

N-A-E-B NEWS LETTER

National Association of Educational Broadcasters
Madison, Wisconsin -- June 16, 1937

MEMBERS PICK ILLINOIS FOR 1937 MEETING

The 1937 annual convention will be held at the University of Illinois, in Urbana, on Monday and Tuesday, September 13 and 14 according to the choice of members in a mail poll. Both Cornell and Purdue had also extended cordial invitations to be hosts to the convention this year.

Jos. F. Wright, manager of WILL, will be in general charge of arrangements for the meeting. The URBANA-LINCOLN HOTEL has been designated as convention headquarters. Members are asked to send suggestions concerning the meetings, programs, and other details to Mr. Wright. Further arrangements will be announced in the July NEWS-LETTER.

EXCHANGE PACKET RECESS

The June exchange-packet will be the last regular mailing until early October when the stations' new fall bulletins are ready. Special mailings will be handled if warranted. Members are asked to remind their secretaries to send in their contributions to the "exchange-packet" on October 1.

MORE MEMBERSHIPS RECEIVED

Renewals of membership have been received from WNAD, University of Oklahoma, and WOSU, Ohio State University, according to a report from Treasurer Brackett.

DAMMON LEAVES WBAA POST

Clarence E. Dammon, who has contributed so largely to the growth and expansion of Purdue's broadcasting activities during recent years sends us this note:

"You might be interested to know that on July 1, I am retiring from active charge of the station here at Purdue in lieu of a promotion in the administrative organization of the University. However, I shall continue an active interest in the station and the development in educational broadcasting. I shall remain a member of the University radio committee and have some influence in directing the radio policy. I believe I have made my contribution during the past four years and it is now time for a new man to come in and make a contribution along the lines which we need strengthened.

"My new work will be as Assistant Director of Personnel for the university in charge of personnel for a certain number of the schools. My work with public relations will be expanded and I am to devote more time to industrial and business contacts. The whole set-up is very promising and I am looking forward with considerable enthusiasm to the future in this administrative development.

"I don't believe any mention of this is necessary. As I said before I will be keeping up an active interest and participation in the NAEB, and in the policy shaping work of our activities here."

Congratulations and lots of luck, Clarence! We know you'll be a booster for WBAA and radio education in your new capacity too. We do mention it because our members want to know of your advancement.

WESTERN STATE ACTIVITIES

According to a report from Walter G. Marburger, chairman of the committee on Radio Education at Western State Teachers College, the institution concluded its season on May 27 and will continue in the fall over WKZO, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

In his letter he says:

"During the year we have put on 64 broadcasts using 112 students, 40 faculty members and 8 others not connected with our college. In addition to these about 25 others have assisted in writing manuscripts, coaching, etc. Four of these broadcasts were entirely from sound recordings and two others were in part recordings. We have used a recording of our school song to introduce and close our programs. We hope to acquire better recording equipment by fall."

KFDY DENIED SPECIAL BROADCAST REQUEST

A report from the F.C.C. Broadcast Division dated June 1, includes this item:

KFDY So. Dak. College
 Brookings, S. Dak.

Denied special temp. Auth. to operate from 8 to 9:30 PM, CST, May 24 and 31, in order to broadcast special concert by State College Military Band, and from 3 to 4:30 PM, CST, June 7, in order to broadcast program commemorating the 25th anniversary of Agrl. Extension work in So. Dak. Action taken 5/22.

When a request for afternoon time for a broadcast of that character is denied how can some of the programs on the air be justified?

DOES IT MAKE US VULNERABLE?

Under the present radio set-up educational stations are obliged to play the game according to rules not designed primarily to fit their needs. Nevertheless we must conform to the practises in force - or be subject to such criticism or prejudice as may follow.

In the past it has been the custom for some educational stations to be off the air during the summer. Some still recess with their institutions. F.C.C. reports dated June 1 list six such authorizations. In some cases the commercial stations with which these educational stations share time take over the extra hours, thus strengthening their claims to full-time operating rights.

The problem within the institutions is a very real one. Limited budgets sometimes make it impossible to carry on during the vacation period. The sign-off is in most cases not because of choice. Be that as it may, every effort should be made to use to good advantage the maximum facilities granted by the F.C.C. Only in this way can an adequate defense be arranged in case of an attack, or additional facilities be secured.

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(Special attention is called to the talk by NABE President H. B. McCarty which is attached to this news-letter. It is a pertinent reply to the question "Why the Educational Station?")

WHY THE EDUCATIONAL RADIO STATION? *

Harold B. McCarty .

Program Director, WHA, Wisconsin State Station
President, National Association of Educational Broadcasters

We have already had today two answers to the question partially expressed in the title of this talk, Why the Educational Radio Station?

In a sense, Mr. Frost gave a negative answer this morning in his ringing rebuke of educators for their failure to realize their opportunity and for the mistake they made in relinquishing valuable broadcasting facilities. Then we have had a second answer, and I believe a loud affirmative one, this afternoon in this roll call of educational stations, reporting recent achievements of college and university broadcasting stations throughout the country.

To much of what has been said about the failure of educators, I am inclined, in good old prayer-meeting style, to sit off in a corner and shout "Amen". But when you indict the educators of America because a number of institutions failed to retain their radio transmitter licenses, something more needs to be said. It's this: Those early stations were not all educational stations. I repeat, those were not educational stations, in the sense of education which means the dissemination of knowledge. Those licenses were, for the most part, requested by physicists and electrical engineers to permit experiment in the science of radio. Their aim was to discover scientific relations, not to disseminate information. They were interested in the technical aspects of this new instrument, not in its social usefulness. They secured licenses to explore physical principles, not educational avenues. I say again, they were not truly educational stations.

Let's not lose sight of this distinction, for when those scores of colleges and universities, voluntarily or under some pressure, lost their licenses, they had not failed completely. Many of them had reached their original objective of scientific research. The shrinkage in numbers is chargeable, I believe, to the "experimental" rather than to the "broadcasting" period of college radio activity. And, instead of cries of "shame!" we might properly send up a couple salvos of applause for their success.

*Talk given at the Annual Institute on Education by Radio, Columbus, Ohio, May 3, 1937.

True, the classroom teachers, the extension workers, and the administrators of our universities have failed to realize their opportunity. They have been slow in awakening to the educational possibilities of broadcasting. But slowness is one thing, and surrender is another. And in my judgment, the educators of America cannot properly be charged with surrender of the idea of educational broadcasting. They hadn't yet grasped the idea when they gave up their transmitter licenses. They didn't realize what they had, more's the pity, perhaps! But there's something more encouraging in this than there is in the belief that scores of educational stations failed, that they set out to do something and found it was wrong or impossible. Our conclusion must be this, that many of those stations were licensed for laboratory experiment, not for educational extension, and that they had reached their objective when they stopped.

But the demise of so many college and university stations cannot be so easily dismissed. What of the others, where there was awareness of the station's importance and anxiety to retain it? Mr. Frost has indicated as the major reasons for discontinuance: indifferent faculty attitudes and public apathy. To those I would add with considerable more stress than he gave: pressure from commercial interests seeking facilities, and faulty federal administration of the limited radio resources.

We should have learned our lessons about conservation by the time we came to dealing with radio frequencies. We should have remembered that America has squandered every single natural resource it ever possessed -- land, forests, oil, minerals, wild life -- everything. But we are an aggressive, optimistic people -- and we forget so easily. We should have said to the custodians of radio frequencies: Drive through the cut-over forest wastelands of the Lake States. Visit the barren, eroded farms of the "dust-bowl". Observe the ruthless waste of coal, natural gas, and oil resources. Witness the thin remnant of a once abundant wild life, and see the results of the exploitation of our fish and game. Then consider whether or not it is wise to leave entirely to the business of selling, the control of the public resource of radio.

Why the Educational Radio Station? First, because down through the years we have found that the public interest in the handling of any public utility must be safeguarded. Public good and private gain just do not go hand in hand indefinitely.

We have a certain amount of conservation of radio resources in the small share of facilities held by educational institutions, and we have heard today about the current achievements of a few of these stations. I don't know how impressive this account is for the average observer, but to me the record of accomplishment in the face of all obstacles is remarkable. These stations are making good. Admitting their weaknesses -- and there

are plenty of them, I know -- these stations still are progressing. They are exploring program sources and fields untouched by other stations. They are devising techniques and training broadcasters. They are building audiences and encouraging critical radio listening. They are seeking to advance public tastes and elevate existing wants, not merely to satisfy them. They occupy a unique position and are performing distinctive services. They should be protected and expanded, for it appears inevitable that the greatest prospect of improvement in American broadcasting lies in the development of radio stations nurtured in educational homes.

Except for these relatively few educational stations, broadcasting as conducted in this country is a business. And while we all cheerfully agree that business brings us an abundance of material pleasures and a fuller life, we must agree also that the security and progress of a free people depend not upon business but upon education and enlightenment. Whence comes such enlightenment? Surely no one expects unbiased, authentic, continuing, soundly organized, or constructive educational and social enlightenment to result out of a business.

Where, then, does the trusteeship for social enlightenment rest? Obviously with the educational system, with the schools, the colleges and universities. As President Herman G. James of Ohio University said in addressing this Institute two years ago:

"A calm, dispassionate estimate of the situation would show that with all their real and imaginary shortcomings in these opposing directions, educational institutions constitute the only hope for unbiased, unselfish considerations of public questions. That they are in their very nature more inclined to view matters objectively than either private business, governmental administrations, or crusaders of any type, is not merely theoretically true, it is actually true. Indeed, if we deny that, then not only is education a fata morgana, but all human progress and even human salvation are dreams that need not even be pursued any longer.

"So I am forced to the conclusion that the fundamental and sufficient safeguards against the dangers inherent in radio to free speech and through it to democracy lie in the safeguarding of a decent proportion of the facilities of the air to such educational institutions. Whether all of them are used or not, whether those that are used are used in the most efficient and effective way or not, whether the group of listeners is large or small, the fundamental consideration is that these facilities should be definitely and lastingly protected against encroachment either by the political administration that happens to be in power or by the special interests of those with or without property. Better a silent hour, or many silent hours, if need be, than a pre-emption of facilities that would prevent the shedding of as much light as possible by disinterested educational agencies wherever such light becomes available."

Light from unbiased educational agencies, that's the important thing. Through the years, experience has taught us that such light and leading, which constitute true education, may be expected to issue most surely out of a center of learning or an educational community such as a great university. Radio education, likewise, may be expected to emerge most authentically from an educational home; and the freedom which radio education requires may be enjoyed only when broadcasting facilities are controlled and operated by institutions committed to teaching and the advancement of learning. Certainly the principle of educational freedom cannot be denied. Without this freedom there can be no advancing education. Consider the dilemma of the educator. He is supported by society; he is maintained in the nation's schools by a society that is naturally more or less interested in maintaining the status quo. But the research men and teachers in our universities are, by and large, not primarily interested in preserving the status quo. They are in the universities because they are explorers. They are reaching out for new truths, new interpretations; and often those new truths make for change, for instability or insecurity of sections of society. Often it happens that university groups introduce the discussion of questions and social measures which are not well received for many years. These measures originate in the minds of men of the exploratory type found associated with universities. These minds must be free to pursue their inquiries. Likewise, the interpreters who transmit the results of this research and study must be guaranteed complete freedom to communicate with the public mind. Broadcasting provides the most effective medium for this interpretation, and in broadcasting, educational freedom can be achieved only through facilities controlled by educational institutions. Without this control, the educator encounters the restraint of business attitudes, the censorship of time scarcity and restrictions, and the competition of entertainment and sales devices.

These are inescapable facts of our human society, and our educators are sound asleep if they don't seek to obtain the greatest possible freedom in the use of this new agency for communication on questions of human welfare.

Why the Educational Radio Station? Secondly, then, to insure perfect freedom for educational communication.

But someone still is unconvinced, and he says, "That may all be true, but let's be practical about this thing. It costs money to operate a radio station, so why not take advantage of the free time offered by our commercial friends and let them carry the cost of transmission?" Now, that's a good question. And there are practical, working examples of educational broadcasting based upon a cordial relationship between certain universities and commercial broadcasting stations. But -- I hope you'll pardon me if I'm too bold in saying this -- but, may I

suggest that those universities may be riding free on a ticket paid for by the universities which operate their own stations? Do I make myself clear? I am suggesting that the mere presence in the field of a number of educationally owned stations, accompanied by the threat of their growth and increase in power, may have something to do with the amount of educational broadcasting heard over commercial stations. I know broadcasters who have acknowledged that their educational efforts are considerably influenced by the agitation of educational stations and outside organizations. When you look about and make careful, or even casual, observations, you are led to question the sincerity of the commercial broadcaster's interest in education. You suspect a certain amount of "window-dressing." You ask why educational programs cannot be heard at favorable hours. You wonder how much present time allotments for education on the air could be multiplied. You have a greater understanding of the problems and conclusions reported in the recent booklet, "Four Years of Network Broadcasting".

So we have a third answer for our question of Why the Educational Radio Station? It's this, that there can be no guarantee of fairness and permanence for education which is dependent upon commercial outlets.

I have a further comment for the gentleman who says, "Why bother to operate your own university station? You can get time from the commercial broadcasters". The answer goes something like this: We have in Madison two rather large theatres. They are pretty much on the red plush and gilt variety, "showy" in other words, but they are spacious, and the seats are comfortable. Occasionally these theatres are used for lectures or educational meetings. Once each year, for example, the Southern Wisconsin Teachers Association holds its general morning session there. The theatres is fine for that purpose. It accommodates more people than the nearest high school auditorium, and the theatre is conveniently located. But notice, I said that it's a morning meeting; the theatre must be cleared by the time the show starts at one o'clock. What about the afternoon sessions? What about the sectional meetings for special groups? They must be held elsewhere, of course. Education hasn't a chance in competition with entertainment under circumstances like that, and the same seems to apply on the air.

No doubt school boards could save money by holding classes in theatres, in town halls, churches, and vacant stores. But public-spirited citizens, recognizing the peculiar needs of education, are not content to compromise on buildings and equipment. They recognize the importance of providing a home for education, with unrestricted hours for its use. They are not satisfied merely to take what space they can get in a plant owned and controlled by another agency. Educators with a similar broad view of educational broadcasting will not make education subservient to advertising and entertainment. They will insist upon controlling and operating facilities.

But what of the cost to a university owning and operating its own transmitter? I find there is considerable misapprehension about the costs incurred in the technical operation of a station. Let's remember that an institution engaged in educational broadcasting without a transmitter of its own must nevertheless provide staff and facilities for program planning and production, for script editing, publicity, and secretarial work. It should have special studios on its own campus to accommodate rehearsals and broadcasts, and it may have to provide travel funds to send broadcasters to studios located in other cities. In consideration of all these items, the extra cost for actual transmitter investment and operation adds relatively little to the total. In Wisconsin the complete cost for all operating expenses of the station located at the university, including technical expense, program production, staff, and administration, is less than one cent per year per citizen in the reception area.

Aside from the independence enjoyed by the institution operating its own station, there are other benefits. Who can gainsay, for example, the good that comes from sending out into the world groups of student workers trained in radio, with educational backgrounds, standards of appreciations, and critical listening habits developed at a university station? And who would belittle the social value of a fine university station which sets a standard by which commercial service is compared and contrasted? We see frequent evidences of this cultivation of better tastes and more critical listening in the areas served by educational stations. Such improvement of standards has definite social value, and of course the answer to this whole question of educational or commercial operation of stations should be based upon a consideration of the ultimate, not the immediate, expense and the ultimate return to society.

We have, then, these reasons for championing the cause of the educational broadcasting station: (a) the experience of the past demonstrates the wisdom of preventing unlimited exploitation of public resources, (b) we must provide for perfect freedom of educational communication, (c) there is no guarantee of adequate time and permanence for education over commercial stations, and lastly, (d) educational stations contribute definite social values resulting from the training of personnel and the cultivation of critical tastes. The educator who sees these factors and the many others involved will insist upon independent operation of radio facilities. His conscience and his sense of social responsibility will not let him shift to merchants and manufacturers the final decision on questions of policy relating to use of the radio. Something there is in the educator that cries out for the opportunity to experiment with the fine art of living free from control of the experiment by persons or groups engrossed in conducting a business.

This opportunity, for the sake of the future and in spite of any failures of the past, we claim for the educational institutions of America.

That's why -- the educational radio station.

Scanned from the National Association of Educational Broadcasters Records
at the Wisconsin Historical Society as part of
"Unlocking the Airwaves: Revitalizing an Early Public and Educational Radio Collection."



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