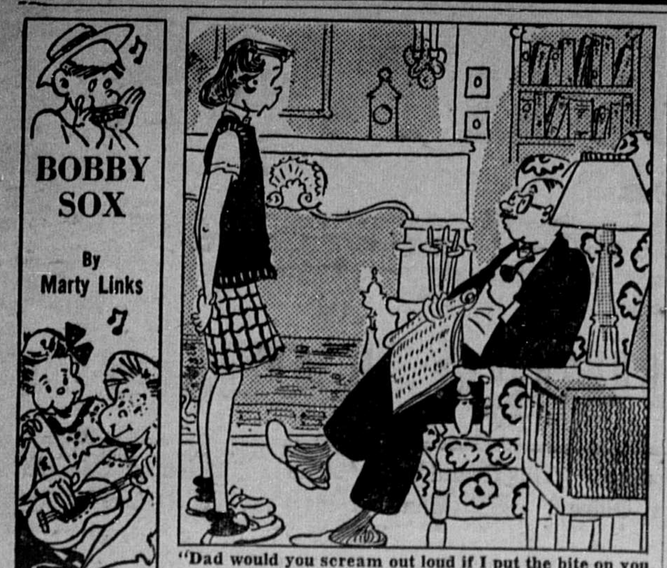
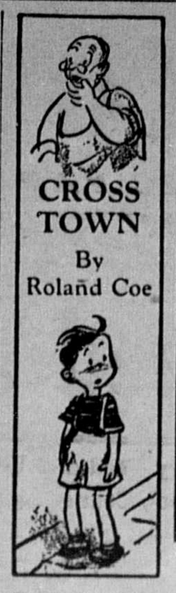


"Dad would you scream out loud if I put the bite on you for a fast sawbuck?"



"Well, I got your money back—but not with a smile, as advertised!"

NANCY — By Ernie Bushmiller

MUTT AND JEFF — By Bud Fisher

LITTLE REGGIE — By Margarita

JITTER — By Arthur Pointer

REG'LAR FELLERS — By Gene Byrnes

VIRGIL — By Len Kleis

SILENT SAM — By Jeff Hayes

WNU Washington Bureau, 1616 Eye St., N. W.

Poor Radio Programs Irk Rural Listeners

FARM organizations here are up in arms against radio stations and the radio networks because they believe rural listeners are being discriminated against in allocation of time and the type of programs beamed to farm audiences.

Through four days of hearings before the Federal Communications commission representatives of the National Grange, the National Farmers Union and the National Council of Farmer Co-operatives laid their grievances on the table in an effort to induce the FCC to demand more adequate farm programs broadcast at a time when farm and rural folks can listen.

The contention was (1) that the stations and networks are not allocating sufficient time to farm programs; (2) that programs now being broadcast are not of high caliber or interest to agriculture; (3) that time of broadcast makes it inconvenient or impossible for rural folks to listen; (4) that 21 million rural listeners are shut off at night from primary radio service and must be content with relatively inferior secondary service, and 10 million rural folks live outside the daytime service area of any standard broadcast station; and (5) due to new allocations many radio stations of land grant universities have been cut off the air by clear channel stations at times when farmers can listen.

The department of agriculture was represented at the hearing by John Baker, chief of the radio service of USDA, and M. L. Wilson, agriculture extension director. The farm leaders were outspoken in their disappointment at Baker's testimony in the belief he did not back them up, although they maintain Agriculture Secretary Anderson was interested in presenting a "strong case" in behalf of his department.

'Farm, Home Hour' Dropped

Farm leaders point to the loss of the National Farm and Home Hour. For many months this ran as a 60-minute, six-days-a-week show during the noon hour in which the department of agriculture and farm organizations participated. They say that the show has now deteriorated into a five-minute Saturday presentation sponsored by a farm machinery manufacturer. Farm leaders contend that if the radio broadcasters were sympathetic to the more than 50 million rural listeners they would allocate more and better time and would program shows of special interest to farm audiences.

Many clear channel stations and the networks were represented at the hearing by their lawyers. While they presented no evidence, they did cross-examine the witnesses for the farm organizations, which included Russell Smith of the Farmers Union, C. Maurice Wieting of the Co-operatives, and Louis Wilson of the Grange.

Paul Porter, chairman of the Federal Communications commission, in an address before the National Association of Broadcasters last March, shortly after he assumed chairmanship of the commission, pointed out the "intolerable situation" in which rural listeners found themselves due to lack of good radio service. This statement indicated that he might do something about the allocation of new wave lengths.

Special Programs Needed

However, the farmers maintain that nothing has been done to correct the situation and they have lost much of the time that was formerly allocated to farm programs. They maintain that farm and rural listeners have a special need for programs tailored to the interests of agriculture.

Mr. Porter, in his address before the broadcasters, pointed out the very facts testified to by the farm leaders, that 38.5 per cent of the area of continental United States inhabited by 10 million rural folk lies outside the daytime service area of any standard broadcast station, and that at night almost 57 per cent of the area populated by 21 million folks must rely on inferior service.

"This is an intolerable situation for a country with our great resources and technical capacity. The condition is particularly aggravated when you consider that the millions who have no service or only inferior service are precisely those isolated rural families which must rely on radio for their contact with the outside world," Mr. Porter said.

It's Up to Stations, Networks

The FCC has regulatory power over the radio stations and networks, not only over power and wave length, but over the type of broadcasts presented, hence the petition of the farm organizations before this commission. It would appear to your Home Town Reporter that with an audience of millions of rural listeners the radio industry would police itself with regard to the proper timing and presentation of interesting agricultural programs. No doubt they have a side in the matter.

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