

NEWCOMER'S FORUM

By Tony Bailey G3WPO

While not wishing to join the Class A versus Class B status controversy, I received some interesting correspondence from Ian Abel G3ZHI, concerning his quest for the introduction of a Novice Licence. Now, while not wishing to decry these efforts, I would seriously question the need for such a licence. Compared with the RAE in its original form, the existing multiple choice papers are not at all difficult to pass for anyone with a medium to serious interest in the hobby. You are not required to pass any form of practical exam (which is a shame judging by some of the stations one hears), or take the morse test, so acquiring a Class B licence is not particularly difficult. The fact that you then require the morse test to get on HF is something we are stuck with I am afraid.

The Home Office does not seem to think there is enough interest in a Novice Licence, reading the back correspondence, although the then Post Postmaster General did, in 1968, promise to introduce a form of Novice Licence very shortly. Taking into account the current RSGB negotiations with the Home Office regarding Class B licencees using Morse code on one or all of the VHF/UHF bands (as a means of self-training) I personally can't see a lot of benefit in a Novice Licence.

The HF bands are already extremely crowded and the position will not improve, so the addition of further stations engaged in very basic self-training will not help matters. I know we all have to start somewhere, but the overcrowded HF bands maybe deserve some consideration. At the risk of being labelled a spoil-sport etc. my own opinion is that in the interests of sanity, for HF, the existing Class A requirements should be the Novice Licence exam, and that a much stiffer theoretical, together with a practical exam of some sort should be introduced for the Full licence. Or in other words, a form of incentive licencing.

If a Novice Licence is introduced because of demand, then it should be for one or two bands only (say 80 and 20 metres), limited to a small segment of frequency bandwidth, and at a power not exceeding 25 watts input.

Whether or not the morse test is still needed is another subject. As I have said before passing the morse test does not demonstrate an inherent ability to use the HF bands correctly.

The Class B licence is a separate subject — everyone, when arguing about the limits placed on Class Bs forgets that the whole purpose of introducing this licence in the first place was to encourage the use of, and experimentation on, the VHF/UHF bands for those interested in these frequencies.

I agree that CW should be usable in some form under the Class B Licence, but please don't confuse the B licence with the A licence — they are intended for totally separate applications. If people remembered this then the arguments over the 'lower status' of the Bs would never have started — this argument is based on a totally erroneous interpretation of the purpose of the two Licences. Many G8/6s I know are far more technically competent than a lot of G3s I have come across (including myself).

If you do want to support a Novice Licence, then write to Ian at 52 Hollytree Avenue, Maltby, South Yorks. If you have any strong views on the subject then write to me c/o HRT.

