

RADIO

May, 1937

200R  
Princeton Univ  
Radio study

This proposal deals with considerations that must be brought out into the open if broadcasting in this country is to be intelligently used in the interest of the general listening public. In principle, of course, broadcasting is a public service. Legally, the industry is given its franchise in return for the service it renders "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity." This conception of broadcasting is always taken for granted in proceedings before the FCC and in all the industry's public statements. Education quite logically bases its claim to radio time on this concept. In practice, however, quite another concept prevails - as broadcasters will readily admit privately: as they say, "After all, we're in business. When educators can provide programs that will get and hold listeners, we're not only ready to give them time but other help as well."

Thus in practice it has to be taken for granted that virtually all of the industry's activities are governed by commercial considerations. Of course the more progressive members of the industry are coming to feel that some measures of genuine public service are necessary as "insurance," as they put it. Thus we have the CBS, for example, making an explicit

public statement of its policy regarding programs that deal with controversial questions. But as yet, so far as I can ascertain, this trend is not reflected to any great extent in the industry's research.

In that, the industry is almost exclusively concerned with the listener as a prospective purchaser. The research divisions of the chains, for example, are so far as I know without exception organized to promote the sale of time. Administratively that are a part of the division of sales promotion. Actually, they undertake little research directly. Most of their effort is devoted to interpreting data obtained from outside research organizations - the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting, generally known as the Crosley Survey; the Clark-Hooper Survey; and other similar agencies. These agencies serve not only the industry but advertising agencies and advertisers as well. Their studies in effect are concerned only with members of the radio audience who are likely to buy products advertised by radio. Their inquiries, with few exceptions, are made by telephone and thus provide no data whatsoever on the approximately 13,000,000 radio homes which have no telephone service. (There are now in use approximately 11,000,000 home telephones, as contrasted with a total of 24,000,000 home radio sets

in use in the country.) They provide no data whatsoever on rural listeners.

It is thus fair to say that little is as yet known of the make-up, habits, or interests of the total radio audience. But obviously radio must take the total audience into account if it is to become a genuine public service. The present proposal, as I understand it, is the first step in arriving at a ~~genuine~~ sound knowledge of radio's audience as a whole. In contrast to present research it will from the outset take the entire audience into account, and it will study that audience/<sup>not</sup>in terms of what it buys, but rather in terms of its needs, interests, and capacities.

This difference can perhaps be illustrated by what this study will endeavor to discover about who listens in contrast to what the industry's research provides. So far as I can ascertain, the industry know who listens only in terms of the total number of sets in operation, broken down into broad socioeconomic groups in cities in the different time zones across the country. The present proposal, on the other hand, would attempt to find feasible ways of extending this information to include the age and sex of listeners, their vocations, their education, their avocational interests, and their cultural background. Clearly such information is essential if broadcasting is to be indepen-

dently planned to suit the needs, interests, and capacities of listeners. Existing data undoubtedly provides a certain basis for planning broadcasts that serve the purposes of advertisers. But if broadcasting is to have a broader public service -- informational, educational, or cultural, -- its planning must take into account such other considerations as these.

On the still more fundamental question of why listening takes place, the industry knows little or nothing beyond the outcomes of one specific study which showed, as would be expected, that it is the program which attracts rather than the ease with which a station is heard. But nothing is known of why programs attract. Here the present project would do pioneer work in opening up ways by which the basic interests of listeners could be determined -- interests occasioned by their personal ambitions, attitudes, repressions, environmental limitations, and, finally, individual responsibilities which they recognize as parents or citizens. Thus, in general, as the docket states, the project would attempt to explain what available data only describes, and that somewhat meagerly for the broader purposes of radio as an instrument of public service.



The docket alludes briefly to certain considerations which the industry believes prevent it from initiating a study of this kind. Commercially, radio has been built up as an instrument of mass appeal. Its research has thus been concerned with the radio audience in the mass: it has had little concern with the individual or with the groupings of individuals within the mass. Again, the industry has not cared to risk research on how listeners listen: any data which would suggest that listeners do not give complete attention to what is broadcast the industry feels would tend to weaken its position with advertisers. On the other hand, this is a factor which must be taken into account if broadcasting is to be planned realistically.

More important still in this respect, is the relation which has grown up between the industry and the advertising agencies on the one hand and between the agencies and buyers of time on the other hand. It is a fact that one of the national chains felt obliged deliberately to curtail its research to maintain good relations with the advertising agencies who acted as intermediaries of sponsors in the purchase of time. Data which the chain was collecting proved contrary to some of the contentions on

which the agencies were selling time. To maintain its profitable relations with the agencies, the chain's only choice was to give up the research.

With this the case, it may seem strange that this project has the support of influential representatives of the industry - and it may well be that some of them at least do not see clearly all that the project implies. But they are nonetheless ~~submitted~~ committed to it in a way which promises their cooperation as work proceeds. This can be briefly accounted for by the project's history.

Actually, the project is a part of a comprehensive program of research which is shortly to be sponsored by the FREC. This is a semi-official body made up of approximately 40 members representing the more important agencies in the industry and similar non-profit agencies concerned with broadcasting's public service. The comprehensive program of research referred to was originally worked out by sub-committees appointed for that purpose. Financing of this program was then discussed at an informal conference called by the FCC in January. The conference group included the presidents and other important ~~/~~ representatives of the ~~px~~ three principal broadcasting chains and the Executive Director of the National Association of

Broadcasters, representing the industry as a whole. The industry's representatives readily went on record that some research of this kind was desirable and needed, but that the proposed program was not sufficiently comprehensive for the purpose. The program was then referred to an informal committee of six whose members included three broadcasters: Willis of CBS, Royal of NBC, and Baldwin of the NAB; and three educators, Tyson of NACRE, Cantril of Princeton, and Charters of Ohio State. The more comprehensive program worked out by this small committee was discussed at a second conference in March and ~~finally~~ formally adopted. It was then agreed that the committee of six would shortly be made the executive committee of the FREC and that it should have the services of a competent executive secretary whose primary responsibility would be the coordination of the various projects included. As noted in the docket, it was also agreed that all findings should be released through this executive committee, though the agencies undertaking the various projects included will be quite independent in carrying on the necessary research.

The industry's commitment to this program is further indicated by its willingness to support certain of the projects included at an expense of

not less than \$80,000 during the next two years. In addition, the industry is underwriting the salary and office expenses of the executive secretary to the extent of \$15,000 annually during that two-year period. In view of the interest this program has for educators and non-profit groups concerned with broadcasting, funds for other of the projects are being asked of various foundations.

Support of the present proposal thus appears to be fundamental for advancing the interests recognized in Foundation program in radio. In the first place, such support would contribute substantially to the success of an enterprise - one of the first - in which educators and broadcasters are cooperating to advance for common interests. In the second place, support of this particular proposal should have the result of making clear for the first time some of the important implications of the public service concept of broadcasting to a degree that may well necessitate important changes in current broadcasting practice. In effect the purpose of the present proposal is to set a new style in radio research. As has been pointed out, the broadcasters do not at present feel that they can afford to initiate research of this kind for themselves. If the present



project succeeds, as I expect it will, in demonstrating the feasibility and significance of studying the actual and potential public service of radio to its total audience it will set a style which the broadcasters <sup>advertisers</sup> cannot afford to disregard. Individual ~~broadcasters~~ already sense the need. Individual advertisers are already challenging the suppositions on which present broadcasting practice rests. Clearly the time is ripe for study of this kind. Support of this project seems to me a strategic move for the Foundation to make at this time.

J M

May, 1937

## WHAT THE INDUSTRY KNOWS

(only what is regarded at present as commercial in implications)

### A. WHO LISTENS

Total Number in terms of (all this based on 32,000 personal interviews -  
1. income 8,000 each in Jan. April,  
2. size of city July, & Oct. These sam-  
3. time-zones plings in 120 cities -  
rural areas not included)

(Certain areas have been studied more intensively for specific commercial purposes: for these areas information exists but is not generally available that answers the question: Who Listens also in terms of age and sex. This work for the most part has been done by individual advertisers who at present are unwilling to make the results available either to the industry or even to their advertising agencies.)

## WHAT THE STUDY WILL CONTRIBUTE

### A. WHO LISTENS

Development of new techniques to supplement existing information in terms of

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Education
4. Occupation
5. Rural areas
6. Cultural background (regional groups; national groups; interests in terms of hopes, avocations, politics, religion.)

### B. WHEN LISTENING TAKES PLACE

Answers to this question come from three sources:

1. Crosley Survey (Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting): Telephone inquiries which by sampling show the size of the audience for every half hour during the broadcasting day in terms of sets in operation, time zones, city size. (This survey is confined to 33 cities which represents 19% of the total listening population - no rural areas included.) It asks: What programs did you listen to during certain specified hours.

2. Clark-Hooper Survey (Telephone inquiries), which shows audience size between the hours of 7 and 10 PM only, in terms of sets in operation. (This survey covers only 16 cities this side the Mississippi; no rural areas included.) It asks: What program are you now listening to?

### B. WHEN LISTENING TAKES PLACE

Same as A.

3. Starch Survey (For CBS) establishes size of listening audience in half-hour periods in terms of sets in operation, age, sex, size of city, time-zones. (Personal interview \*based on recall) This survey represents all population groups in the country over 2500 - thus no areas defined by the census as rural.

\*and recognition forms.

4. Individual companies undertake private surveys of programs they sponsor or test the value of time which they are thinking of purchasing.
5. There are also two surveys on the West Coast: The California Intelligence Bureau (Coincidental telephone): deals with the Los Angeles area; and Facts Consolidated (Personal interviewing recall): deals with five major markets on the West Coast in terms similar to Crosley Survey.

C. WHAT IS LISTENED TO

1. Crosley  
What people hear in terms of what they remember they hear.
2. Clark-Hooper  
What people are listening to during hours called (7-10 PM)
3. Facts Consolidated  
Same as Crosley
4. California Intelligence Bureau  
What people are listening to in the Los Angeles area during any period in the broadcasting day.

C. WHAT IS LISTENED TO

Same as A and B

D. HOW LISTENING TAKES PLACE

NO INFORMATION

D. HOW LISTENING TAKES PLACE

Development of new techniques to supplement existing information in terms of

1. Active and Passive (who, what, when, where)
2. What listeners do while listening (who, what, when, where)

E. WHERE LISTENING TAKES PLACE

1. In terms of home listening from sources noted above.
2. Crosley perhaps takes into account automobile listening to some extent.

E. WHERE LISTENING TAKES PLACE

1. School
2. Listening groups
3. Public places: lunch rooms; entertainment places; churches (South); political rallies.
4. Public conveyances.

F. WHY LISTENING TAKES PLACE

CBS Study in 8 cities: What favorite station is; reasons why:

1. Ease of reception
2. Favorite program

F. WHY LISTENING TAKES PLACE

From data above such motivating factors as:

1. Basic individual interest
2. Ambitions
3. Attitudes
4. Repressions
5. Capacities
6. Temperament
7. Responsibilities
8. Overcoming environmental handicaps  
limitations for social participation

G. EFFECTS OF LISTENING

1. In terms of sales
2. Circulation of books (limited)
3. Attendance at certain public events:  
movies; baseball games, etc.

(No systematic surveys; got by examination of records before and after broadcasts, etc.)

Possibilities:

Nelson's recording device: records of listening and purchases

Psychological Corp.: Brand Barometer

Crosley; Consumers Index (same as above)

Neilson Company: Dealer Index

G. EFFECTS OF LISTENING

On

1. Attitudes
2. Conduct
3. Information
4. New interests and desires