

THE RADIO STATION

Management, Functions, Future

by

JEROME SILL

A RADIO HOUSE BOOK



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THE RADIO STATION

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1. *Who, What, Why is Radio?* by Robert J. Landry
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JEROME SILL

INTRODUCTION

“Radio” to the layman signifies Frank Sinatra or Kate Smith or “Little Orphan Annie.” It signifies bubbly-voiced soap salesmen and laureates giving hymn to headache powders. It signifies great moments in music and great boffs in comedy. Radio, to the public, is programs. Escapism. Romance. Information. Championship prize fights. Election returns. Fireside chats. Racing results. The layman loves and hates, conceives enduring enthusiasms and fierce implacable irritations. But always he thinks in terms of programs. Ultimately, the broadcaster thinks of programs, too, but with a profound difference. To the exploration of that difference this third volume in the RADIO HOUSE SERIES has addressed itself.

Mr. Sill ventures into the little known and meagerly reported back country of American broadcasting. He examines the interplay of advertising and entertainment elements well behind the outer facade which the layman recognizes as “radio.” His point of view is starkly professional. He deals with competition and profits. He reveals basic attitudes. He renders both the problem and the temper of the local station manager in the day-to-day quest of circulation, popularity, ideas, tie-ups, and effective operational tactics. Mr. Sill photographs the local station manager in characteristic pose—the best foot carefully forward.

This is a readable and a sensible text. It is a knowledgeable and a critical text which not only measures the body but hints at the soul. Here is an interesting fact-packed introduction to a profession, radio station management, which is relatively new in our modern world and which has been strangely neglected in type because of the more immediate charm and glamour of the networks, the advertising agencies, the Hollywood originations.

The local station manager is seldom a social scientist. He does not have elaborate theorems or philosophies or data to account for his relationships. But he is by the dictate of his circumstances among the foremost pragmatic interpreters of public whim and political fever symptoms and as such he is perhaps worthy the attention of the social scientists.

New York, March, 1946.

ROBERT J. LANDRY

PREFACE

This book will doubtless be read by some persons not active in the business of broadcasting. This preface is largely for them. As they read through the pages, they may criticize the almost complete concern with the economic factors—building audiences, attracting advertisers, making sales.

I hold little brief for the kind of social reformer who is congenitally against radio without having first buttressed his opinions with a knowledge of what it is all about. I have even less patience with the perennial “letter to the editor” writer, mainly in New York, who pleads for government ownership of radio or some other panacea and who finds these drastic steps necessary because of what he hears on New York City radio stations. There is nothing the matter with most New York stations, in my opinion, but, aside from that, it is undoubtedly true that New York radio stations are no more average radio stations than New York restaurants are average American restaurants.

But there is another kind of critic of radio who is entitled to more respect and who does, in all sincerity, deplore the standards of our commercial radio. It is to him primarily that this preface is directed.

Nobody has to listen to any program and, by this time, any listener’s program preference, at almost any time, can

come very close to being satisfied. Radio does a pretty catholic job in its overall program structure. In the final analysis, we have only two choices. The first is government ownership and operation, in which some appointed persons would decide what we might hear. The other choice is industry's self-policing of commercial radio, in which the people decide what is to be broadcast. If we accept the latter alternative then we must accept, too, a sort of pragmatic standard: if what you are broadcasting is what the people want you to broadcast, you'll know it in the records of their listening.

So, on that score, what this book attempts to do is to explore the ways and means of developing the kind of programs people want to hear, of developing the kind of machinery by which a radio station might know they are listening, and incidentally, of developing the kind of method whereby a station may inform people about what they are going to broadcast.

If this system of free broadcasting is to continue, it must be maintained through commercial sponsorship. There is nothing at all dishonest about that and if the means employed by the sponsor to identify himself and his product are in bad taste, he will know about it soon enough from the people whom he expects to buy his goods, if he has not already been told by the station or network that censored his copy.

It is a socially healthy system that can develop such radio programs as those of the *New York Philharmonic* and *America's Town Meeting* and the *Metropolitan Opera* and the *Chicago University Round-Table*. It is a socially successful system when, for the first time in American history,

it can count its voluntary listeners to such programs in the tens of millions.

Without apology, because there is need for none, and with considerable sense of pride if the book succeeds in helping to create more successful radio broadcasting, I offer this effort to explain through suggestion and example, the many facets that enter into successful operation of a radio station.

JEROME SILL

New York, March 1, 1946.

CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| PREFACE | 9 |
| I. WHOSE AIR? | 15 |
| II. WHOSE RADIO? | 29 |
| III. BUILDING RADIO AUDIENCES | 35 |
| IV. SELLING THE ADVERTISER | 73 |
| V. RADIO'S FUTURE | 96 |
| POSTSCRIPT | 114 |

CHAPTER I

WHOSE AIR?

NOT SO MANY years ago, except for a few balloons and a great many more smoke rings, the air was comparatively free of anything but ozone. Since then, a man by the name of Marconi got an idea about transmitting sound-waves and things started humming.

In 1945, a lot of the humming came from 1004 radio broadcasting transmitters, located in several hundred American communities. They hummed the advertisers' tunes to the extent of over \$300,000,000. and they gave Americans something to do!

In the twenty-five years since commercial radio first started (in either Pittsburgh or Detroit, and we will not get into *that* argument), almost every American family bought radio sets. Only 41% owned or now own telephones; only 39% have bathtubs in their homes but about 95% have radios. Just twenty-five years ago a few hundred excited persons heard history as it happened—they listened to the broadcast of the Harding-Cox election returns. And in November, 1944, an estimated 100,000,000 listeners throughout the world repeated the performance—they listened to the Roosevelt-Dewey returns!

These twenty-nine million American families who own radios sleep pretty regularly and, currently, they are eating just as regularly. Overlooking these two necessities, there's nothing else they do quite so much as *listen to the radio*.

The average—and it differs little whether it be rich family or poor, whether it be urban or rural—is five and a quarter hours per day, every day.

They listen to different things. To be sure they listen to soap operas (another argument I have no intention of getting into) and to dubious comedy, but they also listen to *America's Town Meeting* and to the *Chicago University Round Table* and to the *New York Philharmonic*. All in all, they listen to a richer fare, and a far better fare, than the populace of any nation ever before enjoyed.

For most of the twenty-five years of radio a great many station owners made a great deal of money out of their station operation. In the last few years, practically all stations made a great deal of money. The smallest profit group in the industry was, naturally enough, the lowest-powered stations. Yet, these 250 watt network affiliates averaged a profit, before Federal taxes, of about \$26,000 per station for 1944. And few of them had \$50,000. invested in their plants!

Radio operates in the public domain. It pays no use-tax to the people for using their air and, unlike other comparable media (newspapers or magazines), it need invest comparatively little to make much.

Enter the Federal Communications Commission. To police the air-waves and, to a certain extent, to police its owners, Congress established the FCC. For no especially good reason the FCC also controls the telephone, telegraph and ship-to-shore monopolies. Applicants for broadcasting stations must apply to this commission of seven men for a license. The applicants must show evidence of moral and financial responsibility, of the ability to operate in the "public interest, convenience and necessity" and must

show engineering evidence of available radio frequencies (of which there are almost none left anywhere in AM). Upon satisfactory submission of such evidence, a limited license is granted, which must periodically be renewed.

Of all the major nations, only in America is radio completely free and commercial. In Britain, it is non-commercial, and an adjunct of the Post Office. In Canada, commercial radio, privately owned, operates side-by-side with government radio (also commercial) and the listener pays a use tax. Moreover, in Canada, commercial radio, privately owned, is the Little Orphan Annie. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation decides what may be heard by the people and if, in its superior wisdom, it thinks the program good enough, it takes it for itself. If it has doubts about the quality but none about the purity, it permits its private competitors to air the show. And both Canadian networks—CBC and Dominion—are government owned and operated. (At this writing, a new Chairman has been appointed to the CBC. It is most probable that considerable changes will take place in its operation.)

Getting back to our own country, a few years ago the networks rose in their righteous wrath to question the assumption of certain powers by the Federal Communications Commission. They lost, but the basic question never was answered.

When Congress originally wrote its radio laws, it had no conception of to what proportions radio would grow. Hence, too little attention was paid to the phrasing of the law. The duties and powers of the Commission were inadequately expressed. No provision was made for the licensing of radio networks—certainly a primary factor in radio broadcasting.

When the Chairman of the Commission, at that time James Lawrence Fly, sought to regulate radio networks, the fireworks started. Fly continually maintained that, if he misread the definition of his powers and Congress chose that these powers be limited, he would welcome a new law with new definitions. No one paid much attention to this obvious good sense and the legal battle went merrily on. Finally, the United States Supreme Court decided in favor of the Commission and the networks were regulated. But they were not licensed as they requested. And a major government commission has adopted the ignoble subterfuge of regulating networks by threatening to withhold station licenses if the networks do not toe the line. It works, but so did National Socialism for a while.

Now a new Chairman has entered the picture, Paul Porter.* A man of high integrity, great intelligence and considerable experience in radio broadcasting (he was at one time legal counsel for CBS), Porter really believes in the spirit of the communications law. It says, says Porter, public interest, convenience and necessity so that's what it must mean. And he pointed out early in his Commission career that although applicants were required to specify exactly how they would operate in the public interest, convenience and necessity, when their applications came up for renewal, no one ever bothered to ascertain whether these applicants had kept their promises. Porter intends to do so.†

Up to the advent of Porter, the FCC went through two phases: The first, simply engineering regulation, and the

* Since this book was completed, Mr. Porter has become Chief of the OPA and an FCC successor has not been appointed.

† See POSTSCRIPT for discussion of new regulations endorsed by Porter.

second, regulation by implied threat. Now it seems that, at long last, the Commission will function as a true regulatory body, in any event, as far as the poorly written laws that created the Commission will permit.

More fireworks, no doubt. And many silly points are raised. If a station affiliated with ABC broadcasts *America's Town Meeting of the Air*, for example, is that as much broadcasting in the public interest as were that station to air a poorer public forum that happens to be conducted locally? A silly point to the reader of this book, perhaps, but a point that the FCC has yet to answer. And, carrying it further, if said Town Meeting is commercially sponsored, does that make it any less desirable a program? The FCC has yet to deny that it does! And so it could go for pages. The execution of our radio laws depends to a large extent upon the public spirit and the wisdom of the Commissioners. Networks are unlicensed as such, stations are licensed under a law so loosely drawn that it is constantly subject to disagreement between licensor (the government) and licensee (the station owner). We are most fortunate, today, in our Commission Chairman and in the other six men who make up the group. Lord save radio if other types of men come into power with laws no clearer than they are today. That brings up one final point about the Federal Communications Commission. These Commissioners and their Chairman are appointed for a period of seven years at a salary of \$10,000. per year. The appointment is made by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

We have shown the extent of radio's impact, in terms of set ownership and radio listening. It is needless, we believe, to add to this the obvious evidence of how and how much radio influences our conduct. But it seems evident that if

this gigantic social force, operating in the public domain, is to be regulated by the government, then the regulators should represent those for whom it regulates—the people. And it seems obvious, too, that the regulators should represent in their backgrounds, those groups of the populace who are important to radio regulation. Engineers should be represented on the commission. They always have been. Lawyers should be represented. (Try to stop a lawyer from getting on a Federal Commission.) The Commission employs a large staff of engineers and lawyers so this technical knowledge need not rest in the hands of the Commissioners themselves. There are two other classes which have never been represented and are not today. First, the listening public . . . in the person of an educator or a sociologist or simply, demonstrably a “man of good will,” but without the somewhat esoteric reasoning processes of the lawyer or the engineer. Next, and equally important, a working broadcaster. It certainly seems evident that with the complexity of problems that the broadcaster constantly must face, there must be out of the tens of thousands of active broadcasters, one man with a public conscience and with sufficient practical experience to save broadcasting from the comedy of errors that so often in the past have been the result of regulations purely conceived and poorly applied. But there is no practicing broadcaster on the Commission today. It is simply plain good luck that our present Commission operates so efficiently, when so badly understaffed at that, without the leavening force of a representative of the public and a representative of the industry (neither lawyers nor engineers) sitting on the Commission bench.

We mentioned the nationwide networks before in this

chapter. We referred to their importance in the broadcasting picture. Radio networks are important for two reasons. It is obvious to any radio listener that the radio audience could never have grown to its present importance without radio networks. With its great working capital, with its immediate proximity to the finest talent in the world, with its ability to attract advertising revenue to its member stations, the radio network completely complements the local activities of the radio station, making of the two a rounded whole.

It is unnecessary to detail the program contributions of the network. Twist your radio dial and it becomes self-evident. From the standpoint of gross revenue, 44% of the stations' total revenue in 1945 was derived from payments made by the networks with whom they were affiliated.

Under the regulations successfully instituted by Chairman Fly, a radio station may affiliate with one or more radio networks for a period not greater than two years (subject, of course, to renewal). He may option to the network not more than three hours each in the morning, afternoon and evening for network broadcasts. This means that, within these stated hours, he agrees to provide the time, on call, for network commercial originations and, should a local program be occupying the time, to move or cancel it on demand by the network. His only "out" in this agreement is that the station has the right to refuse a program that it does not believe to be in the public interest or to refuse to remove a local program that it does believe is in the public interest.

The networks agree to pay the stations a stated price per hour for time they employ commercially and, in addition, to offer sustaining program services for virtually the

entire broadcast day. The network, on the other hand, makes its profit by keeping the difference between the price it pays the station for the time employed and the price it charges the advertiser for that time. It generally works out that the gross income is divided equally between network and station.

Currently, there are four major networks; American, Columbia, Mutual and National. NBC is a subsidiary of the Radio Corporation of America. It formerly owned the Red Network (now NBC) and the Blue Network (now the American Broadcasting Company, ABC, which is today independently owned).

NBC was the first network in the field and consequently gathered into its fold most of the high powered desirable stations of the country. Some have since left to go elsewhere but still NBC represents the most desirable facilities in radio broadcasting. Probably as a result of this NBC enjoys a virtual monopoly of the important high-rated night-time shows. Niles Trammel is President and Frank Mullen, General Manager of NBC—two men with long experience in network broadcasting.

Close second is CBS. It came into the field some years after NBC was established. With the independence of action resulting from its not being a subsidiary of a vast industrial combine (such as RCA) and with an unique brittle brilliance characterizing its almost every move, it has pushed ahead in total advertising volume to first place. The management of CBS headed by William Paley, Chairman of the Board, Paul Kesten, Vice Chairman and Frank Stanton, President, has displayed courage, imagination, vision and a daring so far unparalleled in the broadcasting field. Hence, its meteoric rise in network prominence. With

poorer facilities than NBC, it still lacks the first-place position in programming which it enjoys in sales. Yet CBS has contributed much to the art of radio programming. In the field of foreign news coverage and in radio dramatics, with such sustaining programs as the Columbia Workshop, CBS programs have helped radio make marked strides in the art of radio broadcasting.

Ten years ago, a group of radio stations organized the Mutual Broadcasting System which was mutual insofar as its few organizers were concerned. Mutual floundered around for many years, getting almost nowhere with great sound and fury. The sustaining service it rendered consisted of local programs fed to the network by the member stations. Its income derived from taking a sales commission from its affiliates on the business placed, the affiliates assuming all the costs of network membership, such as telephone line connections, teletypes, etc.

A few years ago, Mutual reorganized, hired its first paid president and adopted the standard method of contractual relations with and payments to affiliated stations. Concurrently, it went into an expansion drive that brought into Mutual a total of some 280 stations, most of them low-powered, small-town outlets. They did not succeed, however, in attracting to Mutual any sizeable volume of revenue.

A year ago, new management again came to Mutual. This time it was a group of seasoned, able network-experienced men headed by Edgar Kobak, formerly Executive Vice President of the Blue Network. It is too soon, now, to prophesy how well these very capable men will do. To date, Mutual's revenue-hunger has been greater than its ideals. The result is that a shocking percentage of all pro-

grams on the Mutual network represent those sponsored by advertisers with cures for constipation of the soul or the bowels—commercial religious programs or programs sponsored by laxative companies.

Yet, the Mutual network has made a vast contribution to radio. It brought to the homes of millions of small town families the very first network radio they had ever heard or, in any event, heard clearly. And it provided the small town 250 watt stations with local prestige and a source of revenue theretofore unavailable to them. Equally important, network programming permitted these stations at long last to offer somewhat effective competition, in their own communities, to the far-flung signal of the distant high-powered network station. Largely through Mutual, small-town radio showed signs of coming into its own.

The newest network, American (ABC), is not really new. It was formerly the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Corporation. It is now owned largely by one man, Edward J. Noble, a successful industrialist. The President of American is Mark Woods, formerly Treasurer of NBC and his staff is largely recruited from the two older networks.

American has made astonishing progress in the few years of its independent existence. While still in third place in total advertising volume, American did a gross business of over \$40,000,000 in 1945 and it has attracted to the network 198 affiliated stations.

The American management, entering the field fifteen years after the other networks were established, wisely recognized its need to pioneer. And its contributions have been significant.

One of the peculiar customs of network broadcasting

is to "stay put" once a type of program is adequate. Never was this more graphically displayed than in daytime radio. Continued serials, which occupied most of the daytime hours on the two older networks, attracted to these networks a relatively small share of the total set ownership. Yet, this relatively small share was apparently large enough to "pay out" for the sponsors, so no serious effort was made to change the formula.

American, without the temptation of sponsored daytime programs, tried a different course. It filled most of its morning hours with light, informal and fairly expensive programs of the variety type. The result has been that today the audiences tuned to ABC in the eight of the ten morning quarter-hours in which it uses this type of programs, are in dominant first place in size. At this writing, American is now experimenting basically with the same type of format for their afternoon hours.

It is significant, too, that the American type of daytime program has proved so successful that NBC has invested a tremendous sum of money to attempt to compete with American through a similar type of program, starring Fred Waring. So far, the success of NBC with Waring has been negligible. CBS is also attempting the same type of programming in the afternoon. But its effort is too new to appraise. Equally interesting is the fact that ABC stations achieved this success despite the fact that generally they are newer stations than the CBS or NBC stations, with less firmly established audiences and, in many instances, with far less power or poorer wave-lengths than those affiliated with the older networks.

We could not fairly end this chapter without reference to stations that do not enjoy network affiliation and fre-

quently have no desire for it. Some of these stations, like WJBK in Detroit, appeal almost exclusively to foreign language groups. Obviously, a network would be of no interest to these stations. More interesting, however, are stations of the type of WNEW in New York, WITH in Baltimore and WBNY in Buffalo. These stations rank high in total advertising revenue and have enjoyed remarkable success in attracting large audiences away from the networks. There are periods during the daytime when these three independent stations enjoy larger audiences than do their network competitors. The most successful of this type, WNEW in New York, can point to daytime periods, one after another, when WNEW is in first place in total audience and they can point to most daytime periods when they lead at least one and frequently as many as three of the four network key outlets in New York City.

The formula followed by these successful independents is very simple. In all probability it is applicable only to large cities but even that is uncertain. And it appears that the trick is will-power: adopt the formula and stay with it. The formula? Simply news and popular music all of the time. One need not go far afield to find why this almost obvious program formula should work. In Metropolitan New York, where WNEW achieved its success, there are some three and one half million radio families. It is apparent from any study of listening habits that not all people like the same thing at the same time. At many times only a minority of the people like anything at all that is being broadcast. But there is always a number of persons who like good popular music well played and sung. And especially during the war there was a large number of persons who anxiously sought the news. With the WNEW

formula, people soon came to know that, no matter what the hour of day they tuned to WNEW, they would hear good popular music, and on the half-hour, twenty-four hours a day, they would hear five-minute newscasts. Even were the percentage of such audiences small, the numbers would be impressively large, since 100% is three and a half million homes in the immediate WNEW service area.

WNEW's music is almost exclusively recorded music. But playing records is an old stunt in radio—a way to save money on program costs. On WNEW the technique of recorded programs reached its full flowering. WNEW recordings are carefully chosen so that, within a fifteen-minute segment, there is some sequence and some reason and some smooth flow to the period. The same care is exercised by WNEW in the selection of recordings for a given program as is exercised by the producers of a network's musical program in their selection of musical titles. Moreover, WNEW announcers are good. They understand popular music and complement it with good diction and top microphone presence.

The result of such handling of recorded music is that very frequently the audience tuned to WNEW is impressively large, even in comparison with the audiences tuned to the networks. This, too, is a comparative statement. The two highest rated daytime serials at the time of writing are *Portia Faces Life* and *When A Girl Marries*, both on NBC. Their Hooper ratings are in the neighborhood of 8.0 (8% of all sets owned). But only 18% of all radio homes have their sets turned on when these serials are being broadcast. Assuming that a greater number of persons than 18% could conveniently listen to the radio at these hours were there anything they wanted to hear, it is easy to un-

derstand how WNEW, offering radically different fare than the heart pangs of Portia when she is facing life, can attract relatively sizeable audiences.

In fact, WQXR, also in New York, is another station that builds its programming around recorded music and news but WQXR depends almost entirely on classical music. It, too, enjoys sizeable audiences although it never offers serious competition to the networks. It is possible to combine the best features of the WNEW type of programming with network programming. Several stations are doing it today with gratifying audience response.

To the writer's knowledge, no independent radio station has succeeded in rendering the sort of balanced fare that networks provide. The efforts to build dramatic shows, special events, forums and other non-recorded features, unfortunately have resulted in much applause and many plaudits from the organized intelligentsia, but very few votes of confidence in the form of listening from the public. And with no audience there is little revenue. Curtain.

CHAPTER II

WHOSE RADIO?

IT IS PROBABLY to be expected that an industry so new as radio, an industry that almost from its inception has enjoyed a seller's market, there should abound in a vast number of erroneous conceptions. In fact, there are very few businesses which can offer the luxury that radio does, the luxury of being wrong most of the time and still making so much money that no one can prove it to be wrong.

The most insidious error prevalent in radio station operation is that of operating to "please the advertiser." Nor is the objection to this a moral one. It's much simpler than that. An advertiser's interest in radio is, basically, that of obtaining circulation at a rate lower than he can obtain it in printed media. His interest in one radio station over a competitor is, everything else being equal, that station's ability to deliver circulation.

"Circulation." A peculiar word. All it means is *people*. And in the case of radio, it means, *people listening*. Basically, how do you get people to listen? By giving them what they want. If a radio station designs its operation to "serve the advertiser" and that concept ends up to mean something less than serving the listener, not alone is the station violating the terms of its FCC franchise but, equally important, it is doing exactly the opposite of serving the advertiser.

An intense concentration on finding out what will build

the biggest audiences is a lot of fun, it rings the cash register and it makes the kind of sales promotion that proves happy reading in the offices of advertisers and their agencies. Basically, the difference between the American system of commercial broadcasting and the British system, for example, is just that. We Americans distrust omniscience in our elected governors. If an advertiser wants to buy radio circulation and if, in order to give it to him, a radio station must devote much effort to finding out what people want and then giving it to them, that, in our American way of thinking, is good. The British seem to have another idea. Their British Broadcasting Corporation decides what people *ought* to hear and that is what is broadcast. Result: before the war such out-of-bounds radio stations as Radio Luxembourg, operating on the American principle with many recordings of American commercial programs, stole vast audiences from BBC.

An interesting aside on BBC vs. the "American Way" is that the Union of South Africa has just revised its government radio. Up to now, the Union has operated two networks on the pattern of BBC, one broadcasting in English, the other in Afrikaans. They are now building a third network to be operated commercially and patterned after the American System.

Yet it is not all so simple as the last few paragraphs seem to indicate. We have seen radio stations proudly point out that they "ride the network" all day long, since networks can provide better fare than the station can obtain locally.

That's the kind of "immaculate conception" that will never make history. A very large percentage of network sustaining time is what the networks aptly call "fill." It's the same kind of stuff that you put into your back-yard to

take care of the yawning void where the big tree used to be before you cut it down. Unfortunately, the same editorial care should be exercised in carrying network sustainers as should be employed in filling open time locally. Some of the shows are good and some are incredibly bad.

Finally, the problem that will forever plague us is to what extent does a radio station owe a duty to minority groups? If one family out of fifty likes the music of Bach, while the other forty-nine much prefer Bing Crosby, what price Bach? What about religious programs? Labor union broadcasts? And the host of other special interests that make up the average healthy community?

In many of these cases, the networks help immensely. Networks offer stations such limited interest programs as, for example, *The Garden Gate*, a gardening program on CBS. Religion is taken care of by the various "church of the air" programs on most networks. However, the problem of minority interests is basically a *station* program. Such orthodox interests as good music or trade-unions (in an industrial community) can be handled without too much trouble, if they are handled well.

It is fair to assume that if a group of listeners has interests that conflict radically with the interests of the vast majority, then they will accept having their interests satisfied in off-hours. Every station has hours of poor listening, either because of the small number of sets in use at those hours, because of peculiarities of working hours of the populace, or because of especially strong competition on other stations. Honest minority-interest groups should enjoy some of the attention and some of the time of their local radio station if for no other reason than that a radio station is like a local politician—it must be the friend of all and the

enemy of none. Off-hours of broadcast, if tactfully handled, should take care of these needs in such a way as to make friends for the station. The FCC disagrees with this interpretation (see Postscript) but, if the interest in a given subject is limited, if the minority who are interested is minute, no public service is rendered by using periods of high audience availability for programs of low public interest.

It is not the recipe for taking care of cranks. They'll be with us all the time. Like the very sincere professional atheist who petitioned one of the major networks for equal time to that devoted to organized religion's programs. His argument was that religion was controversial. The NAB Code agreed to give equal time to controversial subjects. Q.E.D.

Most persons are more reasonable. We heard of one group of important local business men who formed a delegation to visit the local radio station in protest against the station's refusal to carry a commercial program presented and paid for by the sect of which these men were members. The station owner, fully conscious of the importance of these men, heard them out. He then explained that from both a moral and commercial point of view he was duty-bound to offer the public programs that they would listen to. He pointed out that this specific program, on the air nationally, had never enjoyed an audience of more than 1% of the potential, according to Hooper. Hence, by carrying it, he would serve neither the listening public nor the church which paid for the time. The result was that the visiting indignitaries left highly impressed with the radio station and highly infuriated with their church's committee on radio activity.

So it is with labor unions. A radio station has a duty to its audience. Labor unions have an interesting story to tell—if they will tell it. But they serve neither themselves nor their cause with fifteen minutes of harangue that simply infuriates those it does not bore.

We know of one radio station in a market where a majority of listeners were active CIO members that felt so strongly on this subject that, at their own expense, they wrote CIO's program. It had to be told anyway, if the station was to be fair to its audience and to itself, and the station chose wisely to tell it well.

Basically, a radio station serves three purposes: to inform, to entertain, to educate.

The news programs, local and network, take care of the first need. The entertainment shows supplied by the networks take care of the other (or the popular recorded music does the job in the case of the non-network station). But that third point is an important one, and the most difficult of the three.

Such network programs as *The Human Adventure* on Mutual, the *American School of the Air* on CBS, the *University of Chicago Round Table* on NBC and *America's Town Meeting of the Air* on ABC all perform the function of education in a way that should give radio pride in its performance. In the fields of human knowledge, of music and the arts, of current events and public affairs, the medium of radio provides magnificent opportunity to educate painlessly—nay, pleasantly!

There are however, problems of education that are purely local or sectional and, for that reason, provide an even greater potential opportunity for the local station than do the matters of international interest encompassed

in the network shows such as those just mentioned. Most radio stations include, within their service areas, at least one college or university. Included in the faculty of such institutions invariably are men and women of vast ability in their chosen fields. And happily, more and more colleges are including courses in radio which provide some understanding in faculty circles of the basic elements of good radio broadcasting.

Very few laymen are instinctively good public speakers. Almost everyone suffers from "mike fright." So, putting on the air any kind of program dependent on college faculty members is likely to be disastrous unless considerable care is exercised. But the point is that here is knowledge, local interest, experience and public service. Add to that the knowledge on the part of station personnel of what makes a good radio program. If you are lucky, add too the instructor in radio or dramatics at the college and you have the making of a radio program that will satisfy the needs of education while at the same time building good-will and good audiences for your station.

Far, far too few radio stations utilize the wealth of good program material available at local colleges. And in addition to faculty groups, there always remain innumerable possibilities among the student body.

The title of this chapter is WHOSE RADIO? Now you know. The people's, of course.

CHAPTER III

BUILDING RADIO AUDIENCES

WE MENTIONED the mistake of "riding a network" sixteen hours a day. That brings up the question, "what is a network good for?" For a diversity of commercial programs (and the income accruing from them), of course. For live musical programs broadcast by famous orchestras. For live talks and forums and special events which bring the notables of the world into the homes of your radio audiences. For dramatic and musical programs that cannot be duplicated locally. For discussions and analyses by important and qualified analysts. For the myriad of interesting, colorful, important activities that together make up the whole called Radio.

There are other things that some networks do for which there is little excuse. A network cannot read news bulletins any more efficiently than can the local station. And obviously they can pay practically no attention to the local and sectional news that is of abiding importance to the local station's radio audiences.

We remember one station, in the West, that not only refused to carry its networks newcasts (not analyses, mind you) but moreover informed the network that it would show them why. So the sponsored network newscast was not carried. At the same hour, however, the station broadcast its own news program liberally sprinkled with local news. The result was several times the audience for this

station's broadcast than was enjoyed by other stations in the same part of the country which carried the network's program. The answer is that, given the same news service, one good announcer is as good as another good announcer. And if, in addition, the wire news service includes a state and city service, the station can do the better job.

Juke-box or Impressario

There is another illusion from which too many station operators suffer. They feel a superiority to recordings that their audiences do not share. And when there is a difference of opinion between station and audience, it is the station that loses.

It can be stated as simply as this: there is very little likelihood that Joe Doakes, the local boy-wonder tenor, is quite as good an entertainer as a gentleman in California whose name is Bing Crosby. Nor is there any local dramatic group that can quite equal, in audience entertainment potential, the skilled writers, directors, producers and actors who together transcribe *The Shadow* every week.

This raises the question so frequently, and illogically, asked: "why should I pay for network service if I'm going to use transcriptions?"

The answer is that the service and virtues are reasonably mutually exclusive. There is a station in Syracuse, N.Y., WOLF, which is affiliated with Mutual. The station competes with three others, those on CBS and NBC having been established for many more years. It also has the poorest frequency and the lowest power. In fact, it suffers from everything but audiences so it really is all quite painless for everyone concerned. WOLF wisely concluded,

when it went on the air, that it had only one function to perform: to build radio audiences. They carefully weighed the audience potentialities of network sustaining programs and rejected most of them. (Some years before, another station in Pittsburgh, WCAE, did the same thing with the same results and by a peculiar coincidence it was affiliated with the same network which at that time was suffering from a case of advanced anemia.)

But WOLF went to work. They started working by going out on a buying spree. They bought *phonograph records*. Not just any kind of records but complete libraries of the best popular entertainers such as 480 different songs by Bing Crosby; 296 different numbers played by the popular Benny Goodman orchestra; 338 selections by Guy Lombardo, etc. In all, a library that today includes over 15,000 different recorded numbers. Nor was this an easy task. It involved countless hunts in hundreds of haunts throughout the United States and Canada.

What it was all about was this: just as WNEW built tremendous audiences in New York, as we described before, WOLF was determined to build audiences for itself in Syracuse, despite less power, a poorer frequency, a newer station and the weakest network schedule in town.

WOLF's problem, however, differed from that of WNEW. WOLF was affiliated with a nationwide network. It was necessary, or desirable, for WOLF to fill in the time not utilized by the networks for commercial programs with their own programs. Or, putting it another way, while WNEW has absolute control over the program content of their entire broadcast day, WOLF enjoyed such control only during the hours that they were not carrying network commercials.

And the solution of the problem was different. If WOLF succeeded in building adequate audiences during the hours that they broadcast their recorded programs, what effect if any would this have on the relative audiences to the network programs? And if, as sometimes contended, programs of popular recorded music attracted only the bobby-soxers, what then would happen to the adult programs being fed to WOLF by their network?

The best answer lies in the rating figures. C. E. Hooper, Inc. conducts periodic surveys of listening audiences in Syracuse. They likewise conduct periodic nation-wide surveys of listening audiences. The last comparable issues of these surveys that were released while this book was being written give us some interesting analyses. At the time, WOLF was carrying ten Mutual sponsored programs between 7:00 P.M. and 10:00 P.M., Mondays to Fridays. Up to the night-time hours, when Mutual stations face their stiffest competition, WOLF had attracted sizeable audiences with the playing of recorded popular music. At night they interspersed their recorded programs with network shows, ostensibly a dangerous move.

What happened when the heavy audience network programs dominated the picture?

Mutual's average ratings for these ten programs was 5.8; WOLF's was 9.8—almost 70% larger audiences in Syracuse for the same programs than those programs enjoyed nationally.

Fulton Lewis, Jr. had a national 6.4. On WOLF the rating was 14.2.

Gabriel Heatter had a national 11.2 but the Syracuse rating was 23.8.

And even the relatively unsuccessful dramatic program

Freedom of Opportunity, with a national 1.8 had a 5.3 on WOLF.

The quiz show *Double or Nothing* jumped from a national 6.1 to a Syracuse 10.2.

The average increase of WOLF ratings over the national ratings was 69%; the median was 51%.

If you will accept this experience as reasonably typical, it should bury for all times the bromide that "people don't like phonograph records." People don't like anything poorly done and they do like most things that are well done. As we mentioned in a previous chapter, just spinning records at the discretion of a third-class engineer won't do the trick. Using judgment and balance and intelligence in the planning and producing of recorded programs is good radio.

A word of warning for network affiliates. "Mood programming" or "Sequence programming" as some people call it is a factor in programming that we shall discuss in more detail later. Suffice it to say now that if you plan to go whole-hog on record-spinning, remember that you'll suffer heart-pangs when you must abandon your successful record show in network time because a network commercial dud has pre-empted the time. And you may often be forced to break the entire mood of your local programming sequence because network programs that you must carry are in a totally different mood. But as we've proved to an extent in the foregoing paragraphs, that's not necessarily disastrous, since a well-planned record show can provide the same *kind* of variety entertainment, albeit slower-paced, as most network shows supply.

The purpose of this detailed discussion of WOLF, in fact, is not to persuade stations to spin records most of the

time but to point out that, *in certain hours*, periods of recorded music—and they need not be boogie-woogie—will provide good programming for your station and good entertainment for your listeners.

There are a few other points about programming which are worthy of discussion. One is almost obvious. Because not everyone likes the same thing at the same time in radio programs as in most other things, it is a good idea to program against the competition. If your competitor has a solid block of soap operas on the air at a given time, don't try to wean away his soap opera audiences with more soap operas. Give your listeners music. If he is broadcasting music, give them drama or news or quiz shows or almost anything but music.

Point Two: It is nothing new that the small town newspaper succeeds in holding its own because people like to read about the unimportant doings of other people they know. And people love to see their names in print. Interpret that in terms of radio and you have local news programs. Maybe it is not exciting that Zilch's Hardware Store had a big fire, that the circuit court decided against Farmer Jones or that the million and one other things that make up the routine of our daily lives did happen today, but it is sufficiently interesting to make you an integral part of your community. Maybe some of the local talent will never make the Quiz Kids or the Met but families and neighbors make audiences and if you will maintain normal standards to keep the program interesting (even the next door neighbor can be an awful bore on the air) you'll win loyal audiences.

Another thing: get one good man on your news show (and if you are in a big city, on your sports show) and let

him circulate. Every good station has its own man who "can run rings around Elmer Davis," if you listen to the townfolk. And that's what makes successful radio.

And on that subject of news, if you can make a tie-up with the local newspaper, do it. It will help the paper's circulation no end (that has been demonstrated time and again) and the newspaper promotion you'll get in exchange will help you just as much.

Remote lines cost little, they work wonders in building local loyalty and you'll be surprised at how often you can use them. But use them with discretion. Used too often, the remotes clutter up your schedule needlessly and empty your tills.

So it adds up to this: a network affiliate probably will be broadcasting network programs on an average of nine hours a day. He'll need program locally about seven hours a day. News will occupy a large part of that—wire line news, supplemented by the wire services' local and state line plus purely local news programs. A small amount of time probably will be devoted to sports. Special events will occasionally take time. Local or regional public service programs will be a regular part of the schedule. Perhaps a local children's show will fit in. Some good dramatic or musical shows from your transcription library will be in the picture. Add a farm program if you are in that kind of an area, an early morning "musical clock" if you are in an urban community. Well handled, well announced, carefully selected, popular and semi-popular recorded music will make up a number of your programs. And there you are at the end of the day with practically nothing left to do but sleep (in fact, there's no time left for anything

else but too little sleep and back to work tomorrow morning).

The use of popular recorded music as we have described it applies largely to urban stations. Rural listeners differ to a great extent in their program preferences. Hence, if yours is a rural station, forget what we told you about dance music and popular soloists; give heed, instead, to the FCC survey of rural radio preferences which was conducted in the summer of 1945 preparatory to the FCC Clear Channel hearing. Bear in mind that the study was conducted during war time when it seems probable that listening to news was at an all-time peak, and it seems equally possible that this news interest will diminish, although less among rural families than among urban families. Bear in mind, too, that there is a difference in program preferences among non-farm rural families and among professional farmers.

Anyway, the Department of Agriculture conducted 4293 interviews in 2423 households of 116 counties, some in the country, some in the rural towns, as many as possible with both male and female heads of the house. There were some peculiar "aside" results, such as the report that farm families who could hear only one station seemed to spend as much time listening to the radio as those with a wider choice. Also, the study is made somewhat ridiculous by the complete disagreement between answers to two questions: (1) "What Type of Programs Do You Like Best" and (2) "What Kind of Program Would You Miss Most If Your Radio Gave Out?"

The differences, which we will point out later, are explained by the apparent ability of the respondents to discriminate between "programs they like" and "programs they consider important." To assume that such discrimi-

nating judgment exists among average listeners requires, in our opinion, a respect for the developed intelligence of the average family that, unfortunately, no facts will support.

But, now that you are forearmed and forewarned, here is a digest of the answers to the question as to which programs these listeners would miss most if their radios gave out:

| <i>Kind of Program</i> | <i>Farm Men</i> | <i>Farm Women</i> | <i>Non-Farm Men</i> | <i>Non-Farm Women</i> |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| News | 87% | 74% | 83% | 70% |
| Religious | 16 | 24 | 11 | 17 |
| Serials | 3 | 25 | 4 | 26 |
| Oldtime Music | 14 | 11 | 12 | 7 |
| Comedy | 9 | 8 | 12 | 13 |
| Music (general) | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| Market Reports | 23 | 5 | 3 | * |
| Religious Music | 3 | 8 | 3 | 7 |
| Farm Talks | 14 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Complete Dramas | 3 | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| Weather Reports | 12 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Sports | 4 | 1 | 13 | 2 |
| Quizzes | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Talks & Discussions.... | 3 | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| Popular Music | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Dance Music, Jazz..... | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Classical Music | * | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Semi-Classical Music .. | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Mystery Stories | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Correct Time | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Military Band Music .. | 0 | 1 | * | 1 |
| Vocal Music | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Humorous Episodes ... | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Women's Programs ... | * | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Miscellany | 5 | 8 | 8 | 11 |

* Less than 1%

Now, before you decide on how you will run *your* rural station based on your study of the above, give heed to the answers to the other question, "what type of radio programs do you prefer" (the percentages quoted are approximate):—

| <i>Type of Program</i> | <i>Farm Families</i> | <i>Non-Farm Families</i> |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| News broadcasts | 88% | 85% |
| Religious music | 48 | 40 |
| Old Time music | 55 | 38 |
| Market Reports | 42 | 10 |
| Quiz Programs | 23 | 42 |
| Dance Music | 15 | 22 |
| Dramatic Serials | 15 | 21 |

Now you see the contradictions (if you will assume a lack of listener discrimination) in making fine distinctions between programs "important to me" and "programs I like." Why, in this category, religious music should rate so high as a favorite type of program among farm families and so low in their consideration of something they would miss if their radios gave out is one of the inconsistencies of the entire report that tend to cast doubt on its value.

But before we discount it completely, there are some interesting side-lights. The report of rural women on soap operas agrees in an interesting fashion with the results of a survey of daytime radio taken some time ago by the Blue Network Company. You will recall that roughly a fourth of these farm women would "miss continued stories most" if their radios gave out. You will notice, too, that in the affirmative question, "what programs do you like most,"

15% of the farm women and 21% of the non-farm rural women voted for soap operas.

In the Blue Network report, it was found that of all the women who reported listening to daytime radio, roughly half of them did not listen to daytime serials—a rather similar response to that received by the Department of Agriculture researchers. In other words, so far as the soap operas are concerned, it's a case of love 'em or leave 'em, with the votes equally divided.

Notice, too, how radio has come to serve a professional need for farm families. Lump together news broadcasts, weather reports and market reports and you'll see that they dominate the fields in which radio has become essential to farm families. Old time music is a prime favorite, which accounts for the success of hill-billy bands. But quiz programs, which tend to be on the "smart alec" side, and dance music rate poorly. From these aspects, the study is interesting, albeit in a somewhat negative way. It can provide a reasonably safe formula for arriving at a series of "don'ts" for rural radio. But the questions are confusing, perhaps misleading, and might have tended, moreover, to invite self-conscious and therefore inaccurate responses.

A safer index of rural radio tastes, on the positive side, would be a careful study of the coincidental surveys undertaken by such successful rural stations as WHO. The direct reports of actual listening to specific programs contained in these station studies would provide more positive relative pictures of program-type popularity.

But before we end this subject, there is one phase of it worth discussing: that's the point of sequence programming. Years ago, we used to think that good programming meant an endless variety, no two consecutive programs to

be in any way alike. We've since learned that the opposite is true. Earlier, we mentioned that the secret of the independent stations like WNEW was that they gave listeners the same thing—news and music—all of the time. We told you how successful such a formula was and we gave our reason for its success. Studies have been made of such “sequence programming” or, as some people call it, “mood programming.” And it adds up to the same answer. Apparently, when people get into the mood for a given type of radio entertainment, they want more than 15 minutes or a half hour of it. And if the station to which they are listening does not give it to them, they'll get up and switch to another that does. That tends to discount the theory about human apathy being stronger than strong program preferences.

An interesting example of a study of sequence programming is the following. In 1942 *Screen Guild Theatre* on CBS had an average Hooper rating of 13.1. It was then moved to follow the *Lux Radio Theatre*, an almost identical type of program. *Lux* was a one hour show. Were people surfeited with radio dramatizations of screen plays, featuring screen personalities? The answer is that after the program moved, its rating climbed to 20.8. And the year following, it kept climbing steadily to 21.6. In other words, with no change in format but simply a change in time, this one program showed an increase in audience of about 65% over its previous audience. *Death Valley Days*, a mystery-adventure type of program shows the same trend. Its Hooper rating was 5.9. Then CBS placed *Suspense*, a mystery drama, ahead of it. *Death Valley's* rating jumped to 7.6.

A more exact study of audience flow was made in con-

nection with the *Mr. Keen* program on WABC, the CBS key station in New York. In October-November, 1943, *Mr. Keen*, a mystery-type drama, was followed by the *Roma Variety Show* on the same station. It was found that of every 100 listeners to *Mr. Keen*, only 15 remained tuned to WABC for *Roma*. In December and through January of the same year the CBS mystery drama, *Suspense* was substituted for the *Roma Variety Show*. Now 37 out of every 100 *Mr. Keen* listeners stayed tuned to WABC. And three months later, when *Suspense* had become more firmly established, 55 of each 100 *Mr. Keen* listeners stayed tuned to WABC. And this high audience loyalty took place despite the fact that the enormously popular *Maxwell House Showboat* was being carried by WEAJ in competition with *Suspense* on WABC.

Still another example on the other side of the fence tends to confirm the belief that when listeners are in the mood for a type of program, they'll twist their dials looking for another program of the same type that they had just heard. From December through April, 1944, the key Mutual station in New York, WOR, was carrying *Sherlock Holmes*, a very popular mystery program. It was followed on WOR by one of Mutual's top-rated programs—*Gabriel Heatter*, the news commentator. (Heatter, incidentally, offers the type of program that is far from a profound news analysis; its appeal is almost that of an entertainment, rather than a news program.) Competing with Heatter on WJZ, the ABC key station in New York, was *Counterspy*, a program of the same type as *Sherlock Holmes*, which had a lower total rating than did Heatter. Yet, out of every 100 *Holmes* listeners on WOR, 21 immediately switched to

WJZ when the *Holmes* program ended, to hear *Counter-spy*, the same kind of program.

There are many such examples of sequence programming. The independent stations like WNEW, for example, have found that when they depart from their popular music formula, they tend to lose the audiences they had established. Presumably these audiences either turn off their radio sets or "go fishing" for popular music on other stations. (That was not true of WOLF, which unlike WNEW, had not established itself as exclusively a "news and music" station.)

ABC conducted an interesting experiment, intentionally or otherwise, in this respect. On Friday nights, from 8:30 P.M. through 9:45 P.M., ABC aired a solid sequence of mystery-adventure stories. Their share of the audience, per program was currently as follows: 23.2, 26.0, 27.6. Only ABC had this type of program on the air at this time. But at 10:00 P.M., ABC aired the prize-fights. Their share of the audience then dropped to 10.6. And, while ABC broadcast the fights (at 10:00-10:45) NBC changed their pattern of programming to a mystery. Their share of the audience was 39.7. To be sure, some of this NBC audience has been inherited from previous NBC programs. But it is a reasonable assumption that a large percentage were ABC listeners in the former periods, when that network was airing mysteries.

A CBS-owned station some years ago followed the then accepted technique of interspersing programs of the same type. Deliberately, three women's quiz programs were spaced hours apart. None did too well audience-wise. They then did an about-face, tied in the three local quizzes with one on the network, giving the station a solid hour

consisting of four women's quiz programs. The result was an average increase in audience per program of 64%; an increase in the station's share of the total audience of 72%. This same station carried five minutes of news, followed by ten minutes of music. When they switched to five minutes of news followed by ten minutes of news analysis, they increased their share of the audience 26%. Another CBS-owned station in the South disturbed by the poor ratings that their recorded music show enjoyed, substituted for it a locally written soap opera, sandwiched between network soap operas. Their ratings zoomed!

That brings up the subject—*“how do you know when what you are doing is right?”* That's—

Radio Audience Research

Radio research has only one function. Its purpose is to make radio listeners articulate. It's a difficult job and, almost since radio started, there have been differing techniques employed. At the risk of boring those who are thoroughly familiar with these techniques, it seems worth describing the most common methods as briefly as possible.

COINCIDENTAL TELEPHONE SURVEYS. This is the method employed by the two largest audience research organizations in the field: C. E. Hooper, Inc. and the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting. This year, the two organizations combined will have made over 15,000,000 telephone calls. They ask respondents if their radio is on and, if so, to what program and what station they were listening at the time of the telephone call. They assume that the persons whose telephone numbers they select at random are a true cross-

section of the nation. Thus, those called represent 100%—all radio homes. If 40% said they were not listening and another 20% were not at home, they report 40% sets in use. Since the base is 100%, if of the persons who were listening, 20% said they were listening to a given program or station, they would then credit that program with a rating of 8.0 (8% of all radio homes).

The technique has value as a relative index, the relation of one program to another in its middle-class or better audience in urban areas, and as an index from month to month of the impact of this program on such a stratum of society.

Its weakness stems from two factors: in certain areas, the percentage of telephone homes is low and, in fact, telephone ownership is common only in the homes of people in better economic circumstances (telephone ownership in New York City, for example, is only about 30%). Second, it is unreasonable to assume that listening tastes are identical in small towns, in rural areas and in large cities. Yet, the telephone coincidental surveys are conducted only in a nationwide group of big cities. In fact, Hooper actually surveys only 16% of the United States; CAB only 21%.

Mr. Marion Harper, Jr., Vice President in charge of Research of McCann-Erickson reported in a speech to some New York radio executives that his department undertook some studies of coincidental telephone surveys. The studies were conducted by Mr. Harper and by Dr. Zeisel, head of the agency's Research Development group. While Mr. Harper was not prepared to substantiate the agency's findings, it is interesting that he stated,

“Our recent experimental work with the telephone coincidental method suggests strongly that because of certain deficiencies in their techniques, the present coincidental ratings services underestimate the size of a radio audience from approximately 13% to 23%”.

RECALL SURVEYS. Telephone recall surveys have been largely discontinued. They used the same general technique as the telephone coincidental surveys but, instead of asking to what programs or stations persons were listening at the moment of the telephone call, they asked respondents to what programs they had been listening for the entire day or for several hours before the call. Its weakness was, of course, that it was dependent on listeners' memories, which have been proved so often to be faulty. There is another type of survey in this same general classification known as an “aided recall technique,” frequently a roster survey. This is the method employed by such research organizations as *Pulse, Inc.* which currently operates in only a few of the larger cities, and *Hooper-Holmes*, the insurance research organization that, some years ago, were employed in a considerable volume of radio audience research. In this technique, personal interviews are employed. The interviewer is armed with a printed roster listing all of the stations and programs aired for a stated period. The respondent then checks those programs he has heard.

The printed roster method has a great many flaws. It is dependent largely on the skill of the interviewer and the aid sometimes rendered pretty well dictates the answer. Moreover, in all sincerity, respondents frequently report having listened to programs and well known performers that in reality they did not hear, in the belief that they

really did hear them during the reporting period. In fact, some years ago one such technique was employed in a large Eastern city and in an effort to discredit it one of the stations supplied a roster that was entirely inaccurate. Program times were wrong, the names were jumbled and there were inserted the names of a great many entirely fictitious programs. Despite this, a surprisingly large number of respondents reported listening to the non-existent programs and many more checked the program names and hours of broadcast that were intentionally incorrectly listed. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in *Pulse's* reports, there is a wide variance between the ratings of the same programs when reported by the coincidental method, on the one hand, and the personal interview method, on the other. Even discounting as far as possible the errors of the personal interview-roster technique, it does seem evident from the variances that the presumed cross-section of the 30% telephone homes called by Hooper and Crossley are not representative of the 70% non-telephone homes in New York that these telephone surveys cannot reach. Another technique that has been recently employed is

THE DIARY SURVEY

Industrial Surveys, Inc. is an organization whose original business has been that of reporting on consumer brand consciousness and consumer purchases in the food and drug fields. The method they employ is to obtain names representing an accurate cross-section of a county, urban and rural. These persons are offered a series of merchandise premiums in exchange for their agreement regularly to fill out and return a questionnaire about their pantry or drug shelf supplies. From these reports, a check is made on the

movement of goods to the consumer. This has been necessary in food and drug fields because shipments are made, for warehousing, to wholesalers and there is no way of telling from wholesale purchases what immediate consumer reaction may be to a new advertising campaign since both wholesaler and retailer might warehouse heavy inventories.

In recent years, Industrial Surveys applied the same technique to radio listening. Once a week, a group of respondents mailed in their diaries, which were carefully kept records of 15 minute periods of radio listening by each member of the family, all of the hours of the days included in the diaries. Out of it there could be analyzed not only the extent of listening to a given program but, and this is important, to what type of program persons switched, if at all, when another type was concluded. This study of "audience flow," if the survey is accurate and the interpretations correct, might make possible a sequence of programs that would hold listeners to a given station indefinitely.

The Diary technique is still too new to criticize from the point of view of its accuracy. Moreover, until the Nielsen Audimeter method is more commonly used, there is no comparable survey technique against which the accuracy of the Diary method might be checked.

NIELSEN AUDIMETER

A. C. Nielsen is another organization whose primary business has been that of making continuing pantry reports to the food and drug fields. Some years ago, Nielsen devised and tested the Audimeter. It is a mechanical device attached to a radio which by the use of a stylus charts

second by second the stations that the radio set is tuned to.

Nielsen planned to place the Audimeters in a limited number of homes that would represent a cross-section of the national radio public. They then planned periodically to remove the charts, analyze them and report their findings to subscribers. The advent of the war delayed the plan, since materials for manufacturing the Audimeter were not available. Nielsen is now rapidly expanding his Audimeter installations. Currently, while he does not yet cover the country (omitting, for example, all of New England and all of the Southwest), he has placed 1300 Audimeters in 1100 homes—representing 63% of the nation. Nielsen's reason for placing more than one set in a given home is that the listening to a given radio in a home might be a distortion of the actual listening to any radio in that home. He refers especially to the widespread listening to children's programs in the later afternoon and points out that while the big set in the living room might, during those late afternoon hours, be turned off, the small set in the children's rooms would be in use—listening to children's programs.

In any event, Nielsen claims to have learned from experiment that placing one or more audimeters in each 16,000 homes can give an accurate picture of the total national radio listening. Since Gallup employs a sample of only 3000 in his Presidential polls, where he is seeking to achieve the far more difficult purpose of sampling *opinions*, and since Gallup's errors in these Presidential polls are minute, there thus may be grounds for accepting so small a sample as Nielsen selects. Samuel Gill, a prominent authority on radio research problems, disagrees with this. It is his opinion that samples must be broken down into eight different categories, to be truly representative of the total radio au-

dience. Were this true, the Nielsen sample for the nation would have to be 100,000 for the nation instead of the present level of 2166 audimeters that Nielsen implies would be representative of 29,000,000 radio homes.

So far, the test installations have provided some rather startlingly different results from those we have previously taken for granted. They have indicated, for example, that "dial roving" right through the middle of programs was frequent, thus making coincidental ratings rather happenstance, since a person might be tuned to a given program at the moment of the telephone call but had the call come three minutes later might have left that program and be tuned to a competing show.

The use of the Audimeter has not, at this time, been sufficiently widespread to permit of critical analysis. Only one serious complaint has been registered against this technique and that applied primarily to their reporting of daytime programs. The machine will register listening when the radio set is tuned to a given station and program. But radios are frequently turned on by a housewife while she is doing her housework in the morning. It is left on even though she may have left the living room and gone upstairs to the bedrooms. So, in this instance, it gives a false picture of radio listening compared to the coincidental technique which at least reports real listening at the moment of the telephone interview. In fact, Crossley reported in 1940 that his tests indicated 20% to 25% of the sets in operation for periods exceeding ten minutes when no one was in the room with the set. The Audimeter has one other great advantage over methods that allow for still less accurate reporting of program listening. It, like the Diary Technique, gives a graphic picture of audience flow, a

series of blue-prints that permits a station or network program director to program with a knowledge of audience habits that he does not now enjoy.

THE STATION AND RESEARCH

Radio station operators should have a working knowledge of audience research methods if for no other reason than because their performance will be judged by the ratings they receive. But equally important, radio is one of the few businesses that makes little effort and spends little money on checking its own product. Few radio stations have bothered to make intensive audience studies for the sole purpose of finding out what the stations themselves are doing that might be better done.

It is amazing that, since all that a radio station has to sell is "audience," it makes no effort to find out wherein the competitor is getting the audience and where, therefore, the station might alter its programming to compete more successfully. It is also amazing how many station owners are content with "one man surveys," believing implicitly in the complete accuracy of what their handful of friends tell them about their listening habits, and then projecting the handful of biased listening reports to the entire service area of the station.

Some years ago, WNBF, then a 250 watt station in Binghamton, N. Y., budgeted a large sum of money for a small station for the purpose of employing Crossley, Inc. to make continuing studies, by fifteen minute periods, seven days a week, by the telephone coincidental method. Through these studies, the station learned much about audience habits, about its actual net audiences, about competition. And moreover, when this small city station sub-

mitted to important national advertising agencies these continuing Crossley studies (something theretofore employed only by the most powerful of big-city stations), the station earned a respect and a good-will that resulted in orders far exceeding the cost of the surveys.

The case of W_NB_F is extreme and most secondary market stations would find it an unnecessarily expensive procedure. There is little doubt, however, that a station should make an impartial study of its audience, perhaps four times a year. It is extremely inexpensive life insurance and, if the station is doing well, extremely potent sales promotion. The method to be employed depends upon the type of community. If it is an urban, closely-knit community with wide-spread telephone ownership, the coincidental telephone survey, by fifteen minute periods, seven days a week, will provide the safest index. Some form of diary survey might prove useful. Or, if unbiased interviewers can be obtained (perhaps from the marketing class of a nearby college) and if the area includes a large rural audience, personal interviews might be employed. But the point to be stressed is an old one:—*Know thyself!*

There is another type of survey which serves an entirely different purpose but which is of equal importance in radio station operation:—the study of *geographic scope of audience*: not *how many* listen but *where* they listen. Again, there are differing techniques for determining scope of audience and, usually, no technique at all.

The most common measurements employed are the field strength measurements and these, too, are sorely abused. The standards of good engineering practice of the FCC specify that an acceptable signal intensity during the day is represented by the half-millivolt contour, except in areas

of very high noise levels. At night, the signal intensity necessary for an audible signal again varies with the noise level of the community but it can be said generally that in urban areas, a signal of from two to four millivolts is essential. In the case of regional stations, they must concern themselves with protecting other regional stations on the same channel. Sometimes, their protection need be so great that their actual coverage is limited to less than that of a little local station. Thus, we see that at night the 250 watt station cannot render adequate service beyond its two to four millivolt contours; the regional station faces the same need for signal intensity but faces a further need, on some occasions, to protect stations on the same wave length even farther in than their two to four millivolts would carry them.

All too many stations, however, circulate a rough concept of what their half-millivolt contours are presumed to be and then blithely claim that as their day and night primary coverage area, despite the fact that seldom can a half-millivolt signal of anything but a clear-channel station be listened to at night. 250 watt stations almost certainly cannot be heard at night beyond their two to four millivolt contour (perhaps a six mile radius from the transmitter), because of the vast number of stations on the same and adjacent channels. Everyone knows these elementary facts and time buyers are among the "everyone" which leads one to wonder who the stations think they are fooling.

The use of engineering data to measure the scope of listening audience has one serious flaw:—people listen not to signals but to programs. There are countless instances of radio families listening to a station whose signal engineers insist is unlistenable, listening in areas far beyond the speci-

fied contours. In all probability, there are as many instances of the other extreme—a perfectly listenable signal but no audience. Hence, field strength surveys are at best but a rough measure of a station's potential coverage.

Mail maps are frequently used to demonstrate coverage. If the method of mapping the mail is correct, there's nothing wrong with the maps. Obviously, if a person writes to a station in response to a program, then he must have listened. CBS stations adopted, some years ago, a mail technique that seemed adequate. They offered premiums of no intrinsic value, a different premium day and night. They then mapped the mail, using the home county of the station as par. Primary and secondary coverage by counties was decided by the percentage of response per thousand population of the reporting county, as compared with the like percentage in the par county. The figure was:—primary, up to 50% as great as the home county; secondary, 25% to 50%; tertiary, 10% to 25%.

The same general method was employed by other stations but in relation to their normal fan mail. This, too, has an important weakness if the same care as CBS employed is not exercised. There might have been on the station one program with an unusually desirable give-away. People would tell their non-listening neighbors who would write in, or the station might have one especially strong program to which people wrote fan mail. That would tend to show the listening to that specific program but not to all programs. Also, if the mail included very early morning programs, which are generally mail pullers, that would not indicate the all-day coverage of the station, since early morning atmospheric conditions permit of wider physical coverage than at other hours of the day.

A third technique was employed by NBC. They chose a county which was bisected by the half-millivolt contour. They then measured mail response, in some abstruse way relating this to field strength. This became the par county and all others were evaluated on a relative basis.

Advertisers receive from stations dozens of maps purporting to be coverage estimates. Some of them represent the techniques described above, some no techniques at all but simply guesses on the part of the station (more likely, hopes) and a large number of them probably represent an honest effort to gauge coverage but give no explanation of what basis the map was drawn on. A surprisingly large number are simply free-hand drawings, in the form of circles, which looked to the hopeful station managers like something they might get away with.

Because of this utter confusion, many efforts have been made to establish a standard method of evaluating radio station coverage. Finally, one effort is taking hold. It is BMB—the *Broadcast Measurement Bureau*.

BMB is operated jointly by the radio stations, the Association of National Advertisers and the American Association of Advertising Agencies. After many meetings, the basic technique employed and tested by CBS to determine their own coverage was adopted as the official BMB method. You will recall the previous explanation in the discussion of audience measurements of the technique employed by Industrial Surveys, Inc.

CBS used the same organization and the same panel to determine radio station preferences. A ballot was sent to these panel members, who again received premiums for answering, wherein they specified to what stations they listened regularly, day and night. When at least 50% of

the panel members in each county of the United States had replied and if the 50% was a good cross section (the ballots were coded so that CBS knew from whom they came), the survey was closed and the tabulations begun. As a matter of fact, Columbia enjoyed as high as a 90% response.

At this time, BMB has adopted that technique, has sent out for bids from various research organizations and hopes to offer the first uniform station coverage study in about two years.

There are, of course, obvious flaws in such a method. But CBS demonstrated, through their use of the method, that these flaws tended to iron themselves out. And moreover, the advantage of uniform coverage reporting for all stations in the country seems far to outweigh the disadvantages of the method.

Stations need constantly to be warned, however, that the BMB method does not in any way obviate the need for listening surveys, nor does it in any way indicate *extent* of popularity.

Station A might have 50% regular listening in Station B's home county. Station B has, of course, 100% regular listening or, in other words, at some time during the day everyone listens to his home town station. The survey would show that Station B's home county is primary for Station A as well as for Station B. But an audience check would indicate that Station B has so much larger audience to any given program that it is the better buy, for the advertiser.

So, the immediate problem of "where" will be solved in due course by BMB. The continuing problem of "how many" must be solved by the station, for their own introspective study and for purposes of sales promotion.

PROMOTION

In the roster of badly abused words, certainly "promotion" will be on top of the list. Almost anything that anyone does that he can't neatly catalog as something else, he calls "promotion." Almost any expense that a station undergoes which is slightly, or highly, extra-curricular, it charges to "promotion." And all the dirty jobs that float around a radio station are usually handed to that much-abused and most-often-underpaid young man who is blithely called "our promotion manager."

Actually, promotion is or should be a major function in radio station operation. In this book, we intend treating it as such. We'll start off by talking about one of the two major branches of promotion—*audience* promotion. (The other branch, *sales* promotion, we discuss in another section.)

There was no such thing as "audience promotion" in radio until a comparatively few years ago. Then it came into being, pretty much against everyone's will in the broadcasting field, as a new name for that old newspaper kick-back, free merchandising service. And it went through the same silly gestures in a different form—the business of everyone trying to kid everyone else and nobody being taken in by the subterfuge. It finally reached its flowering when CBS got the bright idea of cooperating with its stations in spending some \$500,000 in a vast nationwide newspaper campaign to promote CBS programs. From that point on, in one form or another, "audience promotion" became a factor in network and station operations. It firmly established itself despite the fact that there was no evidence that the expenditure brought the results

for which the money was ostensibly expended—an increase in audience to CBS shows.

As a matter of fact, it tended to demonstrate a fact that has been proved in less costly manners: that the radio listening habit is probably among the most tenacious of all habits. No amount of advertising seems to have perceptible influence in changing listening habits. (Although it is true that audience promotion does not promote audiences, that requires amplification. If it didn't, radio would still be the absolute monopoly of the first stations on the air.)

What CBS attempted to do was promote all of their programs simultaneously, to create a tremendous impact with the vast variety of big names and big shows that are heard over the course of a week on CBS stations.

There is no way to measure the effectiveness of such an effort. Undoubtedly it *was* effective. Surely, as a result of such advertising, local radio listeners gained respect for their local CBS station, if such respect was theretofore lacking and if the general conduct of the station, in non-network hours, was not too entirely reprehensible. But what the CBS campaign did not do was to show immediate results in larger listening audiences to CBS stations, as compared, for example, with the same period the year before. That brings us to the sour note in audience promotion activities of networks as they affect stations.

Generally, the network prepares a very pretty and rather complete brochure of suggested audience promotion, to be mailed to their affiliated stations and to be paid for jointly—the brochure is paid for by the network, the advertising, if it is done, is paid for by the station. The client pays nothing. So he loves it, even if it doesn't work. And, because he loves it, the agency loves it, too.

But unfortunately what happens is that the demand for audience promotion is greater from advertisers with poor programs on the air than it is from advertisers with successful programs.

Long before radio, it was an accepted principle that advertising could not for long sell a bad product. It's true in radio, too. Even if the promotion is so good that it does attract listeners once, they won't remain listeners if they don't like the show. And studies have indicated that, dial roving habits being what they are, people do tend to find and stay with the programs they like.

What, then, can audience promotion do? For a bad show, nothing! For a good show, it can accelerate the pace and bring the program to its normal level more quickly.

There is, however, another side to this coin, so before we bank it and get on to *station* audience promotion activities, let's flip the coin and see what it says.

Advertising never hurts anyone. If you, as a station operator, can do good advertising for your station that at the same time can be classified as audience promotion, you have gone through the motions of making your client happy which almost certainly will make the agency happy. So the moral of all that precedes this is don't say "no" because you know it won't work. Figure out some way to do it that will be of some good to someone. The ideas for "some way" follow.

Before we talk about station audience promotion, we should clarify our terms. In this writer's opinion, anything that promotes *the station* to potential and actual listeners is audience promotion. To be sure, the best way to promote a station is through promoting its merchandise which happens to be the programs that the station broadcasts.

Sometimes, there are other ways, too, but we will cover most of them.

There are four advertising media commonly available to a radio station. They are:—newspapers, outdoor advertising, movie advertising and of all things!—the station's own air.

To depart for a moment before we go into the subject of using these media, we think it might be helpful if we referred to another field, a field that is as matter-of-fact and down-to-earth as any that exist: retail advertising. A long time ago, retailers learned that they could not profit from advertising slow moving and therefore undesirable merchandise. But that they could and did profit by advertising highly saleable goods. Store traffic is thus created, store prestige is thus earned and, one way or another, the slow-moving goods does move if it is at all saleable. So in radio. It is true that, in all probability, enough advertising could add as much as 20% to the rating of a very low rated night-time program, if that program has some staying power with the listener. But if only 3% of the potential listeners had been tuned previously and now we have increased that by 20%, that's still only 3.6% of the potential and no one can get rich on that thin diet.

On the other hand, if we know that Walter Winchell has now 50.2% of the sets in use tuned to his program, as he does, we also know that his appeal is widespread. Odds are that the proper promotion can push that up and, at the same time, help the rest of the ABC station's Sunday night audience. That's not because people don't know that Winchell is on the air—almost everyone does—but people do forget. And a reminder might work with enough listeners

to show sizeable results. In addition, it's good all-around station promotion.

We mentioned before the sequence programming on one of the networks on Friday nights. Here again, if roughly a fourth of all listeners do tune to that network for that type of programming on Friday nights, it sounds like good advertising logic to promote Friday nights on your station, should you be an ABC affiliate. Or to promote Sunday nights on your station if you are an NBC affiliate (their share of the audience, starting with Jack Benny and continuing through the Fred Allen program, averages better than 50%).

The next question, assuming you agree with the basic premise that it is good advertising practice to advertise the merchandise you know is saleable, is *how*?

Newspapers are a primary advertising medium. They have the advantage of flexibility. And you know, from newspaper readership surveys, that the readership of radiolog pages is high. But is it wisdom to run so small an advertisement that it is not likely to be seen? Is it enough to say, "Tune in—Station XXX—0:00 P.M. tonight—the Joe Zilch Show"? (That's what most of the "canned" audience promotion mats say.) Or is it wiser to run fewer advertisements that are likely to be more effective? Wouldn't it seem more intelligent to promote a sequence of interesting programs and make some effort to describe the action to take place? Wouldn't it be wise to steal a page from the very complete books of motion picture theatre exhibitors who have found a pattern from which they seldom depart? (And apparently, it's a pattern that builds box-office in a related field of entertainment.)

If you choose to use the newspapers as a primary me-

dium for promoting yourselves, at least be as smart as the other local advertisers who use the same medium and make it pay out day after day.

The next medium on the list is outdoor advertising. By a peculiar and fortunate coincidence, outdoor advertising plants find it difficult to sell space at just the time of the year that radio can best use the space—the winter, when radio listening is at its peak. To be sure, roadside signs in the Northern part of the country might prove impractical. But suburban boards and those located in the downtown districts are certainly desirable. So are three-sheet postings which are generally in neighborhood locations. But choose what you say with care. Your call letters should be prominent, of course. So should your “street address,” which happens to be the frequency on which you broadcast. But it is hard to imagine that so many of the outdoor postings for radio stations are effective—postings that simply say, “For the best in radio, listen to me” or something just as vague.

Here again pick the top air features on the network with which you are affiliated (or your own top features if you are an independent) and *plug them hard!* Also, if you are going into the expense of outdoor advertising, don't put your investment in jeopardy by stinting on new paper or revisions of your painted boards. Keep plugging your top features, tie them in with your call letters and your frequency. Again, if it works for some of the nation's leading advertisers, it should work for you.

Movie trailer advertising has very frequently proved enormously effective, if the trailers are well planned. Very frequently variations have been employed with great success. For example, when news listening was at its peak,

early in the war, WKBN in Youngstown put a line into the leading local theatre. At stated hours, they broadcast the latest news and, while this news was being broadcast in the theatres, ran silent slide film on the screen calling attention to WKBN's round-the-clock news service. Undoubtedly, it was good promotion and it was a service welcomed by the thousands of anxious people who attended the theatre. Here again, in movie advertising, if it is possible to promote the programs of a given night during matinees and of the next night during evening performances, greater results should accrue.

The most important medium for promoting radio programs is certainly the station's own air. But if most of a station's advertisers used as bad copy as poorly conceived to sell *their* products, as radio stations use to sell theirs, radio advertising would not be the gigantic force it is today.

As this is being written, we hear a major station filling its valuable air with a program promotion announcement that discusses a rather ordinary program to be aired three days hence!

We have all heard announcements so dull and so poorly written that they could not conceivably have sold anything to anyone, even something free like a radio program that can be heard by the twist of a dial.

We have seen program promotion announcements broadcast only at hours when the stations knew their audiences were near the vanishing point (and therefore the announcement time could not be sold). But what advertising is more important to a station than that which provides the station's own life insurance—peak listening audiences?

By now, we have discussed in sufficient detail several

factors of station programming that should give us the cue to the *how* and *when* of promoting a station's programs. We have learned, for example, that a very large number of persons like to listen to a sequence of the same type of programs. If that has been proved true of so many people, it is very likely true of more were they reminded. So why not devote the very choice twenty-five words before your first mystery-drama of the evening to remind listeners that it is followed by another or by several others? Why not tell something about them? You know that the audience you reach at that moment likes the type of programs about which you will be telling them.

Next, don't depend on long memories. Radio is a habit with most people, to be sure. But memories are short. Talk today about today's programs, or, at the most, about the following day's early morning shows.

And finally, try to exert as much care in the writing of your promotion announcements as you do, for example, in the writing of that important sales letter. The sales letter won't work if you don't have audiences!

There are, of course, other somewhat opportunistic ways to promote a radio station. They are more in the nature of public relations than audience promotion, although the terms ought to be synonymous.

WCKY, which is located in the Gibson Hotel in Cincinnati, has a continuous moving news ticker circling the front of the hotel, with the news interspersed with WCKY announcements.

Many stations have talent pictures displayed in prominent locations, such as hotel lobbies and bank foyers. (People do seem to want to know what their favorite radio voices look like).

WCSC, in Charleston, S.C., was unable to obtain newspaper listing of their program log, so they printed the weekly log and distributed it house-to-house.

WELI, New Haven, prints and distributes a lively fan magazine as did WKNE, Keene, N.H., when it was under the same Wilder ownership.

WWNC, in Asheville, had an attended news ticker in the window of a department store. WAKR, in Akron, displays the press association's news reports, which are changed frequently, in the lobby of the big office building in which the station's studios are located.

Many stations heavily promote personal appearances which are inevitably successful station promotion (people seem to feel a closer kinship to radio personalities they have seen in the flesh, still closer if they have exchanged a word with them at some public function). Hill-billy groups always find ready welcome; news commentators have been in demand as speakers; women's program commentators are often welcome at meetings of women's groups.

Many stations which enjoy ample facilities have made their auditoriums available for local women's club meetings and teas.

One station—WKRC in Cincinnati—at one time closely tied in with a home economics institute which lent its quarters to different women's groups each day, providing luncheons (at cost or less) that consisted in large part of sponsors' products.

The station aired a program from the meetings. It was a sort of a "man-on-the-street" broadcast deliberately designed for the type of women attracted to this institute.

WAPI, in Birmingham, broadcast a daily home eco-

nomics program from the local lighting company's model electric kitchen.

WSTV, in Steubenville, Ohio, regularly arranges and broadcasts a public forum consisting of qualified local persons as speakers and concerning itself largely with issues of deep local interest.

Some years ago, WJR, Detroit, sent qualified interviewers throughout the vast service area of this 50,000 watt station conducting a Gallup type poll of public opinion.

KOIN, in Portland, Oregon, conducts an annual Radio-In-Education seminar with guest speakers from all over the country.

KFBK, in Sacramento, runs summer courses for school teachers on the use of radio in the classroom.

A good many years ago, WIL, in St. Louis, conducted a program called *Mr. Fixit* to whom listeners wrote complaints and queries about anything that bothered them in the administration of the city government. *Mr. Fixit* attempted to obtain the answers and then broadcast both questions and answers.

The variety of "public service activities" that make good station promotion is as broad as human ingenuity can make it. The local circumstances dictate the opportunities but, whatever may be the circumstances, the opportunities are legion.

There is only one more point to be discussed in connection with the general question of building radio audiences. Given the best program schedule in radio, you still will not enjoy audiences if the people can't hear you. And given a good signal in your home community, you will get at least a fair shake from the researchers. (If 25% of the people they call aren't listening to you because they can't

hear your signal, your ratings will drop and so will your revenue since ratings are based on a potential of 100% of all radio homes.) Usually you can't do much about your power or your frequency. That stern police force, the FCC, has taken care of that.

But within the limits of an assigned power and frequency all too often there is so much that could be done to improve the signal that is not being done. The "not doing" results from sheer apathy or ignorance, sometimes, short-sightedness, at other times. For example, it might cost you \$3,000. to erect a half-wave antenna that would greatly increase your service area. You can't raise rates just because you've raised a higher tower so you fail to see the economic wisdom of the technical investment. Or perhaps it's a problem of moving your transmitter site, which would improve your coverage. But the wisdom lies in business insurance—the more people you serve well, the more necessary you will be to them. The more necessary you are to listeners, the more desirable you will be to advertisers. We're back again at the business of "selling circulation."

You're simply a shrewd businessman if you don't say quits on the subject of better coverage until you have exhausted every possibility. "People listening" is all you have to sell—the more people, the more sales.

CHAPTER IV

SELLING THE ADVERTISER

WE WISH WE could say that radio, in its twenty-five short years, has taught all advertising media how to sell; that radio has displayed a brilliance and an ingenuity in its selling that has made it what it is. And then we wish we could point to the sales figures, the \$300,000,000. a year in advertising volume, and say, "see—that proves it." Then we could fold up our tent and silently steal away, having everybody in radio mumbling into his beard, "he's a nice guy, and to prove it just look at how smart he said we are."

Only, it just ain't so!

For proof, button-hole almost any time-buyer in an advertising agency, almost any radio station representative, practically any radio advertiser.

The truth is that almost from its inception radio has enjoyed a seller's market in the big cities. Seldom has there been much time available for sale. And the reason is simple. When radio started, advertisers blithely cataloged it with calendars and other "advertising novelties." Being purely on the defensive, radio did some strange things, such as establishing "local rates" which are about half the "national rates," on the theory that local advertisers—a very flexible classification—could not use all of the station's coverage and therefore should not be charged for it. The idea reaches its height of absurdity when it is applied to a 250

watt station (which it generally is) whose coverage is so limited that every advertiser obviously can use all of it.

Why did radio establish such inequality in rates? Because newspapers have local and national rates. What's that got to do with it? No one has yet figured the answer to that.

But getting back to the original point, network and big city radio set its rates incredibly low to attract advertisers and it has not ever been able to make the radical adjustment necessary if the cost per delivered impression in radio were to approach the cost of comparable media for most advertisers. Thus even those advertisers who were not sure that radio was "here to stay" gambled timidly (it didn't cost much). And the results were so salutary that they stayed.

That was in the major markets. In the small towns, rarely did one find a station with any business, other than religion and patent medicines, from national advertisers.

In important secondary markets where the local newspapers were loaded with national advertising, such national advertising was conspicuous in radio by its scarcity. The war did change that. Whether it will remain changed is still a question. In any event, the availability of money for advertising, the tax situation and other factors have brought national advertising revenue, both network and national spot, into the smaller markets. But to a large extent, time has been bought, not sold!

Now we are facing a situation where almost a thousand newcomers have applied for radio station licenses. It is within the realm of possibility that there will be on the air several thousand radio stations (probably FM) in place of the 1004 who now operate.

A lot of them will fail should conditions become tighter.

Others will continue and, no matter how small a share of the audience they take from the established stations, they will be splitting the audience that many more ways.

The result may be lower rates and a smaller return to the station operator. Another, surely will be far more severe competition for the advertisers' dollars. And maybe then, we'll eat our words about radio stations' sales ability. We hope so. In any event, it is worth reviewing.

We mentioned, in a previous chapter, the almost ludicrous collection of "coverage maps" that were received in one week by one advertising agency. But you ought to see the promotion pieces and the sales approaches!

The favorite sales approach these days, which seldom works, is high pressure. We know of one Southern radio station that was anxious to be ordered by an advertiser who sponsored a very popular news commentator on that station's network but didn't buy that station. So the station went on the air, appealed to the pride of the South and requested that petitions be signed and letters be written demanding this program or else. ("Or else" was, of course, a boycott of the advertiser's merchandise but that was not said in so many words.) They then assembled their several hundred letters, their many thousands of petitions, and they barraged the poor advertising agency. Result: the agency was embarrassed; the advertiser infuriated; and the show did not go on the station.

We recall another station in the West which was owned by a local grocery chain. The station's misguided manager blithely threatened major advertisers with withdrawal of the company's lines from these stores if the local station was not used. Since the food products were in great demand and since the local chain needed fast-moving, pack-

aged foods to earn a profit and since major manufacturers did not lie awake nights worrying about their sales in one town of 20,000 people, that was a sales approach that would have been better left undone.

There is, of course, a legitimate means of accomplishing the same purpose. No advertiser would object to intelligent solicitation by the station, of local jobbers, distributors and company salesmen. None could object to the request on the part of these company representatives that a specific station be added. And it usually works. But that requires effort!

Much of the answer to misguided efforts such as these (and there are thousands of examples that could be quoted) is that most of us suffer from understandable astigmatism. We know that ours is a good town. We know that the people there buy lots of goods and we know, too, that they listen to our local radio station. But we tend to overlook the fact that our dot on the map is not really very important to a great many advertisers and that we had best aim our shots in a more potentially productive way.

There are advertisers, however, who are interested in small towns. What they want to know about your town and your radio station is very simple: How big is it, really? How much volume in their field do the local stores enjoy? To what extent do people listen to outside big-city stations, which might be carrying this advertiser's messages? How much do they listen to your station? How much area (with how many radio homes) do you *really* cover? Prove them all. It helps, too, if you have a simple, carefully-integrated merchandising plan that will attract the attention of the dealers, that might persuade them to give counter and window space to point-of-sale material, that

will attract maximum audiences to the advertiser's message (if it is program time that he is buying) as soon as possible.

And, strange as it may seem, agency time-buyers like to meet the people from whom they buy. Trips to New York and Chicago, well-armed with simple, believable data like that described above, usually pay dividends, either through getting the order or through finding out that you have no market for national advertisers and that, therefore, you might best concentrate on local and regional advertisers.

Another point frequently overlooked by small town radio stations is that of relative rates. In all advertising media, the advertiser expects to pay more per thousand as the circulation decreases or, in the case of radio, as the size of the community decreases.

But there must be *some* relationship. There are far too many stations whose potential is *truly* about 2000 radio homes and whose rate is so high that there is no economic justification for using the station. In the face of a fair average of perhaps \$1.50 per thousand, these too many stations publish rates that would represent a cost of \$20. to \$30. per thousand!

And the reasons given are equally interesting. They will tell you that the published rate for program time doesn't mean anything because (a) nobody ever buys program time anyway (all the station sells is announcements); and/or (b) well, when the politicians and the religious advertisers come along, they pay the rate! And more often than not, the station then sets an announcement rate so disproportionately low that no intelligent advertiser would ever buy anything else. Certainly, it was far from the original concept of the first men who set up a rate card in

radio that a station would offer continuous entertainment programs for the sole commercial purpose of having space fore and aft for announcements. Moreover, if that were economic, there'd be no program sponsors; everyone would be buying announcements.

The answer is simple. Surely, the sponsorship of a good program by an advertiser insures continuous listening. Certainly there is some "plus" for the advertiser to be identified with this program and its personalities. Obviously, the careful handling of the three commercials per 15 minute program brings higher attention value and sales responsiveness than just plugging announcements in available station time. It seems logical that were a local station to set a rate for programs proportionate to its announcement rate, the program time would then be sold, as announcement time is now sold. It would make for far healthier station operation.

But the entire problem of small town selling of time to national advertisers goes beyond the immediate problem of current rates. It is possible that, for a great many small town stations, any published rate would be too high. A 250 watt station, in most areas, has extremely limited coverage at night. Let us assume that, within this area, there are 2000 radio homes. Surveys have indicated that some one-station-market stations, affiliated with a network, attract slightly less than half of the total listening audience. Night-time sets in use, according to Hooper, seldom get beyond 30% in the cities at any one period. Assuming that, in these small towns, 50% of the sets are in use and half of this 50% are listening to the local station, that would add up to 500 sets tuned to an advertiser's program.

The figure of \$1.50 per thousand, mentioned before, is

for the base time period of one hour. A quarter hour is charged for at 40% of the hour rate. It needs no slide rule to figure that, in the hypothetical situation described above, the station could justifiably charge \$2.60 for a 15 minute program. But out of that \$2.60 would come an advertising agency's commission and perhaps a station representative's commission. Odds are the order would not be forthcoming, if the station would accept such a rate, because it would cost both agency and representative several times their commission simply to go through the necessary book-keeping.

A similar situation faced the country weeklies. They answered it with some success through the organization of the American Press Association. APA sold country weeklies of limited circulation in bulk, providing the advertiser with small town coverage of the entire nation or with coverage of certain geographic areas.

In radio, a similar idea was started when the Keystone Broadcasting System was organized. This organization attempted to provide a transcribed sustaining service to small town stations and to sell time to advertisers (both programs and announcements) on the same broad basis as did APA in the newspaper field.

Keystone made some progress originally but their growth was slowed by two factors. First, Petrillo issued his first ultimatum to broadcasters which made the use of transcriptions as used by Keystone impossible.

Before this problem was solved, the networks went into a new type of expansion program. Mutual extended its service to almost 300 radio stations, most of them in small towns, with the announced intention of carrying on until the number reached 350. ABC also expanded to 202 sta-

tions and even NBC and CBS increased their number of affiliates by going into smaller communities than they had theretofore considered.

The result has been that these small town stations no longer need the program service that was offered by Keystone and is now made available by the wired networks. Secondly, these wired networks offer a special events and news service that a transcription service could not duplicate. And, thirdly, the net payments, if any, by the wired networks equal that offered by Keystone and provide, in addition, the services just mentioned. (Mutual has attracted advertisers to their small town stations not through selling the virtues of these markets but through offering an overall discount, as much as 50%, to advertisers using the entire network. Since the 50% applies to all stations used, including the big-city basic network outlets (whose total aggregate rate is \$8315. per hour), it is easy to see that many of these small town markets are really added at no additional cost.)

The fact remains, however, that any network service strengthens the listener loyalty of small town audiences. It tends to make the stations better stations and thus better advertising media. But the problem of rate remains for the prospective advertiser. From the station's point of view, the payments from Mutual have no direct relation to the discount structure previously described. For example, 26 supplementary stations of the Mutual Pacific Coast Group are offered by Mutual at a net price (50% discount) of \$62.50 for a quarter hour daytime for all 26 stations. That's an average of \$2.40 per station. But, were you to buy these stations independently of Mutual, you would pay \$140.80 for a daytime quarter-hour, an average of \$5.42 per sta-

tion. The questions are: would these stations accept a rate reduction of over 50% to get national business? Would they pay anyone to get it for them? Could the agencies afford to place orders yielding them a gross profit of 36¢ per program?

The answers seem to lie elsewhere. If advertisers could buy a reasonably widespread list of small-town stations, if they could buy these stations by placing one order with one company, if this selling company could provide reliable, uniform information about each of its stations, it is quite possible that small-town radio would have a source of income from national advertisers that has heretofore been denied it.

Perhaps the answer lies in the further establishment of intensive regional networks, perhaps Keystone or an organization like it can do the job, perhaps a genuinely cooperative, national selling organization can render the service. But until such an organization arises, the market among national advertisers undoubtedly will continue to be slim.

We've devoted so much time to the small town semi-rural radio station because there are so many of them and so many more are planned. The medium market station, however, presents totally different problems. (By medium market we mean the communities of 60,000 to 150,000.) Generally, in such cities, there is more than one station; in the larger cities in this group, all four networks are usually represented.

Here the sales problem is a far simpler one. Advertisers *are* interested. But agencies have been known, quite often, to place business with the station that was not the leader because that station was "easier to do business with." Nor

is this especially disloyal to the agency's clients. "Easier to do business with" really means more business-like management, more intelligent selling. And that should add up, in time, to more sales per dollar invested for advertising on that station.

All too often, agencies face an astonishing complacency on the part of operators of medium-size-market stations. A complacency about the market, about the station's coverage, about relative audiences, in fact, about coming in and asking for business.

A city that has approached the 100,000 mark (and most 60,000 population cities are in that group, if you include the immediate environs) got that way for a good reason. The city must be an important distributing center, or a manufacturing center, or a major rural trading center.

Agencies can't be expected to know everything about every market. But they have the right to expect you to know everything germane to your market, and to tell it simply and forthrightly. They have a right to expect you to deliver a coverage map with a valid explanation of the basis on which the map is made.

They know that no station is the leader in its community all of the time. They want to know when *you* lead and they want to know why your rate is what it is, if you do not lead. (Very often, the second or third station is a far better buy per dollar than the first station. Once again, that old refrain, "circulation.")

And they want to know something about the programs you produce and what they can do for the agency's clients in sales.

The astonishing part of this obvious outline is that, were you to follow it (if you operate a radio station in an aver-

age community of this size) you'd be startled at the number of orders you would get. Just because you did and the other fellow didn't!

The only group we have not mentioned is the major-market station. We doubt if it needs mentioning. The sales approach is not too different from that of its smaller brother but the difference is that the advertiser does the "running after" in big cities. It is still true here, however, that more cooperative work with agencies even in the big city markets will give that station an edge over competition, everything being almost equal.

The only other difference in the big city operation is that since these stations have greater volume, they have more money with which to work. Hence, stations like CBS' owned and operated group initiated the Diary Technique—a research method of incalculable value to time buyers. WJR, some years ago, instituted coincidental studies in every one of the great many cities to which its powerful signal went. Again, an analytical service that paid dividends, even though in many of these cities WJR was proved to be far from the most popular station in the city. WLW in Cincinnati has for many years invested heavily in original research.

Whatever a major market station does that is trail-blazing, if it really helps the advertiser understand what he is buying, is almost certain to pay dividends to the station, even though the dividends may come indirectly.

One last point on this subject is the ever repeated question: "why doesn't my network sell for me. It's supposed to."

None of the networks has a vast sales force. It averages per network, perhaps a dozen men to cover the country.

These men have just two functions to perform: (1) to interest non-radio users in radio advertising and (2) to interest network advertisers in their network over a competitor.

Were a network to attempt to do justice to each of the stations it represents, it would need a sales force so enormous that the network could never justify the costs of it. Moreover, it is most unlikely that any such group, unless it ran into a tremendous number of men per network, could know enough about each market represented by a network affiliate to do justice to that affiliate. So the answer to the question is that networks do try to get as large lists of stations ordered as possible. But they can't sell every individual station even if they tried.

The station representatives are in a slightly different position. They are paid to represent individual stations and, by and large, they do justice to their clients. But here again, in the course of conversation with a possible advertiser on your station, some small point about the market or the dealer or a local program might be just the thing to swing the sale. Those are the intimacies of operation that you who live with it instinctively know. They are, largely, things difficult to commit to print. So the moral is: get in and see your prospects yourself. Your network and your representative will tell you where you might best employ your time and your representative will open doors for you and effect introductions. And if he keeps after the details of the order, once you leave for home, he has earned his commission.

So we get to the last subject in the problem of station time sales: *sales promotion*, as distinguished from *audience promotion*. Sales promotion, which most stations don't do,

is simply selling in print. It's probably the cheapest salesman you will ever hire and it can be the most efficient on your staff. That's up to you.

It's astonishing to consider how many radio stations use the "founder's whiskers" kind of sales promotion. This vastly popular school of promotion believes that advertisers are deeply interested in pictures of the "guys who work here," are fascinated by interior and exterior views of the studio and rush to get in their orders if they receive aerial view photographs of the transmitter site, complete with pictures of tubes and panels and antennae.

Apparently, it never occurred to practitioners of this type of sales promotion that advertisers buy time on a station solely for the purpose of obtaining circulation of their sales messages; that a specially designed desk, hewn of native lumber, behind which sits the station manager, doesn't proceed by one iota toward proving that the station does have circulation.

Such pictures do have some merit when they are presented as part, a very small part, of the whole. If, for example, a station was showing pictures of its audience studio facilities to illustrate *how* it attracted large loyal audiences, through its local special events (and even then a picture of the studio *with people in it* would be better)—that's one point. But our objection is to the excess of promotion efforts that begin and end with pictures of buildings and personnel.

Concerning "what to do," let us start out with a premise that seems basic yet is most often ignored. Printed promotion for a radio station is "advertising to advertising men." You are sending your mail pieces or directing your publication advertising to persons whose livelihood is

earned by the preparing of advertising (advertising managers or advertising agencies). A bad piece of type-setting or printing or art or writing will stand out, to them, like a sore thumb. A superior job will attract their attention by its mere physical superiority, and that's half the battle won.

There is little question that the greatest planner and writer of sales promotion that radio has ever seen is the present Vice-Chairman of CBS, Paul Kesten. When CBS started in business, they had only one competitor—the two networks of NBC. But NBC had been established for a number of years, it enjoyed the vast prestige of being part of the gigantic Radio Corporation of America and, most important, it had a virtual monopoly of the better radio stations at the time.

Paul Kesten, then Promotion Manager of CBS, offset these very genuine advantages by sheer promotion brilliance. He instituted a campaign to sell the medium of radio to advertisers and advertising agencies. He developed trail-blazing research projects and then promoted them with such brilliance that a promotion piece from CBS was passed from hand to hand at agencies as examples of superlative advertising copy and production. In short, Kesten followed implicitly the principle that he was “advertising to advertising men.” Not only was the thinking behind CBS promotion challenging but the copy, the art, the production were so superb that CBS material commanded attention from advertising professionals. And, of course, if advertising is that good, it will almost automatically receive the same measure of attention from the manufacturers who pay the advertising bills.

In astonishingly few years, CBS began to enjoy comparable prestige to the older, more powerful, more firmly es-

tablished NBC networks. Columbia got business and then it got stations and then it became, in truth, a competitor virtually equal to NBC.

Of course, this is an over-simplification. CBS's success was not due alone to the physical appearance of their sales promotion; the point is that it proved to be a mighty weapon, one of the strongest, in the armory of weapons that this new, small network possessed when it sought to compete with a big, firmly established competitor. Nor do we suggest that today someone could duplicate that remarkable feat. Conditions change and opportunities change with them. But the lesson is still there to be applied in greater or lesser measure. And the basic principle still remains—you *are* advertising to advertising men.

The promotion needs and methods of stations vary with the size of the market in which they are located, with the extent of the competition, and with the type of market the stations serve. Big-city stations, with sufficient income and profit, should have good-size budgets, which permit of liberal use of trade papers. That's not true of the station in the small-town market.

In this big-city category, a number of stations have done especially noteworthy jobs. WOR in New York is an example. The copy it employs might, under some circumstances, be labeled "precious." But the consistent use of dominating space, the invariable use of old wood-cuts (interesting in themselves) have brought to WOR an attention value well worth the effort. And, although trade-paper advertising effectiveness is almost impossible to measure, WOR enjoys as a result of its years an enviable acceptance throughout advertising circles. Promotion *must have* helped.

An example of typical WOR advertising is shown here to demonstrate how it uses trade paper space. (See Fig. 1)

Perhaps the other extreme of a remarkably strong advertising-press campaign but using small space is that of WAVE, Louisville. For years, it has employed the same copy slant, to such an extent in fact that it is doubtful if a space-buyer would think about Louisville without thinking about WAVE. What it will do when it runs out of peculiarly named towns is another question, but WAVE

as if you didn't know this all the time!

OR: BICYCLING GOES TO ONE'S HEAD EVENTUALLY



what makes wrinkles?

The general impression about wrinkles is that they are caused by worry, but the truth is that most of them come from laughing. Generally it has been found that the jovial, happy type forms wrinkles that enhance his facial expression.

One of WOR's more studious researchers - Parks by name - recently observed that of the approximately 350 advertisers who used WOR during the year 1945, more than 99/100% have wrinkles that enhance their facial expressions.

greeting customs in other climes



It is common in Arabia to put cheek to cheek. The Hindu falls in the dust before his superior. The Australian natives practice the singular custom when meeting of sticking out their tongues at each other.

Since WOR was founded in 1922, it has become an increasingly popular custom among America's leading advertisers and their agencies to greet the majority of more than 18,000,000 people in one of the greatest listening territories on the Eastern Seaboard by using this power-full station.



Lord Byron.

famous writers

Byron wrote "Childe Harold" when he was 20.

Dante was 50 when he completed his "Commedia".

Goethe wrote his "Sorrows of Werther" at 21.

Milton wrote "Paradise Lost" at 57.

Dickens wrote "Oliver Twist" at 26.

WOR was 23 when we wrote the 96th in a library of 102 great radio success stories. Most recent is the story of "Prem-On", a war product. WOR jumped this Product's sales 100% throughout the WOR area in a few months! Placed it in 43 department stores.



weather told by animals

If a cat sneezes it is a sign of rain.

When the fox barks at night it will storm.

The sandmole makes a mournful noise just before frost.

If the deer's coat is gray in October, a severe winter will follow.

If a sponsor uses WOR, it's a sign that his program will be heard in 16 of America's greatest cities of more than 100,000 people each. They include: New York City, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Trenton, Hartford, and 11 others.

WOR - that power-full station at 1440 Broadway, in New York

Mutual

FIGURE 1

seems to have enough ingenuity to meet that problem when it must. (See Fig. 2)

WITH in Baltimore, has done another outstanding job. Here, the copy is not especially noteworthy nor is there anything especially distinctive about the art or typography. The station simply uses, in full pages, short copy and large "teaser" photographs. But the mere fact that, almost every week, in both *Radio Daily* and *Broadcasting*, a 250 watt station employs full pages to tell its story is noteworthy. It has made WITH one of the well-known set of call letters in radio.

CBS, too, has done a distinguished job over the years for its owned and operated stations. Some years ago, it evolved the plan of simply talking about programs in its station advertising, on the theory that the statistical data (and counter-data) were getting to be a considerable bore to the reader of trade paper advertising. So CBS stations began to advertise their dominance in the terms of their "merchandise," the locally produced programs and their human-

**BLAZE (Ky.)
AIN'T
SETTING
THE WORLD
ON FY-YUR!**

Probably you've never heard of Blaze (Ky.). Chalk it up to the fact that there's nothing better in just a flickering flame. BUT, the Louisville Area's ability to buy is a combination—usually 57.1% of the State's entire advertising buying business. With WAVE, alone, you can completely cover this red-hot Area at a cost that won't bore you up! Turn to an alarm for the dope, today!

**LOUISVILLE'S
WAVE**

500 N. 3rd St. • 571.6 • 555
FRIS & PETERL, INC.
National Representatives

**Are Sales
Sinking
In
Quicksand
(Kentucky)?**

Don't blame your salesman if sales are sinking in Quicksand (Ky.). Don't let it drag you down, but Quicksand just can't afford to buy very much of what you sell. So forget the Little Quicksands—go after the Louisville Trading Area, a market with 25% more effective buying power than the rest of Kentucky combined! And you can cover it completely with WAVE alone—without paying extra for anything else! May we tell you more?

**LOUISVILLE'S
WAVE**

500 N. 3rd St. • 571.6 • 555
FRIS & PETERL, INC.
National Representatives

**WE
DON'T HAVE
THE
SUBTLE (Ky.)
APPROACH!**

Maybe we don't have an engaging gambler to be All Things To All Our Fellow Men. You certainly we don't have any desire to reach Subtle, Kentucky, or any other Garden Spot of less than 4500 people! We aim to get a loud, unconfused signal into every part of the Louisville Trading Area—in keep you ever last for this concentrated coverage—and here to be the best radio set in Kentucky. Is that too blatant, you think?

**LOUISVILLE'S
WAVE**

500 N. 3rd St. • 571.6 • 555
FRIS & PETERL, INC.
National Representatives

**WAVE
ISN'T
ROLLING
IN
CLOVER (Ky.)!**

There's mighty few grasses' round these parts, strange, but 'less' in Clover (Ky.)! This' seed in Clover Creek, Crib Run, or Deer Valley (Ky.). The real pasture for business in Kentucky is the Louisville Trading Area, where most of the people buy more of the things three 67% of the State's population does its grazing in this one field... and with WAVE right alongside! Don't look for "clover" in Clover... let WAVE show you the clover patch!

**LOUISVILLE'S
WAVE**

500 N. 3rd St. • 571.6 • 555
FRIS & PETERL, INC.
National Representatives

FIGURE 2

interest results. It made for an unusually interesting campaign but it must be admitted that, at least to this writer, after a few years, the idea has begun to pall, the stories have become dull, and the copy and layout have a monotonous sameness. That brings up the very important point that, when you institute a "different" campaign, you should keep your fingers on the pulse of it. When the idea is worn out, discard it!

The point we seek to make, in the examples above, is that if you plan to use trade paper space, you should invest enough money for the skill and the brains that will make the campaign noteworthy. Otherwise, it is likely to be a waste of money because it will not be read.

An important medium for all stations, and a primary medium for small stations, is direct-mail. In this way, you can offset the infrequent visits of your salesmen by the frequent visits of your mailings. And, if your material is good enough, your printed salesmen can get in to see people where your personal salesman can never get past the receptionist. Here again, the same principle applies—*do it well or don't do it at all!*

If you are going to do a book (something more than four pages), plan to make it a distinguished book, one that agency men will keep as an example of a good job. We know of one organization which took its annual budget some years ago and divided it into fourths, each fourth to be used to turn out an elaborate, hard-cover book—on the theory that the book would be so much better than anything else agencies would receive at the same time that it would have at least a three-month's life, until this outfit's next book was in the mail. It seemed to work, too.

If you plan a simple story that will not make a book, again plan the copy and the art and the layout and the type-setting so that it will be outstanding in the day's mail. Important to bear in mind is that the average advertising executive gets an incredible quantity of direct mail every day, from radio stations and networks and magazines and newspapers and a hundred other sources. It is unlikely that he'll have the appetite to do more than glance at most of it (do you?). *But* he'll read that which makes him read because it is such a superbly good example of the advertising man's art.

That brings us to something dear to this writer's heart. There is too little use, in our opinion, of the one-cent mailing card. It need not be a penny-postcard; it can be a well-printed, well-designed, multi-color mailing piece.

But if you have a series of points to make, and each point stands on its own feet, the mailing card has a vast advantage—it can make the point quickly and it will be read.

It's a natural for us, when we receive a post-card, to turn it over—no matter how busy we may be—and see what it says on the other side. (It's just as natural, at times, to throw away third-class mailing matter without opening it.) So, if you can make your point in a few words and it is a good point to make, if you can achieve consistency by sending out many cards, on a regular schedule, each making a different point—chances are that you'll get your message across.

Postcards won't get you direct response. But they'll condition the recipient at least to be open-minded about your story when you call. He'll know part of it and he'll be more kindly disposed.

So far we've talked about what to do and how to do it

without saying much about *what to say*—the meat of the problem. Unfortunately, there can be no simple blueprint for this. It depends on what you have to say that is of interest to someone who might buy time.

If you have a story about relative audience-leadership in your community (based on acceptable surveys), of course that is the thing to say.

If you have a story of mail response, and can acceptably document the story, tell it!

If you have a story of noteworthy local special events or local interest programs, tell the story. It proves that you are on your toes, as a station operator.

If you have a story about your market that would make it more valuable to advertisers than data from the standard reference books would indicate, shout it from the rooftops (or, more accurately, from the mailing piece).

Basically, put yourself in the buyer's shoes. Bear in mind that on the day he receives your advertising, he will also be receiving advertising from hundreds of your competitors (because you compete with every other radio station in America, all the time, for your share of the advertiser's budget). There must be something for you to say that will be of sufficient interest to the recipient of your advertising (who, we must assume, doesn't give a tinker's dam for you or your market) to command his attention and his action. Use that as your yard-stick and it is likely that your promotion will pay out.

In normal times, agencies want to know what *live* shows you have on the air that have succeeded in building audiences and are available for sale. A personal letter to potential buyers, telling that story, supported with facts, will

produce astonishingly high results. It's so elementary and so obvious that it seems to escape us!

There are two other types of promotion we have not yet discussed. One is "novelties." That's a word and a type of advertising held up in great scorn. It includes calendars and desk pads and book matches and that ilk of usable-by-the-recipient material. And there's nothing the matter with it if it is in good taste. Far too many such things, like ash-trays, might have served as good reminders of the sender's call letters if they hadn't so blatantly shouted the call letters on the piece. Very few men with pride in the appointments of their offices have any desire to make of their desks bill-posting locations for call letters of stations that want to sell them something.

The other, more basic promotion material is "presentations"—probably the one inexpensive, down-to-earth promotion activity that, if it is well done, exceeds all others in ringing the cash register.

Some years ago, WKBN's promotion man prepared a special presentation for each account on the CBS network that was not using WKBN. The presentation discussed the network advertiser's product in terms of the Youngstown market. It explained what the market afforded in terms of potential sales of the specific advertiser's product, it discussed the virtues of the station as a medium for covering the market and it explained at what little cost, this advertiser could add WKBN. This presentation was then used personally by the station's representatives when they came to New York and, of course, it worked often enough to make it a successful device.

When your station representative writes in to you and asks for details about time availabilities, you can send the

details in the form of a letter and perhaps you'll get the order. Or you can put the story in the form of a presentation, outlining persuasively all of the "plusses" of this available time and, chances are, you'll more likely get the order.

Writing presentations really is not difficult. If you can imagine you are talking face-to-face to the prospect and dictate what you would say to him personally, your presentation will be written. Make one point to a page, make your thoughts and your pages consecutive, sum up your basic points at the end and you will have done a job. (This same principle applies to sales letters. A good sales letter is a *natural* reproduction in type of a man talking. What makes a letter bad is the stilted phrases that you would never use personally if you were talking face-to-face to the prospect.)

To sum up the problem of sales promotion, the first major point to be made is: **DO IT!**

The next point is to decide if you can use trade papers, or one trade paper, often enough to get continuity of message.

The third point is to use direct-mail and use it intelligently. The *form* the direct-mail takes is far less important than *what it says* and *how well it says it*.

Use "novelty" advertising if it is a good novelty, that the recipient might find useful (and will not get dozens like it from dozens of other stations), and employ good taste in your advertising on the "novelty."

Finally, use "presentations." Use lots of them and use them intelligently. They help the agency, they help your representatives, they help your salesmen, so they help you.

You may question, "if it is all so simple why is so little

of it good." Perhaps one answer is that few stations seem sufficiently to realize the importance of sales promotion to pay adequately for the specialized skill of a good promotion man.

Perhaps it is not always true that "you get what you pay for," but the promotion record of radio stations seems to support the argument.

CHAPTER V

RADIO'S FUTURE

IF ONE COULD sum up what is wrong with radio in one pat phrase, it might be that radio makes too much money!

When a person can return his investment annually, when he can make a profit of 30% on his sales, when the capital investment is entirely disproportionate to the potential return (disproportionately favorable, of course), then the likelihood of establishing a "radio profession" among station owners is not very great.

It is possible that the profession of country journalism became so admirable because men knew that they could not go into this field with much hope of achieving more than a modest income, and a way of life that they deliberately chose. Radio, on the other hand, has attracted to itself too many men with no interest in the art of broadcasting and no especial native or developed skill in the art. They did, however, have capital and they knew that few fields would offer so large a return at so little risk. Nor has the FCC been in a position to establish any other kind of ownership.

But we face a different kind of future. The development of FM, if and when, will bring a vast number of stations to America; by dividing the audience among more stations, it will bring a smaller net circulation to any one station. That will cut profits and thus it may bring a new type of operator into the field. Moreover, FM will level out the

accident of physical coverage and will therefore tend to bring audiences to a given station in reasonably direct proportion to the skill of the station in attracting and holding audiences. That, too, should raise the level of operation. (Today, far too many stations have large audiences because (a) a good network brings them to the station, (b) they have more power and a better frequency and thus can be heard by more people, or (c) theirs is the only station in the area so it is a case of "the state, it is me.")

Unfortunately, the colleges seem to be doing little in preparing the "radio professional" of the future. Presumably, the liberal arts colleges of the nation should have a deep interest in a medium of communication with such vast influence on the nation. Yet, the courses in radio given at our institutions of higher learning are generally vocational courses presuming to teach students acting or writing or direction or technical duties.

St. Lawrence University, in Canton, New York, includes as an elective in its curriculum a Radio Workshop that, given the necessary finances, might well become a model for this type of institution (a co-educational liberal arts college). There, the students are taught all phases of station operation, each of them must of necessity obtain experience in every phase of actual broadcasting of college-produced programs over a nearby commercial station. And further experience is obtained through regular broadcasting over the campus station. But basically, they are taught the philosophy of radio broadcasting. There is an attempt, and by and large, a successful one, to create in these students just such a group of "radio professionals" we refer to. The students who complete the course are far from specialists in any field. But their working knowledge of all fields and

their understanding of the social influences of radio make them ideal "apprentice employees" for any radio station.

So much for education and the development of "radio professionals." But what kind of field will they enter?

We said before that the development of FM as our primary system of broadcasting is inevitable. And so it is, despite the best efforts of many forces to throw a monkey-wrench into the machinery.

Paul Kesten, of CBS, testifying before the FCC on FM frequency allocations on July 30, 1945 said, "FM . . . contains in itself almost the whole future of audio broadcasting . . . in deciding the issues at hand (FM frequency allocations) you are deciding the whole future of audio broadcasting . . . you are setting its social pattern, its physical pattern, its economic pattern." And so it does.

In previous presentations to the Commission, CBS had recommended a "single market plan" in opposition to the Commission's announced tentative plan. In this single market plan, CBS had envisioned 4000 to 5000 radio stations (as many as 25 or 30 in each of the larger population centers) and perhaps 10 competing nation-wide networks.

Forgetting for the moment about the economics of the situation, that might bode well for radio's future, from the social point of view. From the economic point of view, however, there is grave doubt. Before the era of heavy-spending occasioned by the war and the tax structure, it was a moot point whether there was room for four radio networks. Of the 900-odd stations, a good number had some difficulty making ends meet. What would happen with 10 networks and 5000 stations is highly questionable.

It has been said that CBS in making such a presentation must be suspect (although they may have had the most

honorable and sincere intentions). The proponents of this point state that it is difficult to imagine what either NBC or CBS have to gain from a system that would divorce them of their virtual monopoly of high-powered stations. They add that it is likewise difficult to imagine that a corporation such as CBS, whose stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange, could afford to display a social conscience that would play havoc with their profits.

Be that as it may, CBS did make a significant contribution to clear thinking on the subject of how to plan for FM. The Commission did revise its rules and accept many of CBS's basic premises. And here is what has happened.

In the populous Eastern Seaboard area and possibly in the industrial Middle West, it is suggested by the FCC that there will be permitted only two types of radio stations: the community station, which will be designed to serve a local area (but with far more day and night coverage than a 250 watt AM station) and a metropolitan station, which will be designed to cover a vast trading area. Elsewhere in the United States, there will be permitted these two classes of radio stations plus a third class—the rural station, which will be the equivalent in coverage of the 50,000 watt AM Clear Channel stations.

Thus, we shall find in smaller communities a number of stations of identical coverage (perhaps a 30 mile radius, day and night) and, in larger communities both this type and metropolitan stations, which will afford relatively vast coverage (but each of these metropolitan stations will afford reasonably identical coverage). And, in areas such as the rural Plains area of the Middle West, we shall find rural stations, which will reach deep into the far stretches of their territories, and again, if there are a number of rural

stations located in one community, presumably each will afford similar coverage to each other.

However, certain original premises of the proponents of FM have been found to be incorrect. First, the premise that when the FM signal reaches the horizon, it will disappear, is not true. There is a considerable ground-wave in FM, the extent of which remains to be measured. Secondly, the FCC has already found that, in place of the plethora of available frequencies for which they had hoped, in New York City, for example, there are insufficient frequencies and those that do exist are not of identical value.

Finally, the pioneers in FM maintain, with data to support their contentions, that the FCC has done a disservice to the art by moving the FM bands from their original location in the spectrum. These pioneers insist that, instead of reducing interference in the higher bands, the Commission has increased it.

Whichever point of view is correct, one important factor remains unchanged. FM will provide more stations; it will level out coverage; it will make possible a physically good radio station for a modest capital investment. And because these things are true, the race *should* go to the swift—the operator with the more “know-how” should capture the audiences. That is all to the good.

Two developments have arisen in radio, however, that are dangerous. Some time ago, a vast corporation with no interest in or knowledge of radio applied for transfer of one of the nation's leading stations to them. The corporation was the Aviation Corporation of America and the station was WLW. In the testimony before the Commission, the principal officers of this corporation admitted that they had no knowledge of radio, no especial interest in it (aside

from its money-making potentialities) and no concept of its social obligations. Their argument was that their employees (the then-present employees of the WLW licensee) had this knowledge.

As deplorable as was this testimony, the Commission found that it had no authority to deny the license on such grounds. The Aviation Corporation people had moral and financial responsibility and, beyond that, the law gave the Commission no authority.

Shortly thereafter came a deluge of applications for transfers and for FM licenses from labor unions. Again, there is no ground for refusing these applications.

A good point might be made that in a medium such as radio, with its gigantic opinion-creating potentialities, special interest group ownership could become a serious national menace.

There is no present reason to believe that the Aviation Corporation has any interest in or desire to mold public opinion through their ownership of WLW. Nor is that the point we raise. There is reason to believe that the ownership of radio stations by (a) Capital which has no professional interest in broadcasting and (b) labor unions, of whom the same might be said, can squeeze the listener into a very difficult spot.

Both Labor and Capital have ample opportunity to use the air-waves licensed to others and ample legal safeguards to guarantee them such use within reason. Hence, it is difficult to see on what grounds they might be justified in owning and operating such radio stations. Certainly, ownership of a station cannot guarantee audiences in a competitive market,—only programs can do that!

This question of who may own a radio station brings

us back again to the pressing need for a new, more sharply defined radio law. And, when it is written, the possibilities just described will be ticklish. To achieve just regulation in the people's interest and at the same time avoid the dangers of bureaucracy is indeed a job for the most skilled of tight-rope walkers.

The significant aspects of FM and television in radio's future deserve far more space than has been devoted to them in this book. Volumes can and should be written about them. But as sure as FM's immediate future seems, it is a subject that cannot be discussed with any authority. And television is even more hazardous to guess about.

One begins to suspect that they have become prime examples of industry's manipulation of a shell game. There was great talk by radio set manufacturers during the war about the imminence of FM. They promised miracles in price and design, come Peace. Peace has come. And the very set manufacturers who talked so blithely about post-war radio in terms of FM now seem to make no effort to produce AM-FM combination sets. All the rumors that abounded about new technical developments that would permit low-priced two-band sets seem never to have passed the rumor stage.

At this writing, there is not on the market a single low cost AM-FM set. There is talk of consoles to be produced in the Fall of 1946 that will include facilities for receiving both types of transmission.

RADIO DAILY in its issue of March 20, 1946, reported on preliminary returns from the FCC poll of radio manufacturers. All but a few of the large companies had reported and, says *RADIO DAILY*, "the Commission is concerned over a trend which seems to amount to a virtual

freeze-out of FM receivers." Of 7,000,000 sets reported to be made in 1946, 90% will be without FM bands. Of all the manufacturers reporting, 90% said they would not bother with FM.

But manufacturers seem to overlook history too, by limiting FM bands to the higher-priced sets. Before the war, the average retail price of a radio receiver was \$18.00. The number of consoles sold was infinitesimal compared with table models. To be sure, America has more money per capita today. But two things stand in the way of the public spending that money for these high-priced sets.

In the first place, there is the possibility that the public has been oversold on FM. No tests indicate a sharp enough perceptiveness on the part of the average man to make him seek or be aware of greater tonal range. There is some evidence, to the contrary, that the average listener deliberately distorts normal reception by throwing his volume control to bass. And there is further evidence that the average ear dislikes the treble tones in speech. Not only won't they thrill to FM's greater fidelity, they may even resent it! Furthermore, it is most doubtful that the popular small radio will have a sufficiently good speaker to reproduce the tonal-range virtues of FM.

FM's other advantage is its elimination of static. But where population is concentrated and buying power is highest (the big metropolitan centers) AM reception is best because of its power, its frequency, and its number of stations. Static and "fade" are not serious problems in most concentrated population areas.

Finally, we must remember that people listen to programs. Until the advertiser and his agency think it necessary to go into FM broadcasting, the programs people want

to hear will be on the AM stations they can now hear.

The FM picture is further complicated by some of the wild statements of its zealous partisans. One independent FM broadcaster has published a number of trade-paper articles showing how he has, for the past four years, made money operating an FM station. It's a good story, but the same broadcaster testified before the FCC that he lost some \$70,000. in the operation of his station.

It would be possible, of course, for some pioneering souls (with an extra couple of million dollars) to set up an FM network and, in cooperation with set manufacturers, simultaneously promote FM sets and program FM stations competitively, in program appeal, with AM stations. But such an undertaking would be so costly that it is unlikely in the immediate future. The same investment in a fifth AM network probably would be a safer risk for that amount of capital.

So on FM, we agree with Paul Kesten that "FM . . . contains in itself almost the whole future of audio broadcasting." Our question is—*when?* And we don't know the answer but we know that all of the available evidence indicates a fairly far-away tomorrow. So if you're thinking about FM, it might be good business to think about deficits for some time to come. From a professional point of view, and from the social point of view, we *wish* FM would come soon. But wishful thinking alone is a costly luxury.

As to Television, one would need a crystal ball far brighter than we possess to make predictions about it. Television is technically in such a state of flux that none but the most opulent can consider an investment in a television receiver today. It is likely to be obsolete tomorrow.

No progress has been made in solving the problem of the vast production costs necessary in television programming. And the method of national transmission of television programs, beyond the big cities, has yet to be satisfactorily worked out.

In this connection, experiments are currently being conducted in relaying television programs from "floating airplane relay stations." It may work, but what then will happen to the local station as the "voice of its community"? Will it become simply a switchboard for television programs and be forced into the weak attempt to hold its local audience, during non-network hours, with audio broadcasts that are not especially competitive? It's a frightening picture!

What we said about confusion in the FM field can be repeated and underscored for greater emphasis when we consider television. Nobody in this field seems to know, for example, if CBS is right on the question of color television. If it is, then its opponents are 100% wrong. And vice versa. The same is so of the equipment manufacturers. The recent fracas about what it costs to build and maintain a television station and what return on the investment might be expected is a good case in point.

VARIETY summed it up on February 27, 1946 in the usual, colorful *VARIETY* manner. Here is what they said:

TELEVISION SEEN AS COSTLY BIZ

D.C. FIGURES

REFUTE DUMONT

"Those big noises coming these days from video row are not sound effects or bursting tubes, but loud gripes from television broadcasters who

complain that DuMont labs 'are selling television short in an effort to get business for transmission equipment.'

"This week, the tabulation of estimated construction and operating costs for six proposed Washington (D.C.) television stations were offered as an answer to the DuMont figures. It was pointed out that one set of figures, in these tabulations, are for DuMont's own proposed capital outlet, and that even DuMont's own estimates in Washington are higher than the same firm's sales dept. offered to prospective customers.

"The tabulation is official, having been entered into the record of the FCC at the D.C. video hearings, Jan. 21-23.

"DuMont sales figures showed that a television broadcaster could go into business for a mere \$272,500. The Washington figures show that the average cost for transmitter and equipment for four proposed Washington video outlets—Philco, NBC, WOR and the DuMont—is \$456,845 apiece.

"The DuMont sales figures held out the promise that, after 30 months of operation, a television station would have annual operating costs of \$314,889. The FCC tabulation gives the average operating costs for that same group of four stations—Philco, NBC, WOR and DuMont—as \$587,500 a year each. Furthermore, these operating costs are for only 28 hours of operation a week; whereas the DuMont sales figures were for operations totaling 49 hours a week.

"Carrying further their criticism of DuMont sales dept. operating cost estimates, video execs point out that right now WCBW (CBS) and WNBT (NBC), both in N. Y., spend about \$750,000 a year apiece for operating costs.

'PENNY-ANTE' RATES

"Video row is just as unhappy about DuMont sales talks promising huge profits for television broadcasters at what some of them call 'penny-ante' rates per half hour. They disagree with DuMont's estimates which tell novices in video they could compete against newspaper and magazine media by offering television time at the rate of \$120 per half hour (in a major trading area of 100,000 families). They point out that when DuMont's N. Y. outlet, WABD, resumes broadcasting, its half-hour time charge (including rehearsal time) will be \$625 per 30-minute stanza.

"'Maybe that talk about low costs will sell a few more transmitters for DuMont,' say the critics, 'but it won't help the industry to have people go into it without realizing that they need real money to stay in business. The costs in television are not at all modest—they are fairly heavy, and the man or firm getting into it might as well know the score from the beginning.'

"Here is a summary of the figures presented to the FCC by the six Washington applicants:

| <i>Station</i> | <i>Construction costs</i> | <i>Annual Operating costs *</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Philco | \$528,423 | \$738,000 |
| NBC | 514,700 | 736,000 |
| WOR | 389,900 | 480,000 |
| WWDC | 259,310 | 225,300 |
| DuMont | 394,355 | ‡396,052 |
| Washington Eve. Star . | ‡244,500 | 300,000 |
| | | to |
| | | 500,000 |

* Twenty-eight-hour-per-week operation.

+ Includes 20% depreciation. Others believed to omit depreciation.

‡ Does not include proposed downtown television studio and studio equipment—cost not estimated."

We must reach the same conclusion about the imminence of television that we have about FM. Yes, television is inevitable. But even the inevitable can wait a long time.

The question of the network of the future must also occupy our minds, since today at least 75% of all stations are network affiliates. It has been demonstrated beyond any question that radio broadcasting without networks could not equal the vast potent system that we know today. It is inconceivable that any number of American radio listeners would be content with radio without network programs. Hence, if we are to consider radio of the future, regardless of whether it is AM, FM, Television or all of them combined, we must also consider the place of the network in radio's future.

A student of social values might justifiably deplore the virtual control by networks, which are non-licensees, over radio stations, which are licensed. Yet, it is a situation which is unavoidable.

Not only are most stations largely dependent on networks for the audience-building big-name programs that they air but there have been few if any evidences of a network affiliate ever leaving a network and operating successfully thereafter without network affiliation. In a small community, where the station's prestige is important (and especially where distant high-powered stations can be heard by local families), it would normally prove catastrophic to drop network affiliation and thenceforth be dependent on local programming and transcriptions.

Because that is so it brings to the fore the entire question of networks and their ownership. Here, too, we face a dilemma.

The situation is somewhat comparable to that of news-

papers and their nationwide news service. Newspapers have answered it with a cooperatively owned and operated service—the Associated Press (although the competitive United Press is privately owned). Why haven't radio stations done likewise? If a network is so important to a station's future, if the network end of the business is so profitable, why don't the stations own their networks?

While it seems like an obvious idea, it is not quite as simple as it seems. In the first place, it has been tried in a limited way and without great success. The Mutual Broadcasting System, as its name implies, was partially mutual. The larger stations were stockholders; there were no stockholders who were not station-members. But as Mutual grew, a vast number of stations were added who did not participate in stock ownership and were, in fact, given no opportunity to do so. Of the 301 Mutual affiliates, eight are stockholders.

But the history of Mutual for nine of its ten years seems to indicate the essential weakness of the idea. In the first place, smooth operation was well nigh impossible because "everyone wanted to get into the act." Mutual did not consist of a group of skilled operating employees who operated the network as their skill and knowledge and experience dictated. The owners never permitted such latitude. And in a business as fiercely competitive as network radio, that made real competition almost impossible. (At the moment, the management of Mutual seems to be allowed a relatively free hand.)

There is, however, a more basic objection to cooperatively-owned networks. Very often, the immediate best interests of stations and networks conflict. When network and station are independently owned and operate under

firm contracts, the authority and responsibility of each is carefully defined. And best interest to the contrary notwithstanding, each can operate intelligently with full knowledge in advance of what to expect from the other.

There may be a solution that resolves these difficulties. If so, so much the better for the future of broadcasting. But at the moment, it would be difficult to predict with confidence any important change in the relationship between network and station affiliate.

We have made no previous mention of the "hot potato" of radio broadcasting. It is the subject of free speech and editorial expression. And it is important to a broadcaster not only because he must often face the problem but, from an affirmative point of view, he must himself decide the character of the station he operates in so far as its opinion-moulding potentialities are concerned.

The argument once used by Mutual on this subject seems entirely specious. They claimed they were providing a vehicle for the free expression of opinion. Therefore, they continued, all points of view might be expressed and it would be the network's responsibility to balance them in number.

But this seems unreasonable to us on several counts. In the first place, it is a station's responsibility to exercise judgment in the selection of material. If in their judgment an expression of opinion is inflammatory or inferentially untrue or, as in the War years, dangerous to the national welfare, then it seems that it is the network's duty to bar such opinions.

Even less debatable than this is the point that you can't balance the expressions of opinion. Audiences differ period by period, day by day, week by week. How then can a

rebuttal be delivered precisely to the same persons who heard the original argument?

Finally, the influence of the spoken word differs from that of the printed word. By inflection, by dramatic emphasis, by timing and delivery a good radio speaker can create an impression on a listener that no amount of rebuttal can shake.

The other point of view is that held by CBS, who believes that the air waves should provide no opportunity for editorializing, excepting of course during forums or political speeches.

In support of this the argument might be used that licensees do not own the air which they use: they are simply holding and using their franchise in trust for the People, who do own the air. Hence, it might be concluded that a station owner's point of view in a controversial matter cannot be expressed over the station he owns because, while the technical equipment belongs to him, the air over which his message is carried belongs to all of us.

In further support of the view is the often-expressed point that, given enough money, anyone can start a newspaper or magazine which would be a vehicle for expressing his views. But radio frequencies are limited; today almost no one can start an AM station in the larger cities. Therefore, there is no basis for so comparing newspapers and radio.

We find the question of free speech is really two questions. The first is whether we should lend or rent our facilities for another to express his points of view. The second is whether we, as station operators, should express our own views.

It is not a simple question to answer. The second part

of it is especially difficult because, if we operate a medium with such vast potential influence, it seems that we owe it to the community to use that influence for something more than entertainment. In the final analysis, the problem of free speech for others and of free speech for ourselves on our station is one that the station operator must grapple with in his own conscience.

We appreciate the magnitude of the problem. We have not begun to explore its many facets. But by pointing up the more obvious aspects we have sought, in these few paragraphs, to create an awareness of the problem simply that in his own mind and in the light of his own community's problems each station operator might arrive at a satisfactory solution.

We come now to the end of a book that has been fun to write because it has said, in one place, what so many have said so often at different times. Some day, we should like to see a library of books, each one of which explores in far greater detail the vast number of subjects that, of necessity, we have treated so slightly.

We look ahead—we who have chosen radio as our profession—to years that will be even more stirring than those that have passed. And we see behind us twenty-five exciting years of mushroom growth; twenty-five years in which the industry sped forward through trial and error; twenty-five years that showed great strides forward in the art of broadcasting and in the accompanying listening and loyalty of American families. Yet, that progress was made without trained professionals. There has been no time for that.

And the future? We quote in part the very eloquent explanation Harper's Magazine made, on their one-hun-

dredth anniversary (July, 1945), of what they considered the functions of an independent magazine to be:

“Our country . . . must rely upon possessing always a leaven of well-informed, clear-headed, thoughtful, public-spirited, and civilized men and women who, serving some as recognized leaders and others, however obscure, as a sort of balance-of-power element in the struggle between organized groups, are ready to think for themselves and act as their thinking directs.”

With radio's vast influence on all the people, might not our radio professional of the future paraphrase this creed and, indeed, amplify it beyond all previous measure? To such might we dedicate our hope for radio's future.

POSTSCRIPT

SINCE THIS BOOK was completed, a very significant event has taken place. In one of the most magnificent examples of casuistry ever to emanate from Washington, the FCC released on March 7, 1946, a 129 page report entitled, "Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees." The report especially concerns us in this book, since it answers many questions we raised and contradicts suggestions we offered. There is, of course, some doubt whether the Commission will carry through the radical steps they recommend in this report although already, despite their disclaimers, they have begun to treat the proposal as a regulation and put it into effect! So, we'll discuss the report and point out the suggested changes from our recommendations.

It is unfortunate that the FCC's good intentions are so often mitigated by unwise actions; so often, a wholly good conclusion is drawn from utterly erroneous or specious hypotheses.

To establish a basis for discussion of any move on the part of the Federal Communications Commission toward controlling the program content of radio, we should give some study to the background.

In the Senate hearings on a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 held in Washington in November and December of 1943, Chairman Fly of the FCC was called upon to testify. This is what transpired, from the official records of the hearing:

THE CHAIRMAN (Senator Wheeler) "Well, have you, or has the Radio Commission, anything in mind with reference to trying to tell the radio stations what should go out, or control their programs?"

MR. FLY: "We have not exercised a negative or affirmative control over any program or any proposed program. Never in history. We have never suggested that any program should be put on the air. We have never endorsed any program. We have never directly or indirectly suggested that it should be carried, and we have never disapproved one or required it should be taken off the air, or even suggested it should be taken off the air. So, in response to the question about program control, I would say that there is just nothing like that here, sir."

And here, at the same hearing, is another piece of testimony on the same subject:

SENATOR WHITE: "Now, what I want to get at: Do you assert the right to have a supervisory control of station programs?"

MR. FLY: "I made that explicitly clear yesterday and I want to make it as explicitly again today, lest I be misunderstood.

"The Commission has never suggested, either directly or indirectly, that any particular program be put on the air or any quality of program be put on the air, and the Commission has never disapproved of any program and the Commission has no plan or no intention of moving into the field of censorship and passing on the particular programs that are on the air. There is not the slightest scintilla of evidence to be found of that anywhere in the record."

So much for the history of FCC control of programs. We might add at this point that the almost-universal ob-

jection to the Commission's exercising such control is founded in sound logic. The objection to FCC control is based on the fear that an appointed body of seven men might dictate radio's programs, they might decide what people may hear; they might control a major medium of communication for their own selfish interests. Assuming, as we should, that the present personnel of the Federal Communications Commission represents a group of sincere, conscientious, public-spirited public servants, we must still recall that we have no guarantee that forevermore, the same caliber of men will hold these positions. And thus, to safeguard the nation against less desirable public servants at some time in the future, we must guard against establishing precedents that could wreck havoc with the nation.

To be sure, in this report the FCC makes frequent disclaimers of any intention of telling radio stations what their program schedules might be. But in the same breath they *do* tell them!

They take to task, and for good reason, a group of stations who have, on the face of the record the FCC draws, not operated in the public interest. But, as Representative Wigglesworth pointed out in Congress, if there have been offenders, then the Commission must share in the offense for not taking action against these offenders. Certainly, as Wigglesworth observed, the indicated course is not to punish the industry and not to set policies that are most dangerous to a democratic nation.

The Commission cites an instance of a station that had promised, in the contested hearing it won, to render an elaborate public service which promise they have utterly failed to keep. We made it a point to read that application. The principles in which this applicant professed to believe

and the conduct they promised to follow, were they granted a license, seem so utterly impractical and so entirely unfeasible economically, that we might conclude the FCC was remiss in not rejecting the application on the grounds that the applicants did not possess the necessary professional knowledge to properly run a radio station! In any event, this seems a poor time (three years after the application was granted) to start studying the applicant's original professions.

The Commission makes some other points that seem equally unreasonable.

They point out that the increase in profits from 1937 to 1944 was "attributable in considerable part to the fact that the industry has progressively retained a larger and larger proportion of each revenue dollar as profit and has spent a smaller and smaller proportion for serving the public." It sounds specious to us. The industry went through a revolution in these seven years. The average small-city station began to attract national advertising dollars; the networks expanded the number of outlets which they served so that the cost to the new outlets for rendering a superior network service was less than their previous cost of rendering an inferior transcribed service. The two smaller networks showed vast gains in business and their affiliates in the smaller communities began to profit from the network affiliation in terms of added revenue. Certainly, all these factors were "attributable in considerable part" to the increased profits to which the Commission points. And they might add up to the converse of the implication that as radio increased its profits, it decreased its public service.

The Commission makes the entirely valid point that the most immediately profitable way to run a station is to plug

into a network and "let it ride," interrupting the network only to make commercial announcements. But then, after making the point, it goes on to conclusions that seem to be arrived at from a rather dubious interpretation of fact. It says, "the record . . . shows that some stations are approaching perilously close to this extreme [riding the networks]. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to see how some stations can do otherwise with the minimal staffs currently employed in programming. For every three writers employed. . . there were four salesmen. And in terms of total compensation, the station paid \$3.30 for salesmen for every \$1.00 paid to writers. The comparable relationship for 415 local stations is even more unbalanced. The average local station employed less than one third of a full time musician and less than one sixth of a full time actor. Such figures suggest, particularly at the local station level, that few stations are adequately staffed to meet their responsibilities in serving the community."

It is quite possible that the FCC's case is confused by not properly understanding the terms of their own industry. We have a fairly well-founded suspicion that the "writers" to whom the report refers are not at all script writers but, instead, commercial continuity writers. And there is, in fact, a very good reason for the situation, which has nothing at all to do with the avarice of which they suspect station operators.

Let us assume that a station did have a staff of writers "particularly at the local station level" which we may assume would, in most cases, be in a fairly small community. Just what would they do? Prepare dramatic scripts? Then who would act in them? And who would prepare the musical backgrounds? Or does the Commission

assume either (a) that local radio listeners want to hear ham dramatics from amateur actors or that (b) the script writers should be employed to ghost-write the "ad lib comments" of local citizens who engage in the station's public forums?

As to musicians—shades of Caesar Petrillo! What service can a local musical group provide that would not be better provided by recordings of the world's great musical aggregations?

One of the most questionable of all of the report's conclusions is that which concerns itself with soap operas. It apparently accepts as its Bible, the Hooper reports on listening in telephone homes in thirty-two cities. But there is much doubt about the absolute values of telephone coincidentals, when they are projected to the nation.

It draws another dubious conclusion, too. Pointing out that NBC and CBS carry too many soap operas, the FCC Commissioners look down their noses at the sort of pap the listener must put up with. What they overlook is a completely valid point that listeners do enjoy free choice, that there are four networks and a great many independent stations, that two of the four networks and most of the independents carry no soap operas at all. So, how does the listener suffer? And shouldn't the 2,000,000 homes that *do* listen to soap operas be permitted to hear them?

They probably anticipated this question because they now display strange naivete. They add up all the watts enjoyed by NBC and CBS in thirty-two cities, compare them with the total wattage of ABC and Mutual in these cities and then say by implication, "you see, the networks that do not carry soap operas don't reach the people." But the fact that ABC and Mutual have many more sta-

tions than do the older networks has some bearing on the case, since a very large number of the nation's listeners do have the choice of listening to something other than soap operas. As a matter of fact, if we were to project the Hoopers to the nation, the number of listeners to non-soap opera programs on ABC would frequently exceed the soap-opera listeners on the other networks. And the current efforts of both CBS and NBC to copy the ABC daytime formula indicates that competition, rather than regulations, tends to straighten out the plethora of one type of program.

The Commission makes frequent reference to the assumption that good programs cannot obtain sponsors and that commercial influence on program content is a menace. They point to the *Columbia Workshop* as an example of a good non-sponsorable show. We might put it the other way. CBS kept shifting the time of broadcast of the *Workshop* so much that the listener found it difficult to know when it could be heard, from one week to another. And now that the *Workshop* has been revived, CBS puts it on Saturday afternoons. What reason is there to believe that, had the *Workshop* been given a desirable time period, had it been allowed to "stay put," that it could not have been sponsored? *America's Town Meeting* and the University of Chicago's *Human Adventure* were sponsored. The NBC Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the New York Philharmonic and the Detroit Symphony all enjoy sponsors. Yet, not one of these is as popular a type as dramatic programs. Moreover, if it were true that sponsors dictate the program content, then advertisers should not be permitted to sponsor news programs, for example. But it is again a statement that cannot be proved. In fact, the bulk of the evidence is to the contrary.

So much for the negative aspects of the report, as we see it.

Affirmatively, the report focuses a spotlight on a situation that, in some instances, deserves the notoriety that will accrue. The Commission, in outlining the operations of stations in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Toledo have pointed out abuses of the public trust that are to be condemned. And, in fact, it is most likely that the industry does condemn such operations.

The report also points out an industry-wide failure to devote adequate time, either with local or with network programs, to the very vital subject of our foreign policy. They likewise, with justice, condemn the stations of the country for their refusal to carry network sustainers that represent very important and very desirable public service efforts. We have attempted in this book to picture the role of the radio professional. We have hoped through these pages to instill in the minds of some readers the vision of radio as a public service. These instances which the report highlights make even more emphatic this need for a professional approach to radio station operation as distinguished from a purely commercial approach. But we doubt if a tradition can be established by law or by regulation. And we doubt, too, that the over-all value of legislating program control can, at best, equal the over-all danger of vesting such power in the hands of seven appointed officers of the government.

The regulations proposed in the report (which those who issued the report insist are *not* to be regulations) make the sort of confused errors that have been made before in Commission rulings. Great stress is laid on "sustaining programs," and it is with no small amount of insistence that

the report demands that more sustaining programs be carried.

But two aspects are overlooked. In the first place, a program does not necessarily have value simply because it is sustaining. As a matter of fact, the great majority of the sustaining programs on the Mutual and American networks are simply commercial programs that have not found a sponsor. There are a great many sponsored programs that have far more merit as public service efforts than many of the sustaining programs.

As for sustaining programs that are designed as non-commercial public service programs, still another aspect appears. A station cannot broadcast the network's sustainers if the network does not offer them. And when the Commission insists that these sustainers be broadcast at periods of high audience availability, they must be offered to the stations for broadcast during these periods. Yet, an examination of the four networks' schedules, Monday through Friday, reveals a paucity of such programs offered for broadcast during week days. (Or is this another effort on the part of the FCC to regulate networks through regulating the networks' affiliates?)

As to the problem of a station carrying too many commercials during the desirable operating hours, the Commission seems to assume that, since its Monopoly Regulations prohibited networks from optioning more than three hours in each segment of the day, neither networks sold nor advertisers bought more than these specified hours. Actually, on the two larger networks, desirable broadcast hours at night are fairly well sold out.

That poses a pretty problem. Can a station afford to

antagonize network, advertiser and agency by refusing a program in non-option hours? Has a station operator the right to refuse his listeners the opportunity of hearing good commercial programs, simply because they are outside option time? Will the listeners welcome a public service program of limited appeal as a substitute for an entertainment program, sponsored, of wide appeal?

We suggest no answers. We simply point out that the problem is not nearly so simple as the Commission seems to indicate. Nor is it entirely a question of greed for revenue or the lack of it.

Or the answer might lie in the Commission's re-examining its own panaceas, in the light of actual experience. Perhaps the Monopoly Regulations were not so wise; perhaps there might be another way to solve the problems which these regulations seem not to have solved. Or maybe the problems themselves were not quite what the Commission thought they were.

So much for that. Now to the specifics of this report, as they immediately and concretely affect station operation.

The old bugaboo about "mechanically reproduced programs" is gone. At long last, the Commission recognizes that recordings and transcriptions have virtue. So far so good!

The Commission proposes that there be professional radio critics, rendering a critical service of the type performed by *Variety*. No one ever disagreed with that and many have said it before. But it is nothing that either the radio station or the Communications Commission can do anything about.

The Commission likes listener councils.

The Commission looks to the institutions of higher learning to raise radio's standards and to develop radio professionals. We talked about that before in this book.

That about covers the things the Commission would like to see but can do nothing about.

We now come to the things it proposes to do something about.

For the seemingly specious reasons outlined before, the Commission has decided that the one standard by which it might determine whether a station is operated in the public interest is whether the station reports "a reasonable proportion of time devoted to sustaining programs." Its reasons are that these programs "serve a five-fold function in (a) maintaining an overall program balance, (b) providing time for programs inappropriate for sponsorship, (c) providing time for programs serving particular minority tastes and interests, (d) providing time for non-profit organizations, and (e) providing time for experiment and unfettered artistic self-expression. For these reasons, the Commission will also take note of network sustaining programs available to but not carried by a station, and of the programs which the station substitutes therefor".

The Commission has decided it has been wrong in its emphasis on live programs as being desirable simply because they are live. It adds, however, "nevertheless reasonable provision for local self-expression still remains an essential function of a station's operation and will continue to be so regarded by the Commission. In particular, public interest requires that such programs should not be crowded out of the best listening hours."

For the first time, the Commission recognizes that certain

types of communities have room and need for highly specialized types of radio services (such as the classical-record station and the popular-record station in New York). It asks applicants, however, to specify henceforth whether they will operate a general-appeal or a specialized-appeal station and, if the latter, to point out why in the applicant's opinion, there is need for such a specialized radio service.

The Commission believes that the carrying of discussion programs concerned with local, national and international subjects *in good listening hours* is a factor to be considered in any finding of public interest.

The Commission will scrutinize, in applications for new facilities and for renewals of licenses, the amount of time devoted to commercial announcements. (But in the same paragraph they point out that they have "no desire to concern ourselves with the length, content or irritating qualities of particular commercial plugs.")

In order to carry out these provisions, they have changed the forms for application and have more specifically identified types of programs (i.e. sustaining, commercial, recorded, public service, etc.).

Thus we sum up a potentially vital change in heart of the FCC.

They properly serve their function by now exercising greater control over station operation in the light of the law regarding the public interest, convenience and necessity that must be served by station operators.

Whether they have the right so specifically to control program content is another question. Whether they have either the moral or the legal right so specifically to catalog what is good programming in the public interest is some-

thing for the lawyers and the legislators to work out. Whether they give evidence of proper capacity for their jobs when they place their imprimatur on a document so full of errors, loose reasoning and faulty conclusions is still a third question.

And finally there remains the all-important question of whether higher radio standards can be legislated into existence.

With no knowledge of the *law* in the matter, we believe that the proper conduct for the FCC is to insist that stations *do* serve the public interest. It should be the duty of the station to demonstrate, in its renewal application, how it has served the public interest, each station using its own yardstick to measure its own performance. It is then the responsibility of the Commission to weigh the evidence. But it is not the function of the Commission, and it never should be its function, arbitrarily to supply the yardsticks. No such wisdom rests in *any* seven men. Nor can this nation assume that, forever more, any seven men can be entrusted with so grave a responsibility.

In our opinion, maturity and sharpening competition for listeners will achieve the purpose. The Commission does have and should have a policing function. Excesses such as this report points out should result in appropriate action against the offenders; it should not result in an unwarranted series of precedent-setting proposals that may do irreparable damage to the nation in the future.

It is a fitting last line, we think, to point out again that *intelligent* station operation usually proves to be synonymous with *successful* station operation. When overwhelming physical power brings success to an operator, it

behooves him all the more to exercise care and study in his operation. Lacking these uncommon virtues, it is just plain good business to run a good radio station. Come FM—when station coverage is equalized—the point will prove itself.

