

WHY BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RADIO PROGRAMS ARE SUCCESSFUL

BROADCASTING in the British Isles is both consciously cultural and intelligently organized. If one has become used to the idea of radio as an agency of advertising and popular entertainment, he may have to change his point of view in order to appreciate British radio. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of Americans visiting England for the first time have criticized the BBC radio programs for their lack of variety and entertainment appeal.

Admitting that programs in the United States are often witty and high-spirited in the typical Broadway manner; that programs of real merit are frequently presented; that many splendid educational programs have been given which were paid for by foundations, educational and social organizations, various societies wishing publicity, advertising firms, and even by certain radio stations themselves; still the consistently planned, carefully-checked programs of the BBC have not been duplicated on a nationwide basis in the United States.

This inability of radio in our country to function nationally is due in part to the fact that education is a state and not a federal function, and in part to the size of the continent. However, if we get down to basic facts, we find that the chief cause of difference is due almost entirely to the type of control.

Our system is operated for profit and controlled chiefly by the great public utility companies owning the wire facilities of the country and selling equipment to sending stations and the receiving public. Instead of paying the government for the franchise, which has netted them millions, they have been charging huge fees for advertising, while our government spends \$872,000 annually to support a Federal Radio Commission whose principal duty is to settle disputes.

In Great Britain, the BBC is a corporation supported by a government tax on receiving sets. Out of approximately \$2.50 a year for each set, the BBC receives about ninety cents. The balance goes to the government.

In order to have a system of educational radio that will be highly successful, there must be cooperation with the press and a judicial use of printed matter; actors, musicians, authors, composers, and directors must participate; educators and parents must be a part of the scheme; and there should be governmental help rather than political confusion.

Let us compare the two systems—the English and the American—in order to see how these various elements function.

In the case of the press, there is out-and-out warfare in the United States since radio has become a competitor in the field of advertising and more recently in the dissemination of news. In England, the BBC publishes *The Listener*, *World Broadcasting*, the *Radio Times*, and special illustrated school pamphlets, containing a limited amount of advertising. These magazines and pamphlets print advance information about music, dramas, and talks. We have nothing similar in America. Our radio journals are either technical or fan magazines. There seems to have been no disposition in America to establish a magazine comparable to the *Radio Times*, which has two million subscribers. The reason is obvious. The character of most of our programs is such that intelligent informational notes would be superfluous.

All of us know of the disputes, arguments, and legal battles that have taken place in America with respect to the actors, artists, and authors. There is much less difficulty in England where certain more or less well-established fees are paid to all. In America, some paradoxical situations have developed. A crooner may get \$5000 weekly from an advertiser, while most of the educational programs are contributed "free" by performers. For example, the radio

director for the national YMCA has been getting the semi-volunteer salary of twenty-five dollars a week, although having had experience and superior training. The speakers, artists, and language teachers receive absolutely nothing in the way of remuneration. The commercial stations receive credit for putting on their quota of educational programs, which they can report to the Federal Radio Commission. At the same time, the YMCA is supposed to feel deeply grateful for the courtesy extended to them. This situation is duplicated many times in our system.

Let us next consider the question of co-operation among educators. Although many have consented to act in an advisory capacity, and many have contributed their services over the air, there is to be found in America a pretty general tendency on the part of school people to hold back. Either they are afraid that advertising will enter the schools or they cannot be persuaded to take seriously radio as a cultural agency. In England, on the other hand, there are a permanent central council, and regional councils made up of government officials, specialists, and classroom teachers.

The activities of the BBC are not hampered by political complications like those which have grown up in the United States. Various forms of political entanglements, much too numerous to mention, have been the direct result of the American method of control. One of the most important issues before the public today, and one in which the President is greatly interested, is that of government ownership of public utilities. In fifteen states local governments may legally own and operate their own public utilities. Probably no other phase of the "Power Trust" control has brought the issue more clearly before the public than has radio.

In England, it is possible for a permanent organization to exist. Programs are outlined by educational experts with informational notes prepared for teachers a year in advance. The educational directors are

prepared for their positions by thorough training and experience in the field of education, not in the field of advertising. In the course of years, the stability of the English system has enabled educators to experiment.

Any visitor at the BBC is forcibly impressed by the fact that there is a sincere desire to use radio as a cultural agency rather than a money-making institution. The same situation exists in practically every country in the world except the United States.

Alice Keith in *Education by Radio*

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK 1934

PROGRAM OUTLINE

THE fourteenth annual American Education Week will be observed November 5-11, 1934. The program will be built around the theme *Educating for Tomorrow*. The observance will be a step in the adaptation of education to the needs of a changing social order. The coming American Education Week programs will be sponsored as usual by the National Education Association, the United States Office of Education, and the American Legion. Other national organizations whose memberships total millions will cooperate. Each community will adapt the observance to its own needs. Topics suggested for the day-by-day programs follow:

Monday, November 5—*Planning for Tomorrow*. Let every community, every school, and every organization ask itself the question: "What kind of a life do we desire?"

Tuesday, Nov. 6—*Developing New Types of Schooling*. Discuss the adaptation of the regular school curriculum to the needs of changing social conditions. On this day give special attention to the Tercentenary Celebration in American High Schools.

Wednesday, Nov. 7—*Improving the Rural School*. Achievement of economic