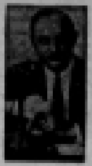
Washington Digest

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 "Chattanooga Choo Choo." Farmers turn a cold shoulder on hot jive. However, both the musical gobbler and the syncopated [illegible] play second fiddle on farm radio [illegible] to the good old-fashioned hymns, like "Rock of Ages," and "Onward, Christian Soldiers." But, down on the farm, the [illegible] favorite on the radio [illegible] 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 in hope, 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 opinion 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 whatever. 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 community, 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 commentators. 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, would use more of it, and more radio sermons, too. The reason may be that religious broadcasts provide a substitute for attending church for some isolated, remotely 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-jazz 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 [illegible], 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."

Well, 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 40 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 manifold 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 opera.

Most farmers shy away from the up-and-coming radio mystery thriller-dramas. They dislike finding corpses in their own living rooms, so to speak, and being forced to sit through harrowing screams, creaking doors, howling owls, and the spooky collection of sound effects which is apt to accompany microphonic 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. But even the ones who don't care much for radio at all had [illegible] 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 [illegible] bill to the floor with no ceilings on the bonus. The administration thinks this will [illegible] may have [illegible] 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. [illegible]. 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 spools 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 in 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 [illegible] village, as manager checks the stocks of "bogie" of raw silk awaiting shipment.

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.

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 would not have been revealed.

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 for his part in industrial development of China.

JUST JESTING

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.

Fall Guy!

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. "It's [illegible] to 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."

Classified Department

HOME FURNISHINGS & APPLI.

[illegible]

You Can Be a Partner
Buy U. S. Savings Bonds!

HIGH ENERGY TONIC helps build RESISTANCE TO COLDS

[illegible]

SCOTT'S EMULSION
YEAR-ROUND TONIC

SALES PEOPLE—TEN SALES net you $16.50

[illegible]

NR TO-NIGHT
TOMORROW ALRIGHT
ALL-VEGETABLE LAXATIVE
Nature's Remedy
GET A 25¢ BOX

Here's One Of The Greatest
BLOOD-IRON TONICS YOU CAN BUY
If you lack BLOOD-IRON!

[illegible]

Black Leaf 40
KILLS LICE
[illegible]
OR SPREAD ON ROOSTS

USE 666
COLD PREPARATIONS
LIQUID, TABLETS, SALVE, NOSE DROPS
CAUTION—USE ONLY AS DIRECTED

FEEL OLD? BACK ACHE?
SORETONE
brings quick relief for muscle pains
[illegible]
50¢ and $1.00
[illegible]

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