

Washington Digest

Radio Fills Economic, Social Needs of Farm

Programs Keep Listeners Up on Latest Doings
And Aid Work, Marketing; Music,
Plays Welcome Diversion.

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When farm folk want to cut a rug, via the radio, they'll do it to the strains of "Turkey in the Straw," not "Chickery Chick." Farmers turn a cold shoulder on hot jive. However, both the musical gobble and the syncopated hen play second fiddle as farm radio favorites to the good old-fashioned hymns, like "Rock of Ages," and "Onward, Christian Soldiers." But, down on the farm, the all-time top favorite on the radio hit parade is NEWS. The farmer and his wife prefer the news broadcast to any other type of radio program.

These interesting preferences were brought to light recently by a survey published by the department of agriculture—a survey undertaken at the request of the Federal Communications commission to find out if radio was important to rural people, and why; and what programs rural people tuned in to, and tuned out in despair.

Rural people are convinced radio is here to stay. When asked if he would miss his radio set, should something happen to it, nearly every rural radio owner said something like this:

"It would make an awful difference. It would be just like going back to old-fashioned lights."

"We need the radio very much—we have a mile of bad road between the house and the mailbox, and sometimes get the mail only once a week."

"That would be terrible! It'd be just like having a corpse in the house!"

Of course there were dissenters. There always are. And the dissenters weren't backward about expressing their unflattering opinions of radio.

For example: "If it weren't for my family, I'd throw the radio out. It wouldn't bother me a bit."

"Makes no difference whatsoever. All you hear is junk and commercials and murder mystery."

3 to 1

For Radio!

But the radio enthusiasts among farmers vastly outnumber the gripers. It's radio three to one as they say in a certain radio commercial. Three out of every four rural radio owners attach a great deal of importance to their radios . . . and only one in eight wouldn't care if Junior took the thing apart and never got it together again.

It appears, from this survey, that radio performs a special service for rural people who may live some distance from town and amusements, or even from the nearest neighbor, and who may often be without access to daily newspapers or telephones.

Rural people have four very definite reasons to explain why radio is important to them: 1. it's a source of news; 2. a source of information, other than news; 3. it provides entertainment; and 4. it's become a habit to listen to the darn thing.

Their comments are illustrative:

"We would feel terribly isolated without the news."

"Wouldn't know how the occupation in Germany is coming. I have a son over there, and I want to know what's happening."

"You get the news quicker on the radio."

"I don't have much time to read the papers or magazines."

Commentators, it appears, are the apple of the farmer's eye. Farm audiences are proved by this survey to be faithful to and enthusiastic about news broadcasts and news broadcasts. As we mentioned earlier, the radio announcement, "We now bring you the news," makes farmers sit up and take notice. Rural radio listeners rate news tops as their favorite program, and also say it's the type of program they'd miss most.

Next comes religious music. Rural listeners, especially in the South, could use more of it, and more radio sermons, too. The reason may be that religious broadcasts provide a substitute for attending church for some inconveniently located farmers.

Old-time musical programs are the farmer's favorite kind of radio entertainment. He eschews "long-hair" music. . . . opera and classical, saying frankly in many cases that he doesn't understand it. And he turns thumbs down on swing-and-foxy dance music and the current juke box favorites. In the South where this dislike of dance music is most pronounced, it doesn't matter whether the person questioned is a portly Kentucky colonel, or a teen-age southern belle. They'll take the old-time tunes any day of the week.

The weather once again proves its durability as a conversational topic—even on the radio. Naturally, weather reports are "must" listening on the farm.

It's the same way with farm talks and market reports. Commodity reports are about as fascinating to city folk as a lecture on relativity, but the farmer says he finds them a definite and practical help in selling his products. In this respect—by giving him weather reports, farm talks, and market data, radio becomes a sort of junior partner, advisory capacity, in the farmer's business.

There's Room
For Improvement

Having read this far in the survey, radio executives might be inclined to pat themselves on the back and figure they've done a good day's work. They've "sold" the farmer, haven't they? He likes what they've got to offer, doesn't he? Seems to them the farmer has given radio an A-plus, or in radio parlance, "a Fibber McGee Hooper rating."

We-ell, not exactly. There are some radio programs some farmers don't like, and serial stories are one of them. It is surprising what a hearty dislike 25 per cent of the farmers (AND their wives) express for some of the so-called "soap operas," which city folk seem to adore.

There is no other type of program toward which there is such divided feeling among rural radio owners as the serial program or soap opera. While one-fourth of the rural listeners say they dislike serials, calling them "foolish" or "silly," many of these same people (particularly the women listeners) say they'd miss the hero and his matrimonial mishaps or the heroine and her troubles. It seems that although, in many instances, the listeners don't enjoy or aren't entertained by these programs, they've become used to listening to one or another, and they feel they just have to find out what's going to happen next.

It's interesting to note, too, that the people who dislike serials value radio more for the specific information they get from it, and depend less on it for "company" . . . or to "keep from getting lonely." Also, the critical ones who turn up their noses at the serial story tend to be somewhat older and to have had more education than those who like soap operas.

Most farmers shy away from the up-and-coming radio mystery-meller-drammer. They dislike finding corpses in their own living rooms, so to speak, and being forced to sit through harrowing screams, creaking doors, booming ows, and the spooky collection of sound effects which is apt to accompany microphone mayhem. Some farmers, explaining why they dislike such programs, say it's because of moral, not morale, reasons.

As is usually the case, the survey revealed more likes and dislikes than suggestions. Not even the ones who don't care much for radio at all had any ideas on how to improve the programs. More than half the rural people who have radios cannot think of any type of program they'd like to hear more of than the ones they listen to . . . and when suggestions are offered, they are scattered over such a wide field, it's hard to put a finger on any one type of program which is being neglected. In other words, there don't seem to be any important specific discrepancies between what the rural listener wants and needs . . . and what he's getting.

BARBS . . . by Baukhage

Is Germany really changing heart? I don't know but I know they have had to change one thing, their daily beer. There is no beer for Germans today.

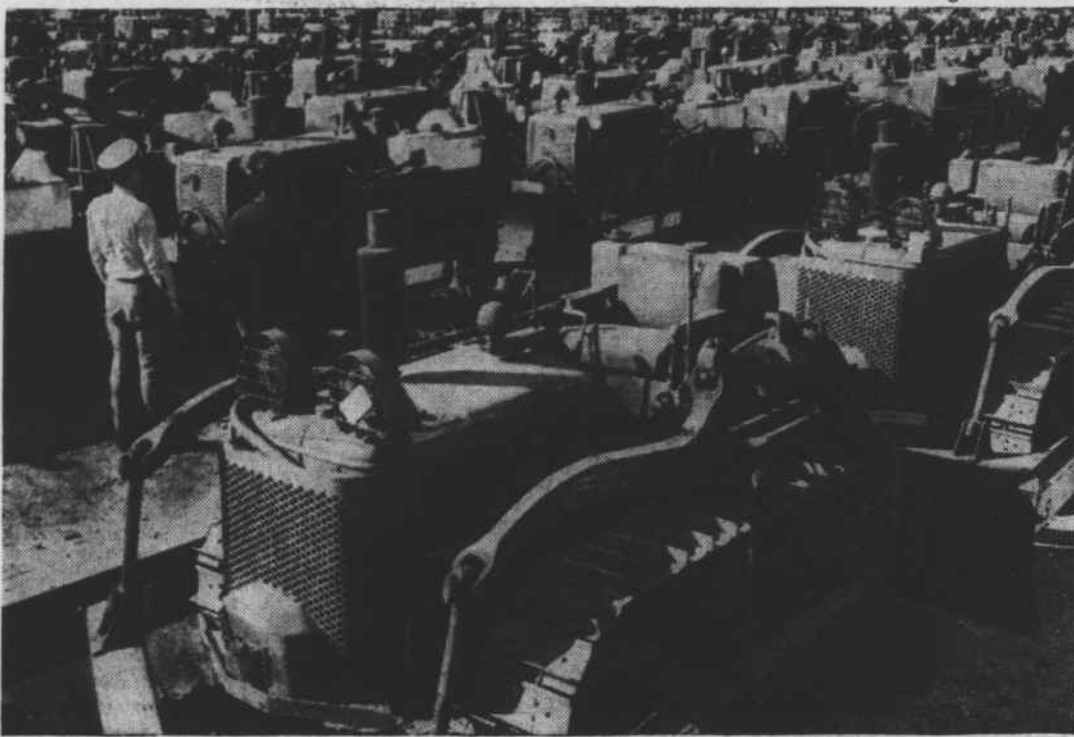
The Twentieth Century Fund says it costs as much to raise a child and put him through college as it does to buy a house—but children are easier to find these days.

The plight of many Americans today is that they can't get a car for their spare parts.

Congress seems ready to send the homes-for-veterans bill to the floor with no ceilings on the homes. The administration thinks this will mean veterans may have roofs to stop precipitation, but not inflation.



UNITED STATES DELEGATES TO UNO RETURN . . . Arriving at LaGuardia field, New York, the American delegation to the United Nations organization expressed high hopes for the organization when it next meets in the United States. Left to right as they leave the UNO Clipper are Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Edward Stettinius, head of the delegation, John F. Dulles, New York international financial advisor, and Sen. John Townsend. They all seem encouraged by progress made at the first meeting.



NATION'S BIGGEST SURPLUS GOODS SALE . . . Square miles of surplus war goods, ranging from spoils of thread to giant road scrapers and derricks, are being readied at the Port Hueneme navy depot, California, for what will probably be the biggest surplus goods sale in the nation. Shown in photograph are some of the tractors which will be sold to the civilian market. Only one kind of goods will be offered for sale in one day.



JAPANESE SILK TO THE RESCUE . . . The drastic nylon hose shortage in the U. S. may soon be remedied, in part, by the shipment of silk or silk hose from Japan. Photograph shows plant at Mimata village, as manager checks the stacks of "books" of raw silk awaiting shipment.



INVESTIGATE ESPIONAGE . . . Justice R. Taschereau, left, and Justice R. L. Kellock, right, members of the Supreme court of Canada, who have been appointed by the dominion government to act as members of a commission to hear evidence on the espionage ring that disclosed wartime secrets to a foreign mission in Ottawa. United States officials have stated that material information on the atomic bomb could not have been revealed.



LONESOME G.I. . . . As the first snowfall of the year hits the dismal city of Tokyo, this U. S. soldier, far from home, with no knowledge of the language, looks like he would rather be some other place.



CHINA'S BEST FRIEND . . . Often referred to as China's best friend, Lt. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer has been active as chief of staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and factor in industrial development of China.



WALLGREN AND LUMBER

WASHINGTON. — Lumber price ceilings topped the agenda of the President's conference the other day with his old friend Gov. Mon Wallgren at Washington.

However, Wallgren also took occasion to invite Truman to spend a vacation this summer in the north-west aboard the presidential yacht.

"The people of my state would be delighted to have you as a guest, and you can also take a trip up to Alaska on the Williamsburg," Wallgren told him.

Truman accepted tentatively, saying he would go if he could possibly make it.

Wallgren's main business, however, was to strongly urge an increase in the price ceilings on lumber. He maintained that this was necessary in order to increase lumber output for the housing program.

"We are facing a serious job crisis in our lumber mills, Harry," said the Washington governor. "We have a model unemployment compensation law in my state, but many unemployed workmen are swiftly using up the 26 weeks they are entitled to draw as compensation. Both from the labor standpoint and the housing shortage, inventories in our mills must be built up as quickly as possible."

IDLE WAR PLANTS

Governor Wallgren also urged the sale of government-owned light metal plants, now idle in his area, to private operators as another means of increasing employment. Two idle plants in question are the Aluminum Rolling mill and the Aluminum Ingot companies at Spokane, operated by Alcoa during the war. Henry Kaiser wants to buy the former for the production of aluminum-built automobiles and prefabricated housing.

Wallgren told Truman that the lumber situation has been aggravated by a neat little device of certain big timber outfits, including the Weyerhaeuser interests, which, calculatedly or otherwise, has been stifling competition. Under the Washington constitution, the state government must sell timber to the highest bidder, but some big outfits have been bidding over the price ceilings. This causes all bids to be thrown out.

The President said he would talk to the RFC about the plants, but suggested that Wallgren thrash out his lumber price problems with price control boss Chester Bowles.

BUTTER BLACK MARKET

The office of international trade, now under the commerce department, is planning to ask U. S. customs officials to investigate some strange shenanigans in the re-sale of butter this country has been exporting to Mexico.

Despite the serious butter shortage, which has caused the American housewife to turn to substitutes and jam for her table, we sent 5,500 pounds of butter to Mexico in the last quarter of 1945.

Some of this is now winding up at Tijuana, the Mexican resort town across the border from San Diego, where the butter is being sold to American tourists for the fabulous price of \$1.25 a pound.

Under export price ceilings, enforced by the OPA and the department of commerce, this same butter was sold to Mexican dealers at from 47 to 49 cents a pound. The price varies a couple of cents a pound, depending on the type of packaging.

In other words, we are now buying back American-made butter from Mexico for triple the price Mexican dairy dealers are paying us for it. Commerce department officials can only guess how much smuggled butter may be involved in this cross-border black market, but the customs office will be asked to make a thorough probe.

NOTE—Mexico is also one of our biggest purchasers of exported nylon stockings. Out of a total of 9,110 dozen pairs of nylons exported in November—the last monthly figures available—Mexico bought 5,010 dozen pairs. Cuba received 2,603 dozen pairs.

CAPITAL CHAFF

One reason for the current international food shortage is that Leo Crowley, when FEA boss, refused to heed the warning of Secretary of Agriculture Anderson last summer, when Anderson argued that FEA should help increase plantings of winter wheat, cereals and proteins in South America. The South American crop was hit by drouth, or it might have been larger.

Sen. Tommy Hart, the only admiral on the senate military affairs committee, recently asked committee members if there were a dictaphone in the walls. He complained that the Washington Merry-Go-Round had quoted him all too accurately when, at a secret session, he defended the war department regarding demobilization. . . . Rep. Clare Hoffman of Michigan, who considers himself an expert at anti-labor legislation, was miffed because he was not consulted in the writing of the harsh Case bill passed by the house recently.



That Settles It
"Was I going west or north when I met you?" asked the absent-minded professor.
"North," answered his friend.
"Good! Then I've already been to lunch!"

One difficulty about abolishing unemployment altogether is that you'll always have some men looking for work where they know they can't find it.

Full Use!

Mrs. Green bought a sundial and had it erected in her garden. She called in the builder and instructed him to move it to a more suitable place.

"Where would you like me to put it?" asked the builder.

"Under the electric lamp in the porch," she replied. "We shall then be able to see the time when it is dark."

What Then?

A film star met a producer on a Hollywood boulevard.

"How's business?" asked the star.

"Why," cried the producer, "it's stupendous, it's colossal, it's dynamic, it's unprecedented . . . it'll be better next week."

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