

PATHFINDER

DIGEST OF WORLD AFFAIRS

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Radio Here and Abroad

With Advertising Generally Absent from European Broadcasts Receiving Sets are Taxed, Not Listener's Patience



American listeners-in are apt to take their radio programs for granted. There is no charge and by a simple "twist of the wrist" one may tune from program to program, to satisfy individual requirements and taste. So many stations are on the air at one time that it is possible to pick anything from Hill Billies to Symphonies, or Eddie Cantor to President Hoover.

It is estimated that 17,000,000 homes in this country are provided with receiving sets, representing an investment within the last 15 years of some \$1,600,000,000. And as there are only about 35,000,000 receiving sets in all the 75 countries broadcasting, and radio licensing nations collect about \$65,000,000 a year from set owners, you son of Uncle Sam can see that you are getting the value out of your radio. even if you did buy during the era of sky prices.

Listeners' license fees abroad average about 25 cents per month. They are usually collected by postmen, the broadcasting being under the supervision of the postal administration. Penalties for nonpayment of fees vary. In some cases the entire amount collected is turned over to the broadcasting stations; in others a percentage is retained for administrative expenses. In France, Holland and Iceland one has to obtain a permit to possess a receiving set, but no fees are collected.

But while American radio programs are dished out without charge they are usually more or less tainted with extravagant advertising claims. In Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Holland, Russia, Switzerland and Sweden advertising via the invisible waves is not permitted. In most other countries it is allowed but not encouraged. There is no radio advertising in Great Britain. In Germany and Norway it is permitted only during certain periods of the day. European broadcasting conditions may be far from ideal, as has often been asserted, but steady improvement in both broadcasting and programs is apparent year by year.

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A recent study of broadcasting programs of 15 European countries for a period of three months, by the International Broadcasting Office at Geneva, shows their average composition as follows: Music and musical entertainments, 44.3 per cent; literature, 5.4; talks, 10.5; criticism and news, 12.7; religious transmissions, 3.65; miscellaneous, 25.1.

Educational broadcasting is growing in popularity in Europe and is being extended into the afternoon school hours. Well known speakers are now talking to students on subjects related with their school work. In Great Britain consultative committees have been formed to aid speakers and school authorities to collaborate. Listeners' "groups" among adults follow up educational broadcasts with discussions and debates. They also "go places," such as museums, art galleries, etc., to check up. In Germany a government official goes on the air for one half hour each day to inform the public of its aims and intentions.

In Russia radio has developed to a remarkable degree during the past few years, observes Albert Coates, famous orchestra leader, on his return to America after conducting large symphony orchestras over the radio in Russia. Some of the most beautiful buildings in Moscow house the latest modern equipped broadcasting stations. A government ban on jazz prevents broadcasting of American jazz or "hot" music, but symphony programs are common, on some stations running as long as four hours a day and the finest orchestras participate. Also, instead of the dramatic skits and comedy presentations so popular in America the Russian air vibrates with talks by government officials and authorities on a wide variety of subjects. But while American stations broadcast as continuously as 18 hours a day, Russian stations are off the ether for at least two hours around dinner time, and their broadcasting periods don't run nearly as long as American.

But "commercial America," with more than 600 of the world's 1,400 radio stations, seems so far to have gotten the most dough out of radio. This business now contributes about \$500,000,000 a year to the nation's wealth. Some \$350,000,000 of this goes for station operating expenses and \$40,000,000 for entertainers. The peak year for sale of radio equipment was 1929 when \$843,000,000 changed pockets. Since then the depression and reduced prices!