslep. I thought it was wrong but who am I to question Mr. X. I'm just an announcer here in charge of news."

Station managements should give their news editors complete authority to copyread all material and have the final word—even if that word means ordering control to cut the program if a commentator tries to use material the editor has ordered out. No commentator, analyst, ace reporter or expert who is not a complete stuffed shirt or afflicted with a messiah complex is going to resent competent and intelligent copyreading.

### Check Wire Stuff

Don't take your wire service as the last word in perfection. This is no reflection on the great news organizations serving Radio and Press. But any telegraph editor worth his salt is quick to detect inaccuracies that inevitably appear on any news wire. I recall that while night editor for NBC, one news service began winning the war every night in its roundup. After steering news writers along a more realistic approach for a few nights, we protested to the service. I presume

some managing editors did likewise. The situation was corrected.

Dozens of stations, particularly those in semi-rural communities, are attempting considerable local coverage. The police blotter, courts, city government, community meetings and that lifeblood of the small newspaper—the personals—are being used. The station usually pastes up clippings from the local paper or just marks up a copy of the paper—a throwback to the early days of newscasting. A few really are doing a neat job of processing this news in interesting fashion. Here, too, accuracy should be paramount, especially where the relation between station and listener is apt to be very personal.

We've all acquired habits as voluntary censors that should be carried over to post war broadcasting. I refer to the Code requests to verify all messages sent in by telephone, to check the source of emergency notices, to edit letters from overseas and to check personal items to see that no clues are given to troop or ship movements. All of these checks promote accuracy—as well as security. Accuracy should be one of the cornerstones in any set of radio news standards.

### Honesty

Honesty is the next standard. When debating over making the switch from city room to radio news room, an old broadcasting veteran said to me: "The biggest thing you've got to realize is that you're going into the show business." Well, after I got into radio, and especially after a year on an observation post in Washington, I wonder if radio management wouldn't do well to forget it is in the show business when it is promoting its news department. Legitimate promotion of commentators and services—yes. Frenzied overwriting and extravagant claims for this or that "news boy"—no.

Today, Radio tosses around the words "commentator", "news analyst," "editor," "newscaster" and "reporter" like so many balls kept in the air by a juggler. I know this committee will attempt to evaluate these terms and give them definite meaning to the public. Here is some comment that may be useful. An opening commercial or top sheet breathlessly tells you that this or that "international expert, famous newspaperman, ace reporter" and so forth is about to give his keen analysis of the news and comment on the great events of the day. And what comes next? A collection of from 10 to 15 stories clipped from a wire service. In some cases there isn't a

single pencil mark on the copy! This phoney buildup also hits a network now and then. A commentator fairly new to the airwaves is a good newspaperman and a friend of mine. However, like most newsmen who haven't made a trip abroad, my friend has a fairly obscure background. Both of us get a chuckle and then feel a little uneasy over the false glamor that the network press agents weave around him.

Then, there is the plagiarist. A wire service man comes up with a good think piece. Or a correspondent gets a real beat. Or a rewrite man happens to do a particularly fine piece of writing. How many commentators give the service or the man credit? In one instance, a Washington correspondent did an excellent piece of deduction on a night when newsbreaks were few. I happened to listen to three commentators that use this service. The first analyst appropriated the story completely as his own. The second merely read the story. The third had the honesty to report it as an excellent story on the wire service he was using—even giving the writer credit.

#### Give Source Credit

This deception also extends in a lesser degree to the stations. Your newspaper labels most of its material. The press and picture associations call you quickly and loudly when you omit that log or agate credit line. But some stations blithely present the news "as gathered by the WWWW newsroom." This committee may see fit to recommend that all material be identified where such labeling contributes to more honest news presentation.

A station discovers it has an announcer who is very facile in reading news. He may never have written a story or handled a piece of copy in his life. But in no time at all he may become a commentator. Why, he'd be paralyzed if he had to write his own script. I recall an instance when an excellent news announcer—newscaster seems to be the right word—was asked to address a prominent women's club. He rushed about the newsroom seeking to get some lowly scribe to ghost the speech for him.

Take another amusing case. It was shortly after the fall of Crete and the top news had shifted suddenly to Russia. A "news analyst" was looking over the copy served up to him neatly by a newsroom writer. "Say," he exclaimed, "there isn't any news from the Mediterranean tonight, eh?" Before the writer could explain, there came this explanation from the bogus commentator:

"Oh well, THAT war down there is over now, anyway."

Remember how you cursed in the old days when you put out a nickel for an extra that amounted to a fake? Well, Radio has abolished most of the newspaper extras—both legitimate and spurious—but has appropriated this vice as its very own. One salutary effect of the war is the virtual banning of the word "flash." I shudder every time I read a show whose format calls for insertion of a last minute bulletin. Some radio men seem to think they can order news to break to suit station schedules. This vicious practice often forces a news editor to prostitute his judgment and give listeners a completely phoney bulletin. A famous network show used this trick for a while. One night, it inserted a "bulletin"—a story taken from the previous day's edition of a New York newspaper—and incidentally ran smack into a Code violation! Another night, a sports result came in just as a newscast went on the air. It was included in the news show—complete result. Thirty minutes later—on the same station—a sportscaster shouted: "And here is the result of that game just torn off the news ticker . . ." I don't think the listening public is so dumb that it isn't going to catch on and lose faith in the honesty of radio news.

#### Radio Has Speed, Freshness

Speed and freshness is one of the greatest advantages Radio has over the slower paced press. But I wonder if some radio operators realize that even tho it has the pace of a tortoise as compared with broadcasting, a good newspaper that gets a break on edition time can get on the street in 20 to 30 minutes? Today, with newscasts on the hour, quarter-hour, half-hour and sprinkled in between, the bulletin quality of any news break fades quickly. New millions have become regular radio news listeners—but we don't have to bulletin them to death to hold their interest. A good news writer can revamp his show smoothly to put a new top on it within 30 minutes of air time. Why not restrict the use of the word "bulletin" to those newsbreaks that occur within 30 minutes of air-time? It's so easy to keep the freshness of radio news before the listener by phrases like "less than 2 hours ago, a dispatch from North Africa said. . . ." If such a standard were accepted in the radio newsrooms of the country, the word "bulletin" would again come to mean something to the public.

This committee might well recommend definite standards to eliminate these petty frauds and trickery from news programming. If the public is to develop complete trust in radio's presentation of the news, we've got to be honest with it.

### Integrity

The next goal post is INTEGRITY. Here, let us look at sponsor censorship, controversial issues, propaganda and time chiselers.

Just last week a friend asked me to read the manuscript of a proposed text on radio news writing and supervision. Several pages were devoted to "sponsor's rights." The author inferred that if a news spot was sponsored by an airline, for example, and a crash occurred on that line, the news should be played down!

Here's an angle that timid broadcasters (and newspapers) might be overlooking. It so happened one year that within a few months, I ran into some hot stories involving local business concerns. The first one caused an advertiser to cancel a 25,000 line contract. The second sent a smaller contract out of the window. The third resulted in the withdrawal of a 50,000 line account. The "front office" was getting dazed. But the stories were accurate, truthful and newsworthy. The editor stood firm and the paper's policy didn't change. And do you know, that within six months, all three of those accounts were back in the paper—one with a lineage boost? It seems fair to assume that respect for the paper's integrity plus its value as an advertising medium that couldn't be passed up must have figured in the return of this business.

All of us know of a large oil company that sponsors many newscasts. This firm has been in the spotlight on many occasions—sometime a most unfavorable spotlight. To my knowledge, the agency placing this radio business never has protested the use of stories critical of its client. I hope this committee will take a firm stand against any so-called sponsor's right or sponsor censorship. And that station managements will stand resolutely behind the judgments of its news editors if demands are made to suppress a story.

### Editorializing

There is the much discussed problem of editorializing on controversial issues. As I understand it, the broadcast practice aims primarily at preventing the possibility of political control by any party over any segment of broadcasting. But

if you had read all the scripts that have passed over the radio news desk in Censorship, you would conclude this theory is a dead letter in many cases. Network commentators certainly reflect almost every shade of opinion on controversial subjects. And you don't often hear a disclaimer by the station or the chain. Two outstanding men appear to voice the views of extreme conservatives. A half dozen others expound the liberal viewpoint with the fervor of a crusader. The most conspicuous example has been the battle raging over our foreign policy.

There are stations who boldly label certain of their programs as "editorial." Several news programs devote a section to what is called openly "the editorial page." And this is not confined to national issues. In a western city, a local commentator poured out purple passages of vituperation against certain members of the City Council for a week. I've wondered if the station was sued for libel! But during the week reviewed, there was not a single word of rebuttal.

What appears to be a possibly dangerous practice is presentation of only one side of a question while claiming that what is said is the whole picture. The lead-ins may say there is much confusion about a certain issue. Then comes the punch line, delivered with finality: "Here to give you the FACTS on this issue is Mr. So-and-so." And then Mr. So-and-So proceeds to give all the facts—favorable to one side of the issue. The listener is NOT told that what he has heard is only one side of the question. If he has only a casual interest in the topic, he may think he has just heard the complete story. He has not, and I think this is a serious breach of any standard of integrity of radio news that this committee may set out.

Propaganda is a much abused word that means many things to many people. Some charge that all the government releases funnelled thru OWI into the stations are propaganda. Without discussing the merits of that contention, I think it fair to point out that other governments are bombarding radio news desks with free material. Some of it is definitely slanted to give the government's point of view. And it is being used. We have had numerous inquiries about this material. In a week's scripts from one station, there were eight newscasts consisting entirely of verbatim reading of handouts of governments other than our own. Three were from the Swedes, two each from the Dutch and the Belgians and one from the Australians. A very internationally minded sta-

tion, you may say. But what of this broadcaster's ability to protect the integrity of his news? This is not said in criticism of the excellent information services operated by the neutral and allied governments. But it is a red flag to radio news editors to weigh carefully all propaganda. Pressure groups and minorities in this country are active. Many have powerful backing and plenty of money. The flow of handouts and transcribed features to stations is going to increase. And all this imposes a heavy burden on the station management and its news editors to keep their judgments keen and sharp.

### Adopt High Personnel Standards

Many of you will recall the scandal that resulted when a congressional investigation revealed certain interests were paying off renegade newspaper men behind the counter to write articles favorable to these interests. The expose was damaging to the prestige of journalism. If we are alert, we can prevent anything like that happening in Radio. A sound policy would be to adopt as qualifications for a station news editor the same high standards required for admission to the Radio and Press galleries of Congress. Require the news editor to divorce himself of outside promotion, lobbying, publicity and other work—and pay him accordingly. There aren't many stations today—even those originating no news—that cannot with profit to their service to the public employ a full time man in charge of news and coverage of special news events. And if they get the right man, the broadcasters will be taking a major step toward safeguarding the integrity of their news.

Now, for the time chiselers. At a cocktail party recently, a "public relations counsel" boasted that he was getting his clients' products plugged on 205 stations every week for only \$3.50 per station. That's the cost of producing a 15-minute show, the platter and mailing charges. The vehicle is a well written news feature with the free advertising worked in very skillfully. The press agent added that he was not dealing only in teakettles—that he had many big stations on his free list. All of us have been following the current argument about railroads buying thousands of lines of newspaper space but getting the same advertising free over the radio. Also, there are many anecdotes about commentators and newscasters "paying off" for free merchandise, free meals, free hotel bills and the like with sly plugs on the broadcaster's time. I don't know how true

these stories are and haven't seen much evidence of this in my brief years in radio. But news editors should be alert to guard against such infringements that may occur in their bailiwick and against subtle or cleverly concealed plugs that smear the integrity of the station's news.

### Responsibility

The last goal post is RESPONSIBILITY. Perhaps here is where a plea should be made for more aggressiveness by individual stations in news handling. Several times "no broadcast" slugs have been slapped on stories on the wire services thru misunderstanding or just plain stupidity. But I have yet to hear the first complaint from a radio news editor.

Again, it sometimes appears that almost any shave-tail or one striper can scare the wits out of a station with a single phone call. Cases are on record of an officer—way out of bounds—ordering a broadcaster to suppress a program or story. Willy, nilly, it is done. Not many months ago, an Intelligence officer called up a network and said an innocent little show was dangerous to security. Without investigating, the network immediately ordered the format changed in such a way that the main feature of the show was killed. The next day, the owner of the show tossed the problem in the lap of Censorship. It did not remotely cross the Code. There was no security factor not already provided for. The show was restored to its original form—but not thru any aggressiveness of the network in protecting its rights.

I should state here that we have a huge Army and Navy with many newly indoctrinated officers. It is to be expected some will make mistakes or that some will try to throw their weight around. We always get 100 per cent cooperation in such cases from the top ranks in Washington.

I'll wager that if a general walked into any country weekly and started issuing orders, the editor would tell him to stick to running the Army or take the responsibility of declaring martial law. Once, while I was a managing editor, a three-star general practically demanded our paper not run a certain story. We weren't at war then. And the story wouldn't violate today's Code. Well, when the General refused to give the Army side of the issue and continued to insist on suppression of the story, I had to inform him acidly of a certain warm region where I was consigning him and his ancestors. It is the responsibility of news

editors to defend their stations against any unreasonable demands involving news.

### Balance News Schedule

Is a station licensee obligated to provide news for his listeners? Most stations now find the news department they once kicked around is now a good money maker. It's so profitable that some of them are losing all sense of proportion and scheduling newscasts and commentaries in such profusion over the broadcast day that it is a wonder that the ratings of all news shows aren't dragged down by a bored public. But what about the leaner days that may come?

Well, I don't suppose any station will lose its license because it drops all its news shows. But can you think of any type of programming that provides such a complete answer to that much discussed phrase ". . . in the public interest . . ." as a well balanced schedule of newscasts and commentaries with special news events handled with judgment and intelligence?

War has brought us the biggest audience in radio history. It was news that did it. Is it going too far to say that it has become the duty of every broadcaster to provide his listeners with the best and most complete news coverage he can afford? Also, I feel that the radio news editor of today and in the future should rank as the equal in importance with other department heads. Of course, probably all of us here may not be unbiased judges of this question. But in pointing up some possible shortcomings of our present handling of news, we have only emphasized the vast importance of this segment of the broadcasting picture, especially in its impact on the public.

As soon as the war is over, many stations probably will not be content any longer to tear copy off the ticker and plug in the network. Of course, some stations are fat, rich and lazy. They may feel: "That's all I need. That gives them the whole story. Why put out more money for news?" Well, it isn't the whole story as I shall explain later. And I think it is unworthy of 50,000 watt stations—which should be the leaders in the industry—to follow such a course. But I can name a half dozen in this class that are content with this kind of coverage. Here's another angle of radio measuring up to its responsibilities—and opportunities. Some leaders in the industry are mystified that the public and Congress appear to have so little interest in the welfare and advancement of Radio. The average citizen will run a temperature when freedom of the press becomes an

issue in any part of the nation. But all of us know how little he bothers about matters affecting the freedom of Radio—which is freedom of Speech.

I understand that a survey is to be made to find out why Mr. and Mrs. Citizen seem to care so little for an institution that brings them so much. Some critics blame this condition on lack of an aggressive public relations policy of the industry. Some psychologists say it is because Mr. and Mrs. Citizen will have to pay out money for their newspaper and that radio is free. And that a person always feels a proprietary interest in something he pays for. Perhaps that factor will disappear in some future year when everyone owns a television and facsimile set and has to pay service charges to keep the receiver supplied with paper.

### Need More Local News

But here I make a plea for a more adequate local coverage of news, for local commentators translating the news into terms of their own particular main street and crossroads, for objective but authoritative discussion of local problems. Perhaps I'm still a city editor who can't get out of the habit of thinking that, in normal times, local news sells the most papers. You will find that Army and Navy PRO's have drilled into them the importance of providing the home town paper with personal news about the boys and girls in the armed services. Any college press agent, and I was one, knows that altho it may be drudgery, home town items are tops in building interest in his school.

At least two small stations recently have hired reporters to gather just this kind of news and put it on the air. A few are devoting one spot a day entirely to local items. I'll wager a reasonable sum that the listeners of such stations will come to feel a more personal interest in the welfare of these broadcasters. And it is my belief that if station managements will assume the responsibility for developing adequate local coverage; if they will pay less money for promoting second rate commentators who parrot the news of rehash what the network men have said and give more thought to developing good local commentators, if all this happens, I believe you will see developing a closer relation between radio and its listeners that may serve Radio well if its welfare is imperiled—either by government or any combination of other interests.

In all of this finger pointing, I am speaking as one who is completely converted to Radio, who hopes to live the rest of his life with it. I have

tried to set out four important goal posts to which can be nailed practical suggestions looking to raising the standards of news handling by Radio.

Under ACCURACY, were discussed the importance of copyreading and complete authority of the news editor.

Under HONESTY, have been listed several petty deceptions such as phoney buildups, false labels, lack of credit lines, the overworked bulletin coupled with a suggestion for a 30-minute deadline for use of that term.

Under INTEGRITY fall the important topics of sponsor censorship, fair play in handling controversial issues, an alertness to propaganda and a ban on all time chisellers.

Finally, under RESPONSIBILITY, I have

pleaded for more aggressive defense by news editors of their rights and contended that it is the duty of every station to present the most complete coverage within its means. I have asked for more local coverage—both from the angle of listener appeal and as a catalyst to bring radio and its audience into a closer bond of friendship.

I wish to thank this committee for the honor of being asked to talk with you. And may I repeat, in conclusion, that my remarks are based on the study of those 12,000 broadcasts; that they represent only my personal views and have no official connection with my duties as a radio news editor for the Broadcasting Division of the Office of Censorship.

Thank you—and “Thirty.”

---

## **“News of Radio Within the Industry”**

**By Bruce Robertson, Associate Editor, Broadcasting Magazine**

Looking at the radio trade press—but why should I pretend to be modest?—if I’m going to talk about industry news I’m going to talk about the way it’s handled in the sheet I work for, so I might just as well start out by saying BROADCASTING MAGAZINE and not go to a lot of trouble to think up fancy synonyms which would mean the same thing, anyway—looking at the current issue of BROADCASTING MAGAZINE, then, a reader who was not familiar with the broadcasting business might think that a broadcaster’s lot is not a happy one.

Here are a few headlines: “Cox Probe to Charge Fly with Contempt; Report to Suggest License Powers Be Stripped.” “FCC Turns Down NBC Petition.” “Way Calls Meeting in Chicago to Discuss Hitch Hike Problems.” “Disc Net Plan Offers Hope in AFM Fight; Threat of Petrillo Would Hit 160 Stations.” “New Definition of FCC Power Urged; Senator Smith Asks Radio Law to Nullify Supreme Court Blow at Free Speech”. The poor broadcaster, our innocent reader would think, every hand turned against him, not a friend in the world, how does he stand it?

But then he might look at some other headlines in the same issue: “Local Food Disc Series Starts on 80 Stations.” “Tobacco Sponsor Announces Plans.” “Wine Discs.” “Healthaids Promotes.” “Vick Renews.” “Information Please Returns.” “Sun-Ray Series,” and so on at great length, and he’d begin to think that maybe his first im-

pression had been wrong and that this broadcasting business is not a headache but a goldmine.

Of course there are a lot of other headlines in the issue such as “Italy Armistice Gives Radio New War Role,” “Radio War Effort Is Lauded by Hoyt,” etc., which I omitted because they didn’t fit into the point I’m trying to make, which is that we don’t have to worry about naivety on the part of our readers because they are definitely hep to what goes with radio.

### **Readers Are Broadcasters**

Our readers are broadcasters—station and network owners, managers, department heads; advertising agency executives, particularly radio directors and time buyers; advertising managers and their assistants of the companies with national or regional distribution who pay most of radio’s bills by advertising on the air, and then there’s a fringe of Congressmen, radio attorneys, university libraries, etc., who make up the balance of our subscription list. I should of course have included the station reps and other service organizations in our list of readers, and at the moment there are quite a few copies going to men who are temporarily employed by Uncle Sam on an extermination project, but who want to keep in touch with what is going on in the industry they hope to come back to one of these days.

In other words, a trade paper is a business

paper, written and edited for members of the industry, who want to get all of the news and who can add up apparently conflicting headlines and articles into a composite picture of the industry as it is at the moment. They know what it's all about, so we can go ahead with our work without stopping to explain the implications of every news development.

Probably in no other business is there as much interest in the whole field as there is in radio. Radio lives in a goldfish bowl. Everybody in the business, it seems, knows everybody else's business. Radio has more rumors and more crises than any other area of human endeavor except possibly show business, per se, which radio isn't. Broadcasting is a hybrid of journalism, show business, the pulpit, the school, the dime novel and the continued story, not to mention the corner drug and grocery stores, from which all box-tops flow.

Such a business naturally produces a considerably varied flow of news from week to week which a good card-cataloger would probably cross-index under a thousand or more headings. But for my purpose today, I'll deal with them in 3 classes. First, there's industry news, which might be described as covering the relationships of the broadcaster to the rest of the world—for instance, the broadcasters contacts with the public both directly and through the public's elected representatives in Congress and its appointed representatives on the FCC and other government commissions and agencies; the broadcasters contacts with the American Federation of Musicians, with AFRA, ACA, IBEW and other labor organizations; the broadcaster's dealings with music licensing groups, news services, transcription library services, networks and other sources of programs and, perhaps, revenue. Station reps might also be included under the general industry news heading, or they might come under the second classification—business news. As long as they are definitely included in the picture, which they certainly ought to be, I don't think it matters very much which group they get put in.

### Business and Personal News

Business news covers news about advertisers using radio for the first time, advertisers renewing and expanding and changing their use of radio, even on very rare occasions, advertisers discontinuing their radio campaigns—always because they've been so successful that the advertiser can't keep up with his orders, of course.

The third classification is personal news. This includes every thing from a Behind-the-Mike note that Joe Jolley has joined the announcing staff of WJUN, Juniper Patch, Ga., to a biographical sketch in which BROADCASTING MAGAZINE pays its respects to Joseph J. Jolley, president of the Rural Regional Network. Seriously, the personal columns of the MAGAZINE over the last 12 years contain the business histories of a good many of today's big shots from the time of their first jobs in radio. The only reason they aren't all there is that a lot of them were already big shots when we started publishing in October, 1931.

Before going into more detail about the handling of these three types of news for industry consumption, I'd like to read part of a memo I got Monday from Sol Taishoff when he told me about this assignment. Here's how he outlines our MAGAZINE'S general editorial policy:

"BROADCASTING magazine always has had a purpose and a mission. It has a definite editorial policy. It is 100% broadcasting industry; it does not owe its allegiance to any other field or business.

"BROADCASTING magazine's mission is to preserve a free, competitive industry, operated by the American Plan. It has been, and I hope always will be, the champion of an industry dedicated to public service but with the profit motive. That's the democratic way.

"We are a trade journal and a business paper. We have pioneered in the field. I think our formula has been right, though there is plenty of room for improvement.

"When we started out, radio was still regarded as a passing fad, something like the miniature golf course. The movies were on our tail; so were the newspapers. Radio had to sell the hard way.

"It gave to the public something it wanted. The educators early saw the prospects of the medium as a disseminator of information. They tried to get their cut of the wavelengths. So did other special groups and interests. Those were the knock-down drag-out days of the industry, happily about over. But some of the boys still are pot-shotting.

"We think radio should stand on its own hind legs. It should not play second fiddle to any other group or industry. By the same token, there shouldn't be any discrimination among classes of people or industries on station ownership. That is what the newspaper ownership fight is all about.

"So we get down to this on our editorial policy and overall philosophy:

### Radio Must Be Independent

"Radio must be maintained as an independent entity. That goes for any radio development or invention having to do with the dissemination of information to the public. Radio is not a common carrier like the railroads or busses; it can't take all comers. When television comes along, it should be part of the radio industry, not a subsidiary of the motion picture field. It will get its greatest development that way.

"These constitute the reasons BROADCASTING magazine has always hammered away at independence for the industry. I repeat, it isn't the show business, it isn't the newspaper business, and it isn't a Government vehicle. It embodies all these fields.

"I think all of you know about our policy on industry problems, both regulatory and dollar-gouging. In the former, we have had a running fight about Government inroads in the form of radio regulation. In the second category follow such groups as AFM, the music licensing societies and others out for their pounds of flesh.

"It isn't that we feel the industry can do no wrong. We want to dispel the idea that radio is a key to the mint and that it is a sucker for these outfits. Publicly we defend radio at every turn. Privately, on occasions, we may hold a different view about certain things. But there is a certain amount of linen that shouldn't be washed in public."

### Other News Handling

That pretty much sums up the treatment of industry news, under the limited definition we gave it as our first general classification. Most of this kind of news originates outside of your control; War Labor Board hearings on the musician's union ban on recordings, for example, is a story which we and the other trade papers will cover by having reporters present at the hearings; we don't expect to find that kind of news in station and network releases.

But occasionally you will have a good public service story which the station publicity man will write up and send to us. At the moment this story will probably concern the cooperation of the station with the Treasury Dept. in putting over the 3rd War Loan Drive. As soon as this drive was hinted at we at BROADCASTING began checking the Treasury for any information

they had about the part radio would be given in the drive, and as soon and as fast as this information was available we published it for your information and so you and all the other broadcasters could make your plans for promoting the drive in your areas.

Well, the drive is now on and we are being flooded, deluged and almost submerged with War Bond publicity stories and pictures from the national and regional networks and from some 900 individual radio stations, according to a memo I recently got from our managing editor, Frank Beatty, a very nice guy although somewhat of a professional pessimist, which seems to amount to an occupational disease for managing editors.

His memo said: "There will be hundreds and hundreds of pictures—War Bond Sales wagons, platforms and thermometers and other structures set up in the town square, guys on stilts and girls in or out of bathing suits. Out of great flocks we will try to cull with fairness and editorial judgment, a couple of good ones here and there, although there's a strong temptation to say to hell with the whole thing, as every one we print will make 890 other stations sore. So any war bond stuff we handle during this drive is merely designed to typify the sort of job the entire industry is doing and every publicity man whose stuff isn't included will figure we have no sense of news values and that we cater exclusively to our big advertisers."

### About Pictures

I'll come back to that advertising angle later. It's a pat alibi for any publicity man whose stuff isn't used—and don't we all love pat alibis? But first let's get back to this industry news coverage. Every station is rightfully proud of its public service programs, rightfully pleased when some organization which it has helped gives it a public pat on the back by awarding the station a plaque or scroll. Usually the presentation ceremony is broadcast and the station publicity man naturally arranges to get a photograph of the station manager receiving the award from the head of the awarding organization. The picture is good for space in the local press, unless a radio-newspaper feud is going on, and it's also space-worthy in our magazine, *the first time*.

But so frequently the plan is worked out on a national scale. For instance, about a year ago the American Legion posts throughout the country began making awards of merit to stations which had given time to the Legion. The first picture

came in; it looked pretty good; the caption said that this legion chapter had awarded this station a plaque for its outstanding service to the cause, etc.; so it got printed. The next week we got two dozen duplicates, except for names and call letters. They did not get used because the story just wasn't news any more.

Speaking of pictures and repetition, I want to beg you to use all the influence you have to see that your station, at least, doesn't send us any more pictures showing a renewal contract being signed with the advertiser, station manager, salesman on the account and the artist on the program all standing around grinning like toothpaste ads. Oh, yes, the agency man is also usually on hand to show his teeth 15% worth.

Now, everybody knows that when the salesman has got the client to agree to renew, the contract is mailed out and signed without any ado about it; but everybody also knows that one of the major purposes of BROADCASTING MAGAZINE from our inception has always been the education of advertisers and agencies about radio as a new, virile and aggressive medium. Recently we have occasionally substituted "established, virile and aggressive medium," but you get the idea. Radio is good; radio advertising is good advertising. And there's no better way to prove it than by a commercial success story.

### Business Pictures

Sometimes these success stories run to a page or more. But not necessarily. A one paragraph item can be a helluva success story. Every new account helps sell radio to other accounts. At least that's what our advertiser and agency subscribers tell us, and they can't both be wrong. And every renewal account is another good sales argument.

Certainly it's legitimate and welcome news. And certainly we like business pictures. But there ought to be some way of getting over the idea that a contract has been signed without actually depicting the pen-in-hand pose. Every once in a while some ingenious guy proves that it can be done. For example, a few weeks back we got a picture about a new milk account, with the boys drinking a toast to the sponsor in his own product. And the "boys" were good—president of the company, ditto of the agency, station manager and salesman. No trace of Milky Moe, your smooth-as-cream crooner.

And just this last week another smart publicity man worked a new twist by having everybody in

the picture offering his pen to the client. So it can be done. And the boys who do it get the breaks with us, which may account for a seemingly disproportionate number of pictures from a few stations. This brings me back to the squawks that we cater to our advertisers. We don't. We give in to the guy with the ideas. I was going to add that there isn't any connection between him and advertising, but it occurs to me that the station that is smart enough to work out new variations on a familiar theme will also probably be smart enough to be a consistent user of space in our magazine.

The same thing is true about stories as about pictures. The easiest thing for a station publicity man to do is to send us a carbon of what he's written for the local radio column, blithely ignoring the fact that the local columnist would be almost certain to delete the very part that we are most apt to use. Let me pass along a few remarks from managing editor Beatty, over whose desk all your copy goes, except that which is given a preliminary sifting by one of our branch offices.

### Tips on Publicity

"I wish you could tell the boys how tough it is from our end to process some of the stuff they send out. For instance, we'll wade through a couple of windy paragraphs and after sifting out the cigars, diapers, future announcers and spurious emissions we discover that Bill Jones, announcer of WOOF, Wisteria, Del., is the father of a boy born Sept. 16.

"My special curse goes to the publicity man who writes a whole page of single-spaced stuff about Mary Belle Crooner who has a nifty new yellow sweater—keep your eyes on your copy, boys; Harry McGonigle is strutting high these days as he fondles a new 52-week contract with Dangerous Dan's Delicatessen. And we have to read through the tenth carbon they sent us to find out in the last sentence that Charles Coughin, formerly of WOOF, Wisteria, Del., has joined the announcing staff of KOWF, Throttlebottom, Cal.

"The boys who really click in feeding us are those who study what we print and then go about sending us news that conforms to our style. If all publicity men were on a string basis, they would use the keen judgment of the experienced freelancer as he maps a story to submit to an editor.

"You might remind the boys that we operate as a trade magazine for the commercial broadcasting industry and that we deem the industry an ad-

vertising medium as well as a purveyor of information, news and entertainment. Therefore we face a very considerable sifting and sorting job several times a day as we get tons of publicity and handouts. We want all the stuff they put out, but they must remember that we can't come up with a four-column head every time station WOOF sells another station break to Freddie the Furrier. We are doing a national job, but still want to give a cross-section of what is going on in the thousands of localities served by broadcast outlets. And if we happen to use WOOF's story when we have the same tale from a hundred other stations at the same time, we're thinking in national terms and hope the other hundred aren't peeved."

That pretty much covers the personal news category too, completing the third of the three general classifications into which I divided the whole field. I realize that I've only touched the highspots and if any of you would like to ask any questions I'll try to answer them. But before I

stop to do that I'd like to quote a little platform that we used to carry on our editorial page mast-head:

"American radio as free as the press.

Maintenance of a free, competitive system of broadcasting.

Programs providing greatest good for the greatest number.

The right to render public service without undue restraint.

Maintenance of highest moral, social and economic standards.

Stand aloof from political partisanship on the air.

Build radio circulation to saturation in 30,000,000 American homes, with radios in every classroom, office and automobile.

Keep abreast of modern technical developments.

Foster sound and progressive development of commercial television and facsimile."

"That was back in Jan., 1940. It holds good today."