

Advertising to Sponsor Wireless

No Licenses for America

In view of the fact that at the present time a suggestion is afoot that advertising on the air should be introduced to permit "B" stations to operate profitably to themselves, the following article in an English magazine, by A. J. Preston, is of no small interest.

receive their broadcast programmes free, gratis, and for nothing.

Advertising Cost.

THE American listener does not pay 2.50 dol. to the broadcasting authorities or to the Government for the provision of programmes, nor does he pay a tax on his receiving set. He pays by his response to the indirect advertising

of American industries. The majority of the programmes are supplied by manufacturers who have added this means of publicity to their ordinary newspaper advertising. These programmes, with which the names of the manufacturers and their products are coupled, create goodwill among the radio audience. Some firms spend as much as 300,000 dol. in a year on their weekly hour of radio entertainment, and the money so spent is charged to their advertising account.

Sponsors of broadcast programmes in America include manufacturers of all kinds of merchandise, principally articles of everyday use—soap, motor-cars, batteries, baking powder, chewing gum, and the like. It is possible that there may be some listeners who do not purchase these articles. They are the only listeners who get their broadcasting free; the rest, by buying the products advertised, pay for the advertisement.

How the Listener Pays.

TO give you some idea of the vast proportions of American broadcasting, let me quote a few figures. The National Broadcasting Company alone has this year sold to advertisers programme hours to the value of fifty million dollars. This time is only a small percentage of the total transmission hours of forty-eight stations.

There are 693 stations "on the air" every evening in the U.S.A. It is plain that the American listener pays more than his English brother, the total receipts from whose licenses do not total much more than 5,000,000 dollars per annum.

It must be remarked also that, in addition to paying for "space" on the ether, the American advertiser must provide his own artists, orchestras, etc. Many millions of dollars are spent on their fees. All this money spent in advertising must of necessity govern the price of products advertised. The listener, in fact, pays.

It is, however, true, that the American listener gets a greater choice of programmes for his money. Yet in this case also he pays. The average receiver in use over there has not less than five valves, and thus, wherever situated, should bring in several stations. There is no dignity of poverty in the States; a man must compete with his neighbours; he must have the latest model, whether of motor-car or radio set. Why, he argues, should he do without either when both can be had on the "deferred payment" system? If his neighbour buys an "eight-tube" receiver Babbitt must do the same. This spirit of emulation, whether you admire it or not, makes for a prosperous radio and automobile trade.

Whether the American listener gets better value for his money in actual quality of programme is a ques-

tion of personal taste. There is one fallacy regarding American programmes which I should like to explode—that they contain much material which directly advertises goods on the market. This is not now the case.

Subtlety in Advertising.

RADIO advertising, like newspaper advertising, has increased greatly in subtlety. The old days of "Buy more so and so!" are past. An advertiser sponsoring a programme realises that to try the patience of the listener with continuous eulogistic description of his commodity would be to imperil the goodwill built up by such heavy expenditure. He cannot risk offending his prospective customer or driving him to seek refuge on some other of the many available wavelengths. Today he is content, in most cases, with a simple announcement at the beginning and end of the programme that "this concert is provided by the makers of so-and-so."

The Case of D.A.

TO what a pitch this subtlety in advertising, this desire not to intrude offensively upon the susceptibilities of the listener, has been carried can be judged from the following instance. The makers of a toilet requisite named "DA—" contracted to use a chain of stations for one hour per week for thirteen weeks. Neither their name nor that of their product was mentioned during the series.

At the conclusion of the first programme the announcer requested those of the audience who were interested in the concert and curious as to the sponsor of it, to remember the letter D, and listen the following week at the same hour for the second letter. At the end of the second broadcast the letter A was mentioned, and so on until the last letter of the product had been broadcast and the word "DA—" spelled out. Listeners then knew to whom they were indebted for the programmes. Thus by means of thirteen broadcasts the name of the preparation was firmly stamped on the minds of listeners who had had the patience and interest to follow the whole series of concerts.

This was "good advertising," but it cost money. Though the price of "DA—" may not have been increased, the day of its reduction had been postponed by the expenditure of so much money. The listener had paid.



It is always surprising to me that so many British listeners seem to resent the enforced annual payment of 10s. for a license. Those who do not take exception to the actual license are as particular about the fare which they receive in return for it as if the sum had been not 10s., but £10. "Look at the United States!" said one listener to me, the other day. "American listeners have an enormous choice of programmes, for which they do not have to pay a penny!" It so happened that, following a recent tour of the U.S.A., I was in a position to correct the common fallacy that listeners "over there"

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THERE is no waste space inside the Columbia Layerbilt "B" Battery. Every available inch is occupied by useful elements... flat layers of current-producing materials that make it by far the longest lasting, most powerful of all heavy-duty batteries.

The Columbia Layerbilt outlasts twice over any other battery of similar size made of round cells. It produces far more power and insures greater clarity, volume and distance than does any other battery.

Columbia Batteries add greatly to the pleasure of radio. In the end they are far more economical than any others.

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