



CAMPAIGN for INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING

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Formerly-National Commercial Radio Movement

Second Memorandum on Independent Broadcasting in the United Kingdom

Foreword

The Campaign for Independent Broadcasting is a listeners' organisation and has studied sound broadcasting in depth. The conclusions of this and an earlier memorandum published in July 1970 have taken into account the listeners' viewpoint, the operating viability including inter-station competition and the effect on existing media and artists and performers.

The feasibility of the conclusions presented in our first memorandum in favour of commercial radio using V.H.F. and operating in small regional units with overlapping coverages have been further justified by the following factors:

The second generation of B.B.C. "local" in reality area radio stations now coming into operation is developing listener interest from wide areas outside the station's normal operating area. Re-inforcing our belief that separate programming on V.H.F. will produce even wider public acceptance of this medium, London stores named in promotional campaigns by B.B.C. Radio London are reporting strong interest in V.H.F. receivers. One major store reports an 80 per cent factor of customers buying V.H.F. Another shop is re-structuring its buying pattern in view of the trend. A third store offers good performance receivers at a price of nine guineas. Reception of B.B.C. Radio London in these highly screened steel-framed buildings varies from good to excellent. The results of transmitter polarisation experiments published by the B.B.C. in August show that 45 degree slant polarisation provides a significant increase in signal strength when using vertical car aerials and portable receivers, without causing serious reduction in signal strength where external horizontally polarised aerials are already in use.

The expansion of broadcasting using V.H.F. is in the National interest bearing in mind that in the near future an International frequency conference may well necessitate some sweeping changes in frequency/service patterns, and therefore the separation of national V.H.F./medium frequency services already operated by the B.B.C. will be necessary. The Administrative Radio Conference, Geneva, 1959, recommendation No. 15 states:

that the members and Associate Members of the Union should consider the possibility of using frequency modulated transmissions in the Band 8 for their national services.

Recommendation No. 14 states:

that at the next Administrative Radio Conference, administrations of Region 1 consider the possibility of proposing a new allocation to services in the band 100-108 Mhz, with special reference to the needs of the broadcasting service.

One of the key factors in determining the success of new sources of broadcasting will be needle time agreements. It is here that regional broadcasting can be a major factor in negotiation with musicians and record interests. The Musicians Union have rejected a straight increase in payments for further playing of records. We believe that this potential deadlock can be resolved by regional stations giving direct employment in originating pre-taped material to balance a sizeable increase in "needle time". Music or other pre-taped programmes originated by a station broadcasting to, say, part of South East England, would be just as acceptable a commodity to listeners in North East England six months or a year later, making an open market of saleable material between stations at the regional and local level. We believe that to operate effectively in the age of television small regional stations have to adopt some degree of audience specialisation. This is particularly true if television broadcasting hours are extended further into the daytime.

The use of V.H.F. with coverages in the order of 50-100 miles will ensure sufficiently viable areas taking into account the fast growing number of fixed domestic and portable receivers to be followed by a steady increase of V.H.F. car receivers. The advertising support for these stations would come almost exclusively from the national advertising market, leaving the local advertising segment untouched as a support for really local stations. Local stations will succeed by the intimacy of their small areas, of the order of 15 miles coverage and a mixed programme output. Really local stations would affect the local newspapers' revenue and in these circumstances local newspapers should be allowed a stake in a local radio station. Where more than one local station is viable in a conurbation there should be no objections to a local newspaper taking a majority stake.

The frequency structure that we have advocated has been specifically selected to allow small regional broadcasting using V.H.F. and local broadcasting with daylight medium wave support covering up to 15 miles to develop without one seriously affecting the revenue sources of the other. Applying this classification to B.B.C. "local" radio would leave the second generation area stations that have coverages of 50 miles or so on V.H.F. solely. The promotion of V.H.F. which the B.B.C. is now undertaking has our full support. The net effect should show an appreciable increase in V.H.F. audience potential by the time commercial radio is ready for operations in 1971/2.

We do not consider that sponsored programmes to be in the best interests of listeners or production staffs and we hope that a broadcasting council will lay down provisions to prevent sponsorship. The maximum amount of advertising appears to have wide acceptance at a figure of 6 mins. in any hour. The actual working arrangement of advertising within programmes should be left to individual stations, i.e. spot advertising with music blends well with some programmes, while grouped advertising is probably preferred during programmes with a more serious aspect.

Broadcasting Council

We have previously outlined the structure this council should take. Whilst we have indicated that certain controls may be necessary and even desirable, we feel it is necessary to reiterate the central point of exercising the minimum necessary controls to allow stations to establish separate identities and develop along lines determined by themselves in conjunction with the wishes of the listeners in their particular areas.

Furthermore, we believe it is desirable in the interests of listeners for new groups from time to time to be given the chance to enter this relatively new medium if they wish. In this way the opportunity will be given for new ideas for programming, management and in technical fields, to come to the fore.

Although this may turn out to be possible only when licences expire after the 3-5 year period (as suggested) we believe that the only basic limitations in the total number of licensed stations should be the technical availability regarding wavelengths coupled with the natural self-limits imposed by the commercial viability.