

Electric Education: How the Media Reform Movement Built Public Broadcasting
in the United States, 1934-1952

By

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ELECTRIC EDUCATION: HOW THE MEDIA REFORM MOVEMENT BUILT
PUBLIC BROADCASTING IN THE UNITED STATES, 1934-1952

Josh Shepperd

Under the Supervision of Professor Michele Hilmes
at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Drawing on primary document research at multiple national, state, and university archives, this dissertation conducts an institutional history of the genealogical origins of public broadcasting in the United States. It details how public broadcasting evolved from an abstract social aspiration held by dispersed local groups, mostly based at universities, to a sustainable national organization with a unique mode of production tied to educational goals and based on communication research. Focusing on the concurrent development of concepts, production practices, programming, distribution, research methods and, political organization, this project argues that the early emergence of public media can be traced to media reform advocates who conceived and designed the first noncommercial media infrastructure in the U.S. through trial-and-error experimentation, supported by government initiatives and key funding organizations. The period of system-building described in this dissertation, from 1934-1952, was deeply intertwined with the innovation of political-economic theory and new methods of public policy research used by educational activists as tools for cultural advocacy. The institutionalization of these methods, in cooperation with government agencies, key foundations, and commercial broadcasting methods, led to the construction of the first noncommercial media industry in the U.S.

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To earnestly study the history of a social movement means to study how its concessions and failures are just as constitutive of its identity as its successes. I've often wondered over the past several years if this dissertation topic hadn't appealed to me for these very reasons. The capacity to adjust to scholarly, logistical, political, and social shifts with reflexivity—on nearly a daily basis—is an academic virtue not to be underestimated. But such a capacity must be learned. It has been my fortune to have strong mentors and colleagues who have guided me to the completion of my degree, in spite of many unexpected adjustments going back to my undergraduate studies.

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When I applied to Wisconsin, I did so to be with my wife, who was studying Russian Literature at the time. I applied to three programs – Curriculum Theory, Philosophy of Education, and Media and Cultural Studies. *Two* of those program applications were to study with one person – Michael Apple. Though I chose a different program, since that application period he has since been a steadfast supporter, providing personal, intellectual, and (when needed) moral support that fueled my continued

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This dissertation is submitted with respectful memory for Hillary Johnson.

Note on Archival Work

Many long hours were spent in archives in development of this dissertation. While secondary sources indicate a few of the major milestones of this history, especially the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's short but accurate history, no paper trail effectively points to the genealogical origins of public broadcasting in the United States. For the last several years I simply had to go to national and regional archives and sort through personal documents from the original advocates. Often historians are faced with a difficult historiographical problem, that of piecing together a history that only reveals traces in part. In this case I had the opposite problem, educators were by nature bureaucratic, and I mean this in the most complimentary terms. I found that they saved almost everything. So in my case I had to go through over 150,000 pages of personal correspondence, memos, ledgers, official reports, policies, etc. Over time, the narrative at the center of my argument, that disconnected initiatives were eventually combined into one initiative, became clarified. Certain names began to appear with regularity, such as John Marshall at the Rockefeller Foundation. And of course, I later found that he played a central role in underwriting most early communication initiatives through 1941.

This is how I began to trace the paper trail. Once a name began to appear in different correspondence with some regularity, I checked to see if there were finding aids elsewhere that would support research into this individual. I began with the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) collection at the University of Wisconsin, a collection that served as a terrific template for the entire dissertation.

At the University of Wisconsin, several extremely large collections remain almost entirely unexamined. The NAEB is the most central group, because it unified different groups into one advocacy history. There are about 100 boxes of materials from 1925 until roughly 1981. And most importantly for this dissertation, most of the materials that I used from this collection came from early correspondence that indicated other places to look, such as other universities or the Office of Education. The correspondence of the NAEB is further interesting because it indicates trial and error considerations by its members during difficult times. Each time the association was close to shutting down, no less than three times through 1952, members began to look to other initiatives outside of the group as examples for how to organize. So one finds letters described in this dissertation between members and John Studebaker, for example. One also notes correspondence between members and regulatory commissions, other organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Radio Council, and most importantly by far for me, internal correspondence between individuals who met perhaps only several times in their life, in the early formation of the institution, but shared the same vision.

Thanks to my advisor Michele Hilmes I began to understand how important underwriting for noncommercial media was going back to the origin of radio in 1921. This led me to a grant at the Rockefeller Archive Center, which became the core technocratic reference point for much of the dissertation. Roughly 4500 pages of documents were used directly from that archive. Almost every major organization discussed from federal, educational, research, and otherwise, went through the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) at some point. And thankfully John Marshall not only saved all of the proposals and correspondence, but all of his personal notes of evaluation about

the different initiatives. His personal notes not only describe what grantees accomplished, but also his personal reception, including his personal opinions of others. Further, because underwriting was so strong from RF, institutions were inclined to send very detailed analyses of their internal workings. In those internal workings, the inception of the possibility for nonprofit approach to broadcasting can be found. More interestingly, and addressed by other researchers mentioned this dissertation, the philosophy of mass communications is described in developmental detail, which allows the historian to historicize the external incentives that played a part in developing specific methods.

A significant amount of time was also spent at the National Archives both in College Park and on Pennsylvania Avenue. At the archives I thumbed through many, many years of congressional debates, FCC reports and considerations in correspondence, Office of War Information papers, and the Office of Education. Most importantly for this dissertation I became familiar with the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. That committee, which is largely unaddressed in communications history, was the overseeing body of the Federal Communications Commission. So while the FCC is often either credited or derided for its actions, the FCC were often responding to initiatives that came from the top down, from specific Senators on the committee. Almost all of these records are completely unprocessed, and I must have spent at least seven full workweeks simply processing documents. Those findings strongly inflected how I approached the conclusion of this dissertation. However most of the most interesting discourses around communications and regulation were left out of this dissertation, to be included in a book form of this work. There were so many considerations besides educational broadcasting that informed communications regulation that nearly an entire separate work could be

written to explain how education positioned itself simply in relation to regulation. The important outcome detailed in the final chapter is that the success of the Rocky Mountain Radio Council influenced Edwin C. Johnson, who as chair of the CIFC serendipitously oversaw an education friendly FCC in the early 1950s. That top-down oversight finally meshed with a research-based federal body, just as new efficiency was discovered on behalf of advocates regarding their organizational structure, was a very lucky moment indeed. Never before or after was there such a long period of regulatory deliberation that opened such a space to cultivate a position on behalf of noncommercial media against the gigantic commercial media lobby and technical infrastructure. Communications history between 1934 and 1967 is fairly well documented at Pennsylvania Avenue if one has the patience to go through 70 large, unprocessed cardboard boxes.

While these three major archives—Wisconsin’s NAEB papers, the Rockefeller Archive Center, and the National Archives—served to offer the most detailed contribution to this dissertation, the Library of American Broadcasting in College Park, Maryland was actually where I spent the most amount of time. I probably put in roughly 5 to 6 months of daily work going through the United States’ official public broadcasting papers. The archives’ wonderful archivists helped me to just how many different contours there were of this history. This includes, of course, wartime communications, visual instruction practitioners not written above in this dissertation but that will be in the book, and the significant collection of papers after 1953. Since the dissertation ends in early 1953, most of that research did not make it into this specific project. However I have accumulated so many thousands of pages from that archive that I would be remiss to mention that reading how practitioners viewed their own trajectory into the 1950s and

1960s influenced me. For this dissertation, I have looked at the outcome of an advocacy. While it is not discussed due to page and time constraints, papers from the late 1950s played a major part in my deliberation about what was important in the history.

I spent a significant amount of time at state university archives such as University of Wisconsin, which holds collections beyond the NAEB, including its own seminal radio station WHA, as well as National Educational Television papers, NBC papers, National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) papers, and so on. I also spent several weekends in Champaign, Urbana at the University of Illinois archives looking for papers by the practitioners who effectively built the field of communication studies. I put in a solid week in Columbus, Ohio looking at the Keith Tyler and Edgar Dale papers as well as the WOSU registers.

Finally I was fortunate to get Princeton University to send me John Studebaker's saved papers pertaining to his correspondence with the Princeton Radio Research Project. That saved me a big trip, and I received a package of primary documents spanning several thousand pages that was almost entirely useful for the dissertation. And on that note, I thumbed through quite a few original books by researchers and practitioners from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, as they developed their organizational and conceptual approaches. After all, many of the people in this history are academics, and they left a big paper trail of published research, little of which is actually discussed in the dissertation.

Ultimately, I was most persuaded by documents in which different actants made statements of intent. The individuals discussed here were so "aspirational" about their goals that finding "smoking gun" papers with regularity became almost a point of amusement. Those are, of course, are often the most difficult papers to find. But there is a

well-defined paper trail of imagined outcomes, social goals, regulatory positions, statements of purpose, often among several rough drafts that were edited so the researchers might see how the rhetorical positions shifted over time. I completed a dissertation with a high degree of confidence that I was able to capture the implicit strain of this history as well as its explicit outcomes.

The omissions in the archives are largely along gendered, racial, and content lines. I discuss this problem in the conclusion of the dissertation, and while I consider these omissions to be significant indications of the limits of the social movement itself, the identification of such limitations also, for better or worse, help to consolidate the historian's confidence that he or she has thoroughly grasped the phenomenon at hand. Limitation of inclusion within the archive speaks volumes above the history itself, especially because related collections are so dramatically complete.

Introduction

1 Statement of Project

In 1950 the National Association for Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) circulated a document that declared their intent to create a nation-wide infrastructure dedicated to the development of educational programming. The report recommended the creation of specialized communication departments to conduct research “in the effect and effectiveness of educational methods” on radio and television.¹ The future of educational broadcasting, the reports writers argued, relied upon the construction of academic programs for training in production, practice, audience building and measurement, and using radio and television in public school curricula. Such training would increase the reach and reception of noncommercial media in the U.S., and promote continuous attention to the development and improvement of educational technology.

This resolution pointed to the fact that, despite more than twenty-five years of organization and planning, educational broadcasting in the United States still lacked a stable infrastructure capable of producing effective curricular programming. Since the 1920s, educational broadcasting had too often remained underfunded, dismissed, and neglected within the larger university, forced to compete with more established departments and disciplines for funding and scholarly respect. Often, the study of radio was housed in related but diffusely focused departments of speech, drama, education, or engineering. In 1950 the NAEB had concluded that only the founding of higher education departments dedicated specifically to educational broadcasting and research would strengthen noncommercial broadcasting so that it might act as a national system and

¹ Richard Hull, Wilbur Schramm, Charles Siepmann, et al: “Educational Broadcasting, its Aims and Responsibilities”: National Association of Educational Broadcaster papers, Box 5, Folder 6.

resource for public education. To support the development of educational broadcasting as an official academic discipline that also circulated information as a mass communication body, the NAEB announced a new division that intended to streamline methods of program production and maintain measurable standards. Educational broadcasting research from 1950 forward, as former BBC Director of Regional Broadcasting Charles Siepmann contended at the conference, would focus on “purpose and design”,² and defend noncommercial media at universities by becoming an official wing of higher education.

The document, a product of two brainstorming conferences known as the Allerton House Seminars of 1949 and 1950,³ simultaneously signified the birth of the discipline of Communication and represented the first stable articulation for how a “public broadcasting” infrastructure would be organized in the U.S. The wider field of educational broadcasting viewed the document as a watershed moment—post-1950, affiliates of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters went about following its recommendations almost step by step as FM radio flourished and television rolled out across the country.

By 1953, early results were already evident. Many universities became members of the NAEB’s program distribution “bicycle network,” which circulated programs to stations across the Midwest, South, and East Coast. A national NAEB clearinghouse was established at Indiana University to act as a program repository and resource.⁴ That same year, members of the NAEB began to staff Educational Television’s research wing, the

² *ibid*

³ Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 265, Folders 2 & 4; National Association of Educational Broadcasters Papers, Box 5

⁴ Untitled document on educational broadcasting at Indiana, Harry Skornia Papers, Box 3, “Indiana University” Folder

Educational Television and Radio Center (ETRC), later called the National Educational Television and Radio Center (NETRC), which would serve as a central organizational and lobbying wing for the entire field.⁵ Thus, starting in 1950, the NAEB effectively envisioned and set about building a *noncommercial media industry* of the sort never before possible in the United States. They did so by streamlining five previously disconnected developments—concept, production, measurement, distribution, and reception analysis—into an economy of exchange between hundreds of institutions across the country. Absent from this economy: the profit motive. The impulse for this project came from a larger social goal—the attempt to expand the progressive-era project of promoting democratic participation through the expansion of universal public education. Radio appeared to be a convenient technological extension of this initiative.

But over the previous 15 years educational advocates had discovered that the transition from classroom learning to radio was extraordinarily complicated. Beyond the need for competent teachers, educational broadcasting required a well-run radio facility that included functional transmitters, trained staff, trained announcers, the support of university administrators, stable funding, an organized plan of content development, adequate publicity, and an interested audience. This was a huge enterprise that few university stations could manage and afford. But having funds and facilities were not enough. To meet the requirements of effective broadcasting, competency in station administration, curricular practices, classroom learning, bureaucratic communication, and even training in voice intonation were necessary. And all of these functions relied upon the capacity to reflexively measure the effectiveness of prescribed practices in relation to

⁵ “Introduction to First Session of Special Agenda for Discussion Group Meetings”, 1965. National Archives, Committee for Interstate and Foreign Commerce Papers. Box 9, unprocessed.

other practices. Educational broadcasting did not just need to work, it needed to be seen to be working. Leading up to the Allerton House Seminars, advocates had been motivated by a *Pursuant* (307) to the Communications Act of 1934. Written by Judge E.O. Sykes, it encouraged educational broadcasters to develop radio station practices as efficiently as the commercial networks. The management of stations—administrative, content development, talent, technical/technological, scheduling, public relations—became the core focus of the media reform movement after 1934. Due to a series of political, regulatory, and intellectual events covered in this dissertation, increasingly sophisticated techniques of information measurement eventually translated the NAEB’s advocacy project into a viable endeavor.

The Allerton House Seminars called upon the previous 15 years of experimentation in administrative, research, and content development areas and organized them into an official plan for action. Between 1934 and 1949 various federal, state, educational, and philanthropic groups had invested significant time, money, and effort into core spheres of “public” broadcasting development.⁶ The University Broadcasting Council of Chicago and the Rocky Mountain Radio Council attempted to organize the first noncommercial regional networks dedicated to education. The Office of Education had created the first clearinghouse for quality educational programs, and remained a resolute supporter of noncommercial broadcasting until the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The Federal Radio Education Council (FREC), with oversight from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Office of Education (OOE), initiated a series of research projects between educators and networks in 1934 aimed at increasing the effectiveness of educational broadcasting, supported by

⁶ Hull, Schramm, Siepmann, *ibid*

empirical evidence. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the world's most effective noncommercial media system, had sent representatives to the states to evaluate the capacity for a noncommercial system in the U.S. And a set of innovative young researchers representing commercial networks, land grant universities, and the Ivy Leagues had discovered reproducible methods for evaluating the effect of broadcasting content on learning and, unexpectedly, political orientation. The Rockefeller Foundation had underwritten all of these experiments and in doing so serendipitously put these groups into communication with each other. As these initiatives unfolded both internally and externally, the media reform movement and its underfunded, dedicated, aspirational adherents at colleges and universities watched and took note of each incremental development.

Spread among hundreds of colleges and universities by the 1960s, the genealogical origin of public broadcasting in the United States can be viewed as the consolidation of distinct cultural and methodological initiatives into a production culture dedicated to increasing social equality and democratic values through the civic utilization of technology. When these different organizational interests were combined, an "economy of scale"⁷ materialized nearly as large, productive, and influential as the commercial networks, unified by the NAEB as an umbrella agency. Just two years after the second Allerton House seminar, in 1952, the FCC would take notice of this new cohesiveness and set aside special frequencies solely for instructional and educational purposes. The result was the Sixth Report and Order of 1952, devised by Senators Charles Tobey and Edwin C. Johnson, with the consultation of FCC Commissioners

⁷Gomery, Douglas. "Media Economics: Terms of Analysis," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, (6) 43-60, 1989.

Freida Hennock and Wayne Coy.⁸ This regulation granted FM frequencies in a range previously allocated to television to noncommercial radio broadcasting, in order to protect it as a public service.

Due to the work of Allerton House Seminars and the support of the Sixth Report and Order, initiatives that occurred between 1934 and 1952 culminated into the first active, national, and *successful* media advocacy—so successful that its foundation ultimately led to public broadcasting. But as this dissertation argues, before 1952 it was not at all clear that educational broadcasting would survive. The journey to Allerton began in 1934 when educational broadcasters seemed defeated, and gained momentum through the actions of key organizations.

2 Project Contribution

The goal of this project is to account for how various experiments between 1934 and 1952 contributed to the unique form of noncommercial broadcasting organization in the U.S. The structure of early public broadcasting in the 1950s and 1960s has been discussed in multiple books and around various themes, but no work has looked at how the media reform movement's early experiments in noncommercial media built the scaffolding for post-war institutionalization. Further, this dissertation contends that the origin of public broadcasting can only be understood if it is viewed as a *consequence of the first major media advocacy* in the U.S., one that successfully persuaded policymakers to set-aside special frequencies for noncommercial media specifically oriented toward civic goals.

⁸ Internal Reports for Department for Health, Education, and Welfare. Dean Coston Papers, Boxes 1 and 3, unprocessed.

The early history of public broadcasting advocacy in the United States was comprised as a series of trial-and-error experiments—all of which were developed with the purpose of satisfying Sykes' *Pursuant*, described above. Constructed almost entirely through personal correspondence, memos, and ledgers, I have attempted to account for these experiments from the perspective of the advocates themselves—as system building *strategies* to create a cultural institution to combat the rise of fascism, increase democratic diversity in the United States through public education, and to temper the effects of for-profit media industries. The core of what eventually became successful system building tactics lay in the development of an academic discipline, capable of gaining funding from university boards, philanthropic groups, and the federal government, that made the case for educational broadcasting and pointed the way towards its future.

The genealogical origins of public broadcasting turns out to hold the same origins as a series of connected cultural institutions: communication and public policy research (as mentioned above), propaganda research, educational technology research by the Office of Education, and noncommercial genres. These initiatives were all developed by the media reform movement to safeguard educational broadcasting. The major breakthrough made by media reformers after 1934 is encapsulated by the development of an academic infrastructure, which validated educational broadcasters to legislators, audiences, and their own universities. The field was made possible due to the development of reliable techniques of media analysis, now called media effects and political economy of media research. Not resting upon this accomplishment, advocates also developed the first standards for educational technology practices, an alternate model

of production and distribution for mass media, and an entirely different set of broadcasting genres than the commercial networks. In effect, “media studies” was once synonymous with noncommercial media practice, and media practitioners whose goal was social amelioration once populated the field of mass communications.

Further, while it has widely been assumed that a rigid binary has always existed between commercial and noncommercial approaches, evidence shows that educators were in constant contact with the commercial networks, learned their techniques for content production, called upon commercial network research methodologies in the development of mass communications research, and by the 1950s, universities began to build programs with the intent of matriculating students into commercial industry jobs. This is not to mistake educational broadcasters as playing a complementary or subsidiary role to the commercial networks—their relationship was often contentious and due to frequency scarcity commercial lobbyists often stood in the way of educational growth. But the dialectical interaction between public/private was at the center of public broadcasting development, and the eventual creation of a “4th network” relied upon the advocacy strategy of meeting the criteria of the *Pursuant* by emulating the aesthetic and administrative practices of the networks.

If one approaches the history of broadcasting from the public broadcasters’ standpoint, as an important media advocacy that permeated regulatory, academic research, and administrative sectors, several commonly assumptions currently held about the cultural history of media shift. Among intriguing but subsidiary findings for this project, for example, it turns out that the reason Theodor Adorno worked with the Princeton Radio Research Project was to develop advocacy tactics to persuade the FCC

to assign frequencies for educational broadcasting, a point too often obscured by the weight of the names that participated. Quite simply, he was invited by Paul Lazarsfeld to help develop educational research methods under a project commissioned by the Office of Education and the FCC. The reason he did not get along with participants was due to his well-cited personality conflicts, but it was also because of differences regarding his methodological *solution* to the improvement of educational broadcasting. Lazarsfeld, it turns out, was also quite sympathetic to Adorno's concerns because they both hoped to improve the study of music education as a vehicle for the civic utilization of technology.

Further, if one views the famous and fascinating Princeton Radio Research Project (PRP) through the initiative in which it was assigned—to develop techniques to gauge the effectiveness of learning by radio—the genealogy of mass communications research might be viewed as holding progressive origins. Far from the current paradigm of approaching quantitative survey research as a net of neutral results, Lazarsfeld developed mass communications research as a *purposive* method for short-gains adjustments to content by educational practitioners during program development. Originally under the supervision of Hadley Cantril, the PRP deliberately pulled from commercial broadcasting survey methods to streamline educational research. It was only after they discovered just how strong messages were upon public perception that his Office of Radio Research shifted to commercial broadcasting, public policy, and propaganda research. Indeed, the discipline of communication studies *began* as an *extension of the media reform movement*.

Consequently, Adorno's failure to influence the Princeton Radio Research Project opened the door for Charles Siepmann, the former BBC Director of Talks and Regional

Broadcasting, to contribute the earliest empirical model for the *political economy of media*. Siepmann's experienced production approach to adjusting program content in response to data from empirical inquiry, to be contrasted with Adorno's dialectically critical philosophical approach, was received by PRP innovators as a complementary technique to new quantitative methods still in development by the consortium. Siepmann's later "Blue Book", political analysis of U.S. broadcasting written for the FCC with a young Dallas Smythe, consolidated political economy as the primary evaluative method found in communication departments between the 1950s-1980s. In short, the history of public broadcasting was shaped by a major intellectual event: the rejection of Adorno led to the institutionalization of political economy as a preferred academic method in the U.S. And of significant note, political economy proved to be the successful advocacy method for persuading the FCC that educational broadcasting required special frequency assignments.

The marriage of mass communications and political economy ultimately led to the formation of the most influential early communication studies program at the University of Illinois. Wilbur Schramm streamlined media effects research, Dallas Smythe conducted critical advocacy for the NAEB, and Robert Hudson ran the university radio station. Illinois' basic departmental structure—research, political advocacy, and media practice—became the fundamental model not only for the discipline, but the institution of public broadcasting itself. It is no accident that the Allerton House Seminars took place in Champaign/Urbana.

A larger intervention made by this dissertation concerns the received story about Communications policy history, namely the Communications Act of 1934. The current

view in the field holds that the regulation signified a concluding defeat of educational broadcasters. In contrast, as a minor rhetorical move I argue that origins of the media reform movement, as we understand it, began not before 1934 but *after* the 1934 Act—because it's not until after the Act that advocates developed the sustainable strategies and methods still in practice today. Just four to five years past 1934 the same figures who were dealt a crushing defeat that all but eliminated national experimentation with noncommercial media in the U.S. innovated the scaffolding described above: effective measurement of curricular standards, noncommercial broadcast networks, workable advocacy methods, and new programming genres. By 1967, with the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act, advocates ultimately “won” the same story often viewed as a defeat. The Act created a precedent by which noncommercial interests were able to formulate effective organizational and methodological reform.

The post regulation period engendered the emergence of an entire media system built from the bottom-up, based around research techniques. This system ran concurrently with commercial broadcasting, pulling from a completely different set of goals than profit or entertainment. Relatedly, while commonly portrayed as enemies of noncommercial media, educators often received support from the FCC between 1934 and 1952. All of the FCC's Commissioners contributed to education's progress in varying degrees until 1952. Clifford Durr and Freida Hennock were education's most important regulatory supporters, and their contributions are described from the educators' perspective in the final chapter.

3 Review of Secondary Literature

There are quite a few works that have looked at components of this history, but never as a holistic progression. Additionally, historical research on public broadcasting has been approached from many perspectives. Among topics of cultural history, public broadcasting is unique in that it features reflective analyses written by its own practitioners. James Day, who ran San Francisco and New York's public stations, identified two crucial characteristics of public broadcasting in his book *The Vanishing Vision*.⁹ The first was the (unusually) "democratic" way that public broadcasting was organized as a consortium after 1952, and the second characteristic was the way that public broadcasting was influenced by and attempted to organize as an American version of the BBC. New document findings of Charles Siepmann's influence upon the NAEB, discussed in this dissertation, closely support his claims. Similarly, John Macy's book *To Irrigate the Wasteland*, contends that the three networks, usually viewed monolithically as antagonists to noncommercial media history, had attempted to translate public service ideals into profit models within the commercial structure.¹⁰ It is clear that many individuals working within the industry had civic intentions, and luminaries such as William Paley and David Sarnoff were quite open to the prospect of educational broadcasting—should audiences be interested in the content of related programming such as documentaries or direct instruction. However, mass audiences simply were not interested, which made educational broadcasting untenable to an advertising medium. Macy was the first president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and that such a central historical figure held a sympathetic view about the complex relationship between public and private helped me to look for contributions by the networks to noncommercial

⁹ Day, James. *The Vanishing Vision: The Inside Story of Public Television*. LA, CA: U of California Press, 1995.

¹⁰ Macy, John. *To Irrigate a Wasteland*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974.

development. Jack Mitchell, founder of *All Things Considered* and former Director of Wisconsin Public Broadcasting, wrote an important book on the complicated dynamic between public radio and television.¹¹ Through archival research and personal experience of the crucial 1965-1967 period *Listener Supported* shows how the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 originally only included television due to the Carnegie Commission's influential report. Robert Avery's series of publications in journals, anthologies, and the edition he wrote with Al Stavitsky for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting itself, have identified major milestones of public television history in reliable detail.¹² As last Chairman of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters Avery's work on public broadcasting as a critical and continuously adjusting enterprise is central to my analysis. While not directly a public broadcasting practitioner, Erik Barnouw's famous *Tube of Plenty* is extremely well written, humorous, but largely focuses on the *NET Journal*.¹³ Written from what I would call a commercial perspective sympathetic to educational broadcasting, he lauds the public service vision of educators, while spending little time on how educational broadcasting worked as an institution.

The United States was one of the last countries to develop a public-based broadcasting system, and several recent works have looked at the institutional and regulatory precedents that resulted in the creation of PBS and NPR. Michele Hilmes' recent work *Network Nations* shows the simultaneously sympathetic and antagonistic transnational relationship between the BBC and American broadcasting. She argues that

¹¹ Mitchell, Jack. *Listener Supported: The Culture and History of Public Radio*. NYC: Praeger Publishers, 2005.

¹² Avery, Robert K. 'The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967: Looking Ahead to by Looking Back', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(4): 358-64, 1967.

¹³ Barnouw, Erik. *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2nd Edition, 1990.

while commercial models intentionally developed a different model to the BBC, educational broadcasters consulted with and took inspiration from the U.K.'s state-based system. David Goodman's *Radio's Civic Ambition* deftly points to the centrality of civic discourses around radio in the 1930s. His analysis primarily focuses on the commercial networks, but he is the first to note that Office of Education Commissioner John Studebaker and the Princeton Radio Research Project were central contributors to the development of American media practices. He only touches on the relationship between these figures and the later development of Public Broadcasting in the U.S., but his work successfully addresses the progressive goals that took place in early academic (especially the PRP) and commercial discourses. This dissertation hopes to complement his recent book with an examination of the simultaneous development of educational practitioners. Brett Gary's *The Nervous Liberals* conducts exhaustive primary document analysis of the place of the Rockefeller Foundation in the development of educational broadcasting.¹⁴ While his work primarily concentrates on propaganda research during WWII, he covers many of the same figures I discuss in Chapter 4, and his analyses of overlapping Rockefeller Archive Center documents was helpful for my reading.

Robert Blakely's *To Serve the Public Interest* is probably the clearest evaluation of the evolution of public broadcasting in the U.S. currently available¹⁵ His work identifies key players, regulations, and many of the key precedents of educational broadcasting for public broadcasting. But many of his assessments of major initiatives are little more than a paragraph or two and lack context; this encouraged me to clarify the interpersonal dynamics of major figures before 1952. George Gibson's *Public*

¹⁴ Gary, Brett. *Nervous Liberals*. New York: Columbia University, 1999.

¹⁵ Blakely, Robert. *To Serve the Public Interest*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979.

Broadcasting: The Role of the Federal Government, 1912-1976, offers a comprehensive and well-ordered policy history of FCC records.¹⁶ While he views the cultural institutions (at the center of this dissertation) as secondary characters to the policies themselves, his thorough attention to even minor policies provides an invaluable contribution to the regulatory history of broadcasting. Carolyn Brooks, fellow alumni of the University of Wisconsin, wrote what is still to this date the major work on National Educational Television (NET), sadly never published outside of dissertation form due to her untimely passing.¹⁷ *Documentary Programming and the Emergence of the National Educational Television Center as a Network, 1958-1972*, covers the institutional development of educational television after the Sixth Report and Order of 1952, and the work well understands the crucial role of public service concepts upon how the institution formed. In many ways I endeavor for this dissertation to be a “prequel” to hers. Finally I share Ralph Engelmann’s optimism in *Public Radio and Television in America* that noncommercial media can contribute to progressive change.¹⁸ Engelmann covers little of the early period of educational broadcasting, but his work is the first to show the complex dynamic between community broadcasting/Radio Pacifica and public broadcasting. He points out that there have always been competing visions about how public service broadcasting should be conducted and organized.

Due to the civic nature of this history, leftist media historians have called upon early media advocacy history as a rich source of inspiration. The most influential work is

¹⁶ Gibson, George. *Public Broadcasting: The Role of the Federal Government, 1912-1976*. New York, Praeger Publishers.

¹⁷ Brooks, Carolyn. *Documentary Programming and the Emergence of the National Educational Television Center as a Network, 1958-1972*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison Doctoral Dissertation, 1994.

¹⁸ Engelman, Ralph. *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

Scannell and Cardiff's *Social History of British Broadcasting*.¹⁹ While not centered on American broadcasting, their analysis of the institutional structure of the BBC from concept, through regulatory channels, and into institutional practice is one of the primary models for how this dissertation was approached. In specific, the way *Social History* looks at how the BBC was constructed as an institution by John Reith to connect (sometimes antagonistic) otherwise disconnected geographic regions into one country. This insightful analysis helped me to understand how the goal of media institutions have always been tied to geographic “unification” through media practices. Glenda Balas' *Recovering a Public Vision for Public Television* provides a brief analysis of the important 1950-1951 years when educators advocated for reserved frequencies during the “television freeze”.²⁰ Her work makes some evaluative judgments about the outcome of specific policies that this dissertation does not share. However, her work was the first to identify the relationship between two key events—the Allerton House Seminars and the Sixth Report and Order of 1952.

Other leftist scholars have viewed public broadcasting as a failed endeavor to promote a specific social vision. Some of these works are curiously over-critical of problematic issues in noncommercial media. David Barsamian's widely read critical evaluation of public broadcasting conducts no new research and takes an overt political position against noncommercial media.²¹ He makes many strong points about the potential reproductive characteristics of state-based broadcasting, but his evaluation is anecdotal and not always accurate about how noncommercial media institutions work.

¹⁹ Scannell, Paddy. Cardiff, David. *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume I*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.

²⁰ Balas, Glenda. *Recovering a Vision for Public Television*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

²¹ Barsamian, David. *The Decline and Fall of Public Broadcasting*. Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2001.

This dissertation is written partially in response to works like his, because I fear that an overcritical evaluation inadvertently strengthens recent attempts to privatize public broadcasting as a solution to its problems. As a democratic public institution, public broadcasting has been built for cultural reflexivity to its community, regardless of the community's political orientation. In that way public broadcasting has always been closer to a "progressive populist" institution than the core of Barsamian's critique—that public broadcasting should serve as a mouthpiece for a liberal perspective. I would note that "liberal" still means "capitalist", and a larger structural critique about capitalism is more prescient to how technology is used than a critical examination of the administration of a nonprofit facility.

That said, there is no question that public broadcasting carried a hopeful vision that social change might be expedited by minimizing the effect of private interests upon popular opinion. The best way to promote progressive change, educators believed, was through the universal expansion of access to public education, much in line with philosophies of education such as John Dewey's. The key to understanding how public broadcasting thus formed as an institution relies upon an understanding of how its proponents advocated for materializing and facilitating their vision into local, state, and federal bureaucracies, specifically the universities where its advocates worked. Three major works have addressed the motivation for system-building. Robert McChesney's book, discussed in more detail below, was the first to identify that public broadcasting history is also a history of activism and advocacy.²² *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy* looks at the various activists, legislators, policies, and social outcomes of

²² McChesney, Robert W. *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of US Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

the Communications Act of 1934. McChesney also looks to how other noncommercial advocates such as labor used radio for advocacy purposes in the 1920s and 1930s. This project would have been impossible without the crucial foundation his work provides.

Hugh Slotten has written two books that examine noncommercial media regulation and practices.²³ *Radio and Television Regulation* looks at how and why the FCC has made decisions about frequency assignments. His conclusion—that technocratic voices have dominated regulatory decision-making processes since the 1920s—was well triangulated among multiple collections during the many months that I spent in regulatory and university archives. Slotten has argued that communication regulation was not *only* political motivation as McChesney argues, but was often conducted to address technological problems such as medium “scarcity”. Put simply, there are many more concerns at stake during regulatory considerations than social effects—such as technology, infrastructure, the needs of law enforcement and the military, and the establishment of precedents for future technological innovation. Whether or not the FCC’s decisions have been democracy-promoting is a central concern of this dissertation; Slotten’s view that the FCC has always been primarily a regulatory body concerned with a significantly wider set of questions than cultural effects alone is well supported by the records. Among FCC responsibilities, broadcasting’s “cultural” dimensions turned out to occupy a very small purview of day-to-day operations, which in hindsight makes the zero political gain education-friendly decisions by the FCC after 1935 even more notable. Slotten’s second book on educational broadcasting, *Radio’s Hidden Voice*, came out in 2009, while this dissertation was still under development, and immediately occupied the

²³ Slotten, Hugh. *Radio and Television Regulation: Broadcast Technology in the United States, 1920-1960*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000; Slotten, Hugh. *Radio’s Hidden Voice: The Origins of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

territory I had originally hoped to cover. It provides a thorough and impressively researched assessment of educational broadcasting experiments, policies, and figures before 1934. In hindsight I was lucky that he did that foundational work, as it helped me to understand educational practices in the 1920s and 1930s and direct my attention to the period after 1934.

Finally, I have returned time and again to Laurie Ouellette's impressively researched *Viewers like You?*²⁴ Ouellette's work is an unusual mix of archive analysis and cultural theory. I would characterize her analysis of public broadcasting as a Foucauldian approach to political economy. She argues that the "pleasures" publics associate with popular culture have been taken for granted by PBS' cultural uplift project. By not appealing to popular culture, public broadcasting narrowed its intended diversity to a smaller demographic audience. I have thought about her claim seriously while writing, but disagree with her conclusions, discussed below.

4 How this Dissertation is Positioned in Relation to Secondary Literature

While McChesney and Slotten have provided thorough accounts of the earliest period of educational experimentation before the Communications Act, the period directly after 1934 was in fact the most explosively eventful period for noncommercial broadcast development until the late 1960s. In line with Robert McChesney's seminal analysis of the early regulatory environment for educational broadcasters in the 1920s and 1930s, I examine this history from the perspective that considers the struggle to achieve a noncommercial media system as a media advocacy movement for political reform. However, I differ from McChesney's account regarding the effect of the passage

²⁴ Ouellette, Laurie. *Viewers like You? How Public TV Failed the People*. NYC: Columbia University Press, 2002.

of the Communication Act of 1934 upon the legacy of educational broadcasting. He prominently argues that before 1934, reform was conducted as a movement that was ultimately defeated by privatization. After this defeat the American system became overwhelmingly commercial, and educational broadcasting all but disappeared in a major historical opportunity lost. In contrast I argue that not only did educational broadcasting not disappear, it continued and gathered strength over a number of years. Many of the same media reformers discussed in his volume, such as A.G. Crane,²⁵ Harold McCarty,²⁶ and John Studebaker,²⁷ in fact played central role in contributing to noncommercial regulatory victory 18 years later. Such a difference in inflection is not intended to overturn his account, but to contribute to the historical study of media reform by pointing to rare model of a critical advocacy movement that actually *succeeded*. One of my goals is to point to an advocacy that worked, through the institutionalization of solution-based models. These models did not follow critical resistance alone, but also carved out territory within the system, incorporated, and eventually changed the system to include a public-based outlet.

This project does not dispute that the overwhelming story of broadcasting in the U.S. can be described as the victory of the commercial model. But it is curious that debates in media and communication studies have only taken either critical or affirmative positions about “the triumph of the commercial system” when a highly complex and well-recorded history of alternate broadcasting practices remains virtually unexplored.

²⁵ Crane was an early member of the NCER, President of the University of Wyoming, and eventual Governor of Wyoming.

²⁶ McCarty was the director of the Wisconsin School of the Air, and an active NAEB member and Rockefeller Fellow.

²⁷ Studebaker was Commissioner of the Office of Education and director of the Federal Radio Education Committee.

The institutional history of broadcasting in the U.S. is much more complex than our current state of knowledge takes into account, comprised of constant interactions between content developers, commercial interests, reformers, regulators, and listeners.

My argument hinges upon the crucial years directly following the Communications Act of 1934, which stripped many educational stations of their licenses. The Act reduced university station frequency assignments from over 200 to under 30, but evidence also reveals that the Act's default favoring of commercial interests engendered the unintended consequence of galvanizing multiple cultural and regulatory proponents. While competent and dedicated activist groups attempted to combat privatization of mass communications in the early 1930s, as McChesney discusses,²⁸ a bottom-up analysis of the 200-plus educational licensees shows that few of these stations were actively engaged in a regular schedule of broadcasting at all, and were generally unaware of regulatory debates and uninterested in the larger cause of educational radio. Further, and this is key to my argument, outside of a small sampling of activist groups, educational broadcasting was not a "unified front" but a decentralized experiment with little knowledge of how to use the radio medium correctly for educational purposes.

Consequently, the early development of "public broadcasting" in the U.S. was composed of multiple initiatives by multiple organizations to learn how to use technology for education, including the federal government, large private foundations, and even commercial broadcasters, directed at improving educational broadcasting's viability through organization, practice, and measurement. A sympathetic revision of McChesney's history might be stated as the evolution from an experiment weak in practice but strong in aspiration and concept in 1934, to an infrastructure strong in

²⁸ McChesney, *ibid*

method but still en route to quality practice by 1952. Ultimately, as Michele Hilmes,²⁹ Hugh Slotten,³⁰ and Ralph Engelmann,³¹ have shown, the history of noncommercial media in the U.S. is one of such strong dedication to the concept of the use of technology for education that a variety of otherwise unconnected groups simultaneously invested in improving its varied spheres of deficiencies. As each deficiency transitioned into coherent practice, practitioners recognized such practices at a later date as significant components of quality educational broadcasting.

The key to accounting for educational broadcasting's evolution from mere experimentation to an established alternative media system relied upon the development of administrative, programming, research, and distribution practices. This dissertation examines the development of each of these. Experiments between 1934 and 1950 took place in diverse geographical regions, at different universities, and were undertaken by contrasting interests. The commercial networks were one of an astonishing number of groups that participated for varied durations of time, among university practitioners and administrators, Ivy League public policy researchers, philanthropic underwriters, federal bureaucrats, and communications regulators all participated. At various times these groups came into close contact, and at other times they merely responded to each other through correspondence. Other times they worked in complete isolation from each other. But the result was the same. This period of fertile development, as seen through the eyes of advocates themselves, led to two major outcomes: successful policy change, and the

²⁹ Hilmes, Michele. *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

³⁰ Slotten, *ibid*

³¹ Engelman, Ralph. *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

creation of a vast nation-wide infrastructure for noncommercial broadcasting that served as the foundation for the creation of a federally-funded and legitimized national public broadcasting system in the 1960s.

Works by Ouellette³² and Barsamian³³ have assessed this political outcome suspiciously, and have argued that public broadcasting did not turn out as its early advocates envisioned. Indeed, many accounts of U.S. public broadcasting take a critical and disappointed tone, and their critiques have merit. But missing from their accounts is the record of just how much dedication, experimentation, interest, funding, development, research, and advocacy it took to build an alternative broadcast infrastructure without the advertising revenues of the dominant system. The history of public broadcasting is a history of the translation of an abstract concept into an institutional form, and an important part of this translation included organizational errors, political concessions, and programming failures made by educators who hoped to expand public education.

If public broadcasting is in fact a “neoliberal” enterprise, as Ouellette³⁴ and more recently Loviglio³⁵ have persuasively and provocatively argued, their critique is more closely directed at specific broadcasters who occupy official institutional positions that continue to shift and change enormously over time, and must negotiate between complex political and ideological forces, than the genre structures that these individual broadcasters occupy. The argument that these genres are occupied by neoliberal-minded agents is a conflation with the structure of educational/public genres themselves.

³² Ouellette, Laurie. *Viewers like You? How Public TV Failed the People*. NYC: Columbia University Press, 2002.

³³ Barsamian, David. *The Decline and Fall of Public Broadcasting*. Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2001.

³⁴ Ouellette, *ibid*

³⁵ Loviglio (forthcoming)

While this dissertation covers only the first major period of the evolution of public broadcasting between 1921 and 1967, and does not endeavor to “defend” public broadcasting as much as identify its origins, I would note that public broadcasting structures and genres represent an impressive conclusion to 46 years of intensively honed, tested, and organized content development across hundreds of learning centers. The lasting current of this history is not “neoliberalism”, a term that refers to assumptions held within a particular historical epoch, but dedication to the innovation of a successful alternative to commercial television and radio that holds civic and educational goals at its center.

Part of the creation of a civic approach to broadcasting has always included the concept of localism, or serving the community in which the station is based through public forums or classroom instruction. This is the source of why public broadcasting has favored targeted demographics. The later tradition of small-audience programming serving cultural uplift purposes, which Ouellette calls elitist, misses the educational core of public broadcasting practices. I agree with some of her critiques of public broadcasting after 1970, but I hope to contribute an understanding of how the genealogy of educational practices led to the consolidation of institutional practices.

5 A Genealogy of Mass Media History in which a Concept is a Central Character

How can it be that an archival genealogy of noncommercial broadcasting has not yet been written in the field of media studies? This project intends to build upon a tradition of genealogical work by Douglas,³⁶ Scannell,³⁷ Hilmes,³⁸ Russo,³⁹ and

³⁶ Douglas, Susan. *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

³⁷ Scannell, Paddy. Cardiff, David. *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume 1*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.

Smulyan⁴⁰ that examines *why* the culture of broadcasting came to be as it is. But, I believe this question indicates that the history of public broadcasting in the U.S. also provides a distinct historiographical problem. No single agent, institution, or policymaker is present to follow for the entirety of this history. That no single individual, group, or organization can be identified as a stable “through-line” is primarily the reason that I believe this history has not yet been attempted. The lack of a “great man” or heroic group has been beneficial in many ways, and permitted this project to escape an assumed binary between private and public uses. Indeed, as mentioned above, documents repeatedly reveal that educational broadcasters attempted to emulate the organizational and aesthetic approaches of the commercial networks, but for instructional purposes. That the system they devised, even while centralized, remains far more dispersed and divided than the commercial industry perhaps says something about education and public service imperatives versus the function of markets, and also about the way that an emphasis on U.S. broadcasting as primarily commercial, as McChesney has argued, has obscured the existence of its thriving alternative.

Yet, my bigger claim is that while educational broadcasting after 1934 might be characterized as a social movement without a dominant leader, institution, or single vision, there is no question that educational broadcasting proponents were unified in their aspiration to increase equal access to public education through technology. I have tried to account for this problem – aspirational unity across disconnected sites and practices –

³⁸ Hilmes, Michele. *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

³⁹ Russo, Alexander Todd. "Roots of Radio's Rebirth: Audiences, Aesthetics, Economics, and Technologies of American Broadcasting, 1926-1951." Ph. D. diss., Brown University, 2004.

⁴⁰ Smulyan, Susan. *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

through a combination of political, institutional, and philosophical analyses of roughly 150,000 pages of archival holdings. My evaluation of documents has called upon three strategies.

The first, political economy,⁴¹ has been effective for identifying political and institutional precedents, and how precedents have influenced consequent structures of organization and policies. Especially considering that the history of educational broadcasting is almost entirely based upon how advocates interpreted and devised strategies to address the Communications Act of 1934, political economy has been a useful way to understand policy decisions and their structural ramifications. In procedure, my take of political economy derives from Dallas Smythe's approach, as well as his legacy, still carried by Janet Wasko, Vincent Mosco, Allison Perlman, Victor Pickard, and others. To frame succinctly, a political economy of media industries begins with empirical analyses of available records from regulatory debates or institutional practices. An evaluative question is then applied to the records—which in short hand can be defined in two parts: 1) What is the stated cultural purpose of this policy or institution?, and 2) what are the intended and unanticipated effects of this stated institutional purpose upon democratic deliberations? A political economy can often hence take a critical tone if the industry's purpose is profit instead of civic based; my utilization of political economy focuses on its empirical approach to examine how a civic concept became an institutional and regulatory structure.

Further, I believe that the “question” of political economy of media industries, which as discussed above was in part developed as a tool of public broadcasting advocacy, is quietly at the core of current debates in the field of media studies. Especially

⁴¹ See Siepmann, Schiller, Smythe, Mosco, and Wasko

in the past five to eight years in media studies, the divide between “political economy of media industries” and “media industry studies” has grown wider, its intramural debates starker, and the goals associated with political economy less influential. Part of the weakening of political economy seems to come from its association as a research model unfriendly to businesses. If a researcher wants access to the media industry, he or she usually has to take a less evaluative tone of their object studied. This creates a conflict of interest between civic research and descriptive analysis. The result has been a heavy reduction in the study of civic uses in media, or more worrisome, the assumption that specific interests and business practices are more effective civic uses of media—because the industry says so. Fundamentally, political economy is an academic *strategy* for social change that makes its case through the presentation of persuasive evidence. My deep concern over the current trend of privatization of public spaces, and the congenial mindset by those designated to protect public resources from plunder, for instance, have led me to the clarification capacities of political economy as an intervention tactic.

The second method, cultural studies, encourages bottom-up evaluation of actual institutional practices and cultural “determinants”⁴² without anticipating or projecting-upon findings. This method, which I identify with my advisor Michele Hilmes, as well as the seminal work of David Morley, has been extremely important in my attempt to construct how institutions, administrations, and agencies were first conceived and then constructed. The majority of this dissertation is resolutely “Hilmesan” in its attempt to account for why institutions formed, how they worked, and why they succeeded or failed. It is “Morleyan” in its desire to conduct a bottom-up evidentiary evaluation of how a

⁴² Williams, R. *Marxism and literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

cultural discourse came to circulate its solution-based vision for how to reconcile class-based social contradictions.

Finally, faced with the difficult problem of accounting for a common thread to multiple initiatives, stated above, I have called upon two theoretical methods sources for document analysis, the speculative work of Alain Badiou, and the polity work of Michael Apple. To understand how divergent concepts with similar aspirations became one institutional unit, the dissertation sometimes takes time to describe concepts of educational broadcasting intent when pertinent documents have provided such information. This is to set up why specific decisions were made by advocates and researchers. The primary conceptual problem this project faced in its development was how to identify when the proponents themselves recognized major events as having taken place. The clear “major” events that signaled advocacy success were the 1949/1950 Seminars and 1952 policy mentioned above. But there were many smaller events along the way that were not understood as significant contributions until they were identified as such. Without detailing his difficult philosophical terminology, Alain Badiou has been immensely useful for thinking through how an “event” is identified.⁴³ The meaning of an event, according to Badiou, is contingent upon shared fidelity to what a relational set “means”. Put tersely, an event cannot take place unless it has been identified as an event. Before identification takes place there are many ways in which a series of actions, concepts, and procedures can be ordered and understood. When an event takes place, be it for an individual, a community, a social movement, or a nation, it has the effect of retroactively framing past activities into a contextual continuity. Before an “event” the

⁴³ Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. London, Continuum: 2007.

same activities might not have been grouped together at all; other times, as in this history, an event crystalizes a tenebrous progression as having held a purpose. Some “events” make notable changes in the world, such as wars or civil rights endeavors, but events are most often relegated to be continuity frames for occurrences in the world. The more people agree (with “fidelity”) that an event was actually an event, the larger the event is. However, without recognition an event remains, as Badiou says, an “inconsistent multiplicity”.⁴⁴ Especially in the case of the Allerton Seminars, it is quite clear that initiatives between 1934 and 1949 were not *understood* as a cumulative development until conference participants were able to coordinate them as a coherent broadcasting infrastructure. Continuity was identified after the fact.

Second, Michael Apple’s work on “strategic alliances”⁴⁵ argues in the tradition of Raymond Williams that every social movement must call upon a combination of past and present beliefs to advocate for a plausible solution to a social problem. Social problems are structurally based, but are often addressed by activists on a case-by-case basis. This means that groups with widely dissenting viewpoints can and often do work together to create common solutions for specific social problems, and are able to do so because they find middle ground by calling upon the same past or present logics. As a historical media advocacy characterized by a slow, decentralized, strategic approach to system building, advocates worked together *in culmination* on the specific issue of securing a stable place for educational broadcasting in the U.S.

⁴⁴ Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. *ibid*

⁴⁵ Apple, M. W. *Educating the “Right” Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality*. New York and London: Routledge/Falmer, 2001.

The combination of these two polity approaches to history has helped me to understand how a social movement can be built around a concept. In this historical case, I argue, overlapping fidelity to key concepts about the purpose of broadcasting technology acted as the primary motivation leading to social change. Further, I believe that calling upon the methods of intellectual history to account for the ways in which concepts of the purpose of technology have materialized in social practice, will aid the discovery of as-yet uncovered uses of media by social movements. I suspect that there are many examples of unaccounted for and decentralized media advocacies historically and in the current media environment. To use Badiou's terms, many initiatives have not achieved their "event" status yet—including our own enormous system of public broadcasting—and require critical history excavation to introduce their initiatives to public circulation.

I argue that while public broadcasting is not a genuinely "leftist" history, it is a part of critical media history. It reveals how the question of *intent* is, ultimately, the most basic and fundamental difference between commercial and noncommercial media industries. In practice public broadcasting and network broadcasting are very similar, except that public broadcasting has historically been, with notable exceptions, much less effective at making "quality" broadcasting, as defined by mainstream practices, and has had, on the one hand, a difficult time acting as an educational extension, and on the other hand, retaining intended audiences. Commercial broadcasters are marvels at producing efficient, entertaining, and abundant content. But public broadcasting has always intended to serve a different historical purpose. Public and educational broadcasting has attempted to serve minority demographics; has utilized its research to improve overtly educational purposes, such as classroom extension services; and most crucially was built

to materialize civic aspirations instead of profit lines. This last point is consequently one plausible explanation for why it took so long for its practitioners to develop a coherent set of aesthetic values and affective techniques: the purpose of the program was not to entertain but to inform and educate.

Further, as noted by Mitchell,⁴⁶ Avery,⁴⁷ Brooks' important dissertation,⁴⁸ and others, for such a large infrastructure of program production, research, and reception, public broadcasting has constantly been in financial crisis. There are quite a few reasons for this, but one fundamental reason often not discussed is that a finance model has never genuinely existed beyond university funding and philanthropic underwriting. Commercial broadcasting's entertainment and profit model continues to impress, rapidly innovate, and evolve, but the difference in core *intention* between public and commercial models indicates that networks cannot replace the social contribution of public broadcasting. As public broadcasting weathers a new wave of attacks upon its state, federal, viewer/listener, and philanthropic funding by *both* the left and the right, I hope that a study of the many trials it took to build such a system will clarify why it exists.

6 Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One (1934-1936) examines how the Communications Act of 1934 engendered expansive interest in strategies aimed at retaining and defending frequency assignments for educational broadcasters, through improvement of educational station practice. Drawing on correspondence, memos, policy reports, speeches, official releases, board

⁴⁶ Mitchell, Jack. *Listener Supported: The Culture and History of Public Radio*. NYC: Praeger Publishers, 2005.

⁴⁷ Avery, R. Pepper, R. "An Institutional History of Public Broadcasting." *Journal of Communication*. Volume 30, Issue 3. 1980.

⁴⁸ Brooks, Carolyn. *Documentary Programming and the Emergence of the National Educational Television Center as a Network, 1958-1972*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison Doctoral Dissertation, 1994.

minutes, and ledgers from the Rockefeller Archive Center, the National Association for Educational Broadcasters collection at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, and the National Archives holdings for the Office of Education and the FCC, the chapter looks at the political aftermath of the regulation on the prospects for educational radio. Despite the loss of station licenses for many less active educational broadcasters, their cause gained a new ally in the federal Office of Education, mandated by the Act. Practitioners pursued one of the largest early administrative experiments ever to attempt to interconnect educational stations, stimulating the Rockefeller Foundation to begin its substantial philanthropic underwriting of noncommercial media research.

Specifically, the chapter begins by looking at problems educational broadcasters had faced during the pre-1934 period, which included a lack of understanding about programming, regulatory processes, and audience building, as well as an absence of collaboration and communication between stations and educational advocates. Many of the problems from this period became the subject of deliberate focus for reformers after 1934. In the aftermath of the Communications Act, it is noteworthy that advocates did not attempt to overturn the Act, but pursued strategies to eventually meet its criteria. As a crucial precedent to later advocacy development, the newly-created Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a follow-up prescriptive statement, "*Pursuant to the Act*," that set forth technological, administrative, and programming standards that would be applied in future assignments. This call was received seriously by the federal Office of Education (OOE), which had hoped to utilize radio for federal educational initiatives. The FCC and the OOE coordinated two major conferences in 1936 and 1937 to determine what courses of action would best lead to educational

broadcasting development. Together they formed an umbrella organization called the Federal Radio Education Committee (FREC). To finance FREC initiatives they solicited the Rockefeller Foundation's (RF) Humanities Fund, which had just begun to expand its interest in mass media through the efforts of director John Marshall. Marshall had already funded several earlier attempts to emulate the success of the commercial networks in an educational context, exemplified in this chapter by the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago.

In a relatively short time, the FREC was able to stimulate increased organization and cooperation, as well as funding, for educational broadcasters as well as creating the first national clearinghouse for quality educational broadcasting programs. The FREC further set up several subcommittees to conduct research into how to measure the effectiveness of educational technology. The most prominent committee was called the Committee of Six, and was built in cooperation with commercial interests, featuring half educational researchers and half network executives. The activities of this Committee, populated by well-known figures such as Frank Stanton, Paul Lazarsfeld, and John Royal of NBC, had an enormous influence on the changing conceptualization of educational broadcasting over the next decade.

Chapter Two (1935-1941) examines core precedents for the development of standards in educational radio administration, program design, and research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of curricular content. Drawing on internal correspondence, ledgers, press releases, and development notes from the Rockefeller Archive Center and National Association for Educational Broadcasters, this chapter looks at internal discussions and initiatives undertaken by practitioners and early activists. The chapter focuses on the first

systematic evaluation of educational efforts by BBC Director of Talks Charles Siepmann, the Rocky Mountain Radio Council's first major administrative success as a noncommercial "network", and the origin of broadcasting research attempts by land-grant universities to evaluate and adjust instructional content.

In 1936 John Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation sought advice on which to make funding decision for educational broadcasting practice and research, leading to the invitation of several BBC practitioners to the States. Charles Siepmann immediately became an influential figure in the fabric of noncommercial media advocacy. Siepmann's study of existing educational stations, combined with his influential assertions of BBC-inflected practice and standards, would greatly influence Marshall and other officials and establish his voice at the center of reformist policy in the United States over the next thirty years.

Chapter Three (1936-1941)

Simultaneously, A.G. Crane, president of the University of Wyoming, began to experiment with a network-like infrastructure for educational broadcasting modeled on the Chicago-based, and Rockefeller-funded, University Broadcast Council. Called the Rocky Mountain Radio Council (RMRC), Crane brought together stations scattered across several states in the Rocky Mountain region for streamlined "rebroadcasting" of educational content, which Crane presciently named "public radio" programs. Along the same lines, this chapter discusses how activists from the pre-1934 period changed their strategy from lobbying for set-aside frequencies to system building aimed at meeting the expectations of FCC as set out in the "*Pursuant*" (307) document post-1934. In this vein, two of the longest-standing primary educational broadcasting centers to persist after the

Communications Act—station WHA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and WOSU at Ohio State University—began to develop methods of establishing empirical evidence of broadcasting effectiveness to demonstrate to regulators that educational broadcasting deserved support. This emphasis on research into the impact of directed communication, heightened by rumors of impending war, soon began to dominate the course of media reform advocacy in the U.S., opening the gates for the expansion of academic study of mass media as a discipline. Communications research began to emphasize evidence-based results due to requirement imposed on broadcasters by regulators and funding organizations. However, progress by NAEB members between 1936 and 1938 did not proceed quickly enough for John Marshall who, under the advisement of Charles Siepmann, cut funding to educators in 1938 and began to turn Rockefeller funding to other initiatives.

Chapter Four (1936-1941) takes a concurrent parallel track to Chapter 2, to examine how the FREC's Committee of Six Projects recommendations led to a series of "Projects" that devised the first methods of quantitative survey research applied to radio audiences, innovated to measure audience reception of curricular content. Drawing on correspondence, grant applications, internal "confidential" ledgers, conference minutes, and test results from the Rockefeller Archive Center, this chapter explores the origins of "media effects" research, still the dominant paradigm for the field of social science-based communication studies, which began as a composite of commercial broadcasting's demographic survey research combined with Hadley Cantril's application of social psychology concepts and methods.

Cantril was located at Princeton. He recruited two young researchers to aid him with “techniques” for understanding how information was received—Frank Stanton from CBS, who was from Ohio State and well versed in demographic research, and Paul Lazarsfeld, who was trained in empirical research and shared with educational broadcasters a strong sense of technology’s civic responsibility. Called the Princeton Radio Research Project (PRP), Cantril, Stanton, and Lazarsfeld innovated the first reliable quantitative methods for audience research, and established the first comprehensive demographic categories for audiences, including the capacity to adjust their study to variables in listening conditions. By 1939 their methods were so reliably reproducible by any research group that they turned their attention from educational radio purposes alone to media and public policy in general.

But Lazarsfeld remained worried that mere quantification of results carried an implicit appearance of neutrality that might undermine the civic goals of his research, and sought a speculative dimension to monitor the Project’s working concepts. The Project further needed a way to translate its findings into clear political language to convince the FCC that progress had indeed been made regarding education by radio. They first turned to Theodor Adorno, who was quite successful at influencing Lazarsfeld to conduct larger holistic analysis into the media effects paradigm, but who was unable to devise a usable civic language for empirical research. However, John Marshall of the RF rejected Adorno’s critical method, much to Lazarsfeld’s disappointment. Adorno’s role was taken by another member already affiliated with the PRP committee—Charles Siepmann—who believed that the PRP’s new approach to empirical evidence was sufficient for content development and political advocacy. The PRP’s development of methodological

standards were so widely and immediately influential that their approach became the foundation for all future broadcasting analysis and research funding; the Allerton Seminars would later institute their methods as the standard methodology for communication research departments. The FCC's requirement for effective standards of measurement had incited the unanticipated consequence of the creation of an entire academic discipline.

Chapter Five (1945-1952) examines how development initiatives discussed in the previous three chapters—administration, program standards, political advocacy, and audience research were carefully combined and orchestrated into a new institutional structure by educational broadcasting practitioners. At the same time, they began to influence federal regulatory changes in communications policy to include permanent set-aside frequencies for noncommercial broadcasting. Based on correspondence, memos, FCC press releases, speeches, FCC reports, and congressional documents from the National Association for Educational Broadcasters files at the WCFTR, the National Archives' Committee for Interstate and Foreign Commerce Commission and FCC collections, and the Rockefeller Archive Center, this chapter looks at the first major political campaign by the NAEB to protect early set-aside FM frequencies from commercial opposition, the final meeting of previous Rockefeller Foundation participants at the Allerton House Seminars in which previous initiatives were consolidated into a noncommercial "economy of scale", and the first broad regulatory victory for educational broadcasting, the Sixth Report and Order of 1952, the major precedent for the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967.

After WWII advocates and practitioners took stock of the previous years of administrative, research, and policy development. While by 1946 the Rockefeller Foundation had turned its attention to funding wartime initiatives, and the Princeton Radio Research Project participants had moved into other research questions, NAEB members had not given up on their original vision for noncommercial broadcasting and instruction by radio. After the war a second wave of advocates appeared at Wisconsin, Ohio State, and Illinois. These new advocates called upon knowledge of past administrative successes and failures, developed tactics for communications lobbying, and were the first generation trained in media effects research. Between 1946 and 1949 Richard Hull of the NAEB planned a major expansion of NAEB membership while he fought to protect experimental FM frequencies provided by education-friendly FCC Commissioner, Clifford Durr.

After the FCC instituted the “freeze”, the NAEB solicited the Rockefeller Foundation to fund two conferences in 1949 and 1950 called the Allerton House Seminars. The conference reunited the major figures of the previous 15 years to discuss the prospects for educational television. The conference was attended by NAEB members but also by Paul Lazarsfeld, Charles Siepmann, and John Marshall, all of whom had since soured on educational broadcasting, but agreed to return for this particular gathering. Wilbur Schramm at the University of Illinois was able to convince participants that educators had the tools they needed to compete with the commercial networks by combining post-1934 tactics into one coherent institutional approach based at universities. Instead of trying to set up a network-like alternative (such as the Rocky Mountain Radio Council), advocates would move to found academic departments

dedicated to all facets of media development and research, as a decentralized consortium. The NAEB would facilitate between departments and advise stations how to participate in their new national “economy of scale”, in which educational content could be conceived, produced, distributed, tested, and adjusted by educational researchers in line with public policy research before being archived at a national clearing house. Training future “majors” in methods, concepts, and production practices in university departments would further help to maintain advocacy funding, however meager, to sustain practitioner vision while new funding lines were developed.

The chapter closes with an analysis of the political events taking place between 1950 and 1952, in which Richard Hull and Dallas Smythe of the NAEB followed the NAEB’s 1946 defense of FM frequencies by setting out on a vigorous letter-writing campaign to the FCC and the Committee for Interstate and Foreign Commerce, which oversaw the FCC. The NAEB planned to convince congressmen that educators deserved their own special frequency assignments, protected from commercial competition. Thanks to an education-friendly Chair of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, Edwin C. Johnson, the NAEB received 11.7% of future television assignments, or 242 assignments in the Bill itself. By the conclusion of the television “freeze”, a previously disconnected and decentralized movement had combined past initiatives to become an interconnected infrastructure and won a crucial regulatory precedent for further advocacy.

7 Conclusion

This project endeavors to contribute to American cultural history by showing how the genealogical origins of public broadcasting must be understood as having emerged

from decentralized experiments that were united through their dedication to nonprofit and civically driven goals. This dissertation most closely addresses questions currently interrogated by the subfields of “media industry studies” and history of education studies, by looking to: 1) the internal workings of noncommercial institutions, as they related to educational, federal, and research expectations, 2) while keeping an eye on how philosophies of education influenced industry practice. The historical tie that binds the fields of media studies and educational studies together happens to be public broadcasting.

Is it possible to conduct a “curricular history” of industrial media practices? Is it possible to do an institutional history of a philosophy of education? These rhetorical questions have been very difficult to answer over the development of this project. However, my attempt to reconcile concerns from both disciplines culminated in what, as I described above, might be understood as an institutional history of an aspiration. There seems to be little doubt that this aspiration, which can be defined as the promotion of democratic participation through the use of technology for education, has not achieved its ambitious goal. How could it? But by chronicling how advocates translated an aspirational concept into institutional practice, I hope to show how their concerted attempts changed our perspectives about the conceptual and political purposes of technology.

Broadcasting and education are dominant “media” for circulating concepts, opinion, information, and belief. We cannot know what critical, progressive, or innovative uses of technology have been envisioned until cultural historians have excavated past initiatives that have been silenced or which have failed. One place to start

is with the largest gap in our current institutional media record—public broadcasting history. Literally millions of pages of documents are extant and remain unprocessed. Somehow, “media studies” has yet to even examine the second largest history of broadcasting in the U.S., which is also incidentally the widest public system with the largest audience in noncommercial broadcasting history. Of all ironies, the history of public broadcasting in the U.S. turns out to be a core genealogical foundation for the discipline of media studies itself. I make no specific claim about how and why such a fundamental source for the discipline has been ignored for so long, or why there is so little interest in the origin of the field itself. But I argue that a conceptual change in what we mean by a “media industry” beyond entertainment and logics of accumulation will help to correct our field of vision. What if the study of media began with ethical *questions* and a concept of media as participating in social solutions, instead of beginning with case examples of production practices?

Media industries are fascinatingly complex, impressively capable of targeting and predicting demographic audience preference (and have continuously improved at this since the late 1930s), and, it’s rarely noted, are populated by a huge production culture of civically minded writers, producers, and developers who want to, and *succeed* in, changing culture perspective—often in small ways but for the better. But the gestalt of the media industry is also fundamentally driven by its profit-based structure. The very organization of the system requires an influx of revenues, and, to borrow Althusser’s words, in “the last instance” this logic regulates and filters, with some exceptions, possible interventions by individual employees.

While some work in political economy can be overly critical, media industry studies often falls into the opposite trope of claiming that social change is most easily accomplished by an industrial production culture that meets the diversity of consumer habits. At worst such a position can manifest as a mere ideological trope, most closely associated not with content developers but the public relations wings of media industries (such as the trades). The result, ironically, is that a media industry studies that relies upon the “trades” or public relations information will miss individual interventions within production cultures, because the paradigm is so centered upon validation of the object of study.

Without question, commercial broadcasting and popular culture are fascinating media for public interaction because many citizens are closely attuned to and respond to representations in these spheres in extremely personal ways. And if a public model—one that increases community participation, provides an outlet for minority voice, and serves social expediencies instead of self-maintenance—can be held up as a point of comparison to commercial industries when evaluating public *participation*, I hope the contours of the debate itself might shift to comparative evaluations of the civic outcomes of institutional models.

Chapter 1: Groundwork for National Educational Broadcasting Administration: Before and After the Communications Act of 1934

This chapter examines how the “problem” of educational broadcasting was identified and addressed by regulatory, educational, and philanthropic groups after the Communications Act of 1934. The origin of public broadcasting in the U.S., as the introduction argues, began as a combination of unconnected initiatives commenced by self-selected advocates to seek solutions to problems with programming, administration, and audience measurement. While McChesney,⁴⁹ Slotten,⁵⁰ and Vaillant’s⁵¹ works have covered core regulatory and practitioner innovations to educational broadcasting before 1934, little work has been conducted on the period directly after the Act.

This chapter argues that the key to understanding how educational broadcasting evolved into public broadcasting in the U.S relies upon a new interpretation of educational broadcasting’s practices before 1934, not as a unified front but as an inefficient and decentralized experiment that nonetheless progressed into an emergent institution by the late 1950s. An analysis of the ways in which practitioners and advocates interpreted educational radio’s failings, and perhaps more centrally the degree to which educational broadcasting had failed as a professional broadcasting enterprise in the years before the Communications Act of 1934, is central for understanding how public broadcasting evolved after regulation.

⁴⁹ McChesney, Robert W. *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of US Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

⁵⁰ Slotten, Hugh. *Radio’s Hidden Voice: The Origins of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

⁵¹ Vaillant, Derek. *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

The Communications Act of 1934 assigned frequencies in accordance with how applicants met stipulations for “public interest, convenience, and necessity”. While commercial broadcasters were able to meet these requirements due to massive infrastructural investment in wires, manufacturing, advertising support, and content, the educational broadcasters were based in underfunded university stations, and few had the resources, equipment, or administrative structure for appropriate development. Yet the Communications Act, this chapter and dissertation argues, set two crucial precedents for the early period of educational/public broadcasting that culminated more than two decades later at The Allerton House Seminars. 1) The Act forced educators to devise strategies to meet criteria for “public interest, convenience, and necessity” while retaining strategic dedication to educational goals. 2) This inspired new advocates to contribute innovations in curricular method, radio station management, and program production to the advocacy. Educators, policymakers, and federal institutions were faced with a difficult question: how to combine the qualities of commercial broadcasting, the model on which communications regulation was based, with the rigorous demands of an effective educational and civic curriculum? This question was, they quickly found out, compounded by additional questions regarding how to locate a stable source of funding without advertising.

The initial period of development, directly after the Communications Act, is covered in this chapter by examining five major initiatives. The chapter begins with a discussion of internal concerns voiced by educational broadcasters leading up to the 1934 Act. Educational broadcasting did not begin as a unified front, but rather a problematic experiment with few genuine pioneers. The chapter then covers the four major initiatives

after the Act, in which federal, philanthropic, and city-based consortia attempted to sort out the difficulties facing educational broadcasters through a series of conferences and initiatives. First, overlooked by previous scholars, archival evidence reveals that the immediate growth of advocacy was unexpectedly inspired by a *Pursuant* document (307) issued in 1934 by E.O. Sykes of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that offered recommendations for how educational broadcasting might compete with the commercial networks for frequency assignments. Directly after the Act, the FCC along with the federal Office of Education (OOE) sought to devise a dialogue between commercial and educational interests so that educational radio might locate solutions for its problems. Second, this chapter looks at how the organization created by the FCC and OOE's initiative—the Federal Radio Education Committee (FREC)—recruited the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) Humanities Fund to underwrite new initiatives directed towards fixing problems with educational broadcasting. These problems were discussed at a national conference held in 1936.

Third, this chapter looks at how the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago (UBC) set key precedents by identifying key problems in educational broadcasting and attempting to fix them by creating the first network-like attempt for educational program production and circulation. Instead of advertising and profit development, the UBC relied upon a mix of funds from local Chicago universities, museums, and philanthropic sources, specifically the Rockefeller Foundation. The UBC staff was the first to recruit multiple practitioners, including educators, curators, superintendents, and commercial broadcasters, into the educational radio effort. Finally, this chapter looks at a second national conference conducted by the FREC that set up a clearinghouse for educational

programming at the Office of Education, as well as the creation of a research group—the Committee of Six—dedicated to the improvement of educational broadcasting administration, programming, and practice.

The Federal Radio Education Committee, based in the Office of Education and including members from all representative interests in broadcasting, was at the center of early institutional growth. And public broadcasting could not have appeared without the significant support of the Rockefeller Foundation’s underwriting of FREC initiatives.

1.1 The Aspirations of Educational Broadcasting: The Association of College and University Broadcasting Stations (ACUBS), 1925-1934

Formed in 1925, the Association of College and University Broadcasting Stations (ACUBS), who changed their name to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) in 1934, began quite a-politically as an association dedicated to basic exchange of information about different university experiments in educational broadcasting. Due to a series of serendipities discussed in this dissertation, ACUBS/NAEB became the primary advocacy group for noncommercial media production and lobbying after 1934. As will be discussed in later chapters, its members streamlined the first standards for educational programming, distribution, and training. But before 1934 ACUBS carried little awareness or interest in acting as a national organization with lofty goals. They were not major innovators in the 1920s or early 1930s and took a secondary role to federal and philanthropic initiatives through the late 1940s. Yet this dissertation in many ways is about how the NAEB eventually evolved into what would become PBS and NPR by successfully incorporating the innovations, insights, and initiatives of others during the 1930s.

To make sense of the arc of public broadcasting history, and to understand how and *why* ACUBS/NAEB became so well organized and effective in the 1950s, it's crucial to understand how it worked before 1934. Broadly stated, educational broadcasting was composed of three basic approaches during this period: 1) engineering based experimentation with little creative production or focus on audiences, 2) exploratory and radio practices accomplished at isolated stations by individual educators, and 3) a small but productive and astute set of activist groups with a progressive-era orientation toward allocating radio as a public resource. Categories 2 and 3 have been well-chronicled by Slotten,⁵² but the vast majority of early non-commercial broadcasting practice fell into category 1.

Early stations left little to no trace after disappearing in the 1920s and 1930s. This creates a huge historiographical problem that has led to an exaggerated focus on successful stations, those with responsible recordkeeping and an eye on policy that employed perhaps, at most, a dozen employees and graduate assistants. Aside from these exceptions, the story of early educational broadcasting is rather one of significant *confusion* about the workings of broadcasting technology, programming, and policy, which later advocates sought to remedy. The best traces we have of early failed experiments in educational broadcasting come from ACUBS records, which persuasively chronicle just how unorganized and disorganized initial broadcasting practices were. After the majority of ineffective early stations based at universities and civic institutions were eliminated in the wake of the Communications Act, remaining affiliated institutions

⁵² Slotten, Hugh. *Radio and Television Regulation: Broadcast Technology in the United States, 1920-1960*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

turned their attention toward improving broadcasting practices in ways early practitioners had not understood.

The origin of public broadcasting in the U.S. is thus in many ways a story of the tenacity of the NAEB after multiple regulatory defeats in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, before succeeding in 1952. Put tersely, the early history of public broadcasting is the history of an underdog with a vision: the effective utilization of technology for education, *for a civic purpose*. Their vision of a purpose-based approach to broadcasting acted as the central catalyzing logic for aesthetic, institutional, and political decisions.

1.2 Founding the ACUBS

ACUBS was founded in November of 1925 after the Fourth National radio Conference in Washington, DC. Noting how well organized and networked early commercial broadcasters seemed to be, educators decided to band. But stations were geographically apart and there was little to talk about besides a desire to use radio stations for extant distance learning initiatives. ACUBS' mission statement remained remarkably unchanged until after the Communications Act, and was not dramatically updated until 1935. This quote well captures most of the early activities of the organization.

“Believing that radio is in its very nature one of the most important factors in our national and international welfare, we, the representatives of institutions of higher learning, engaged in educational broadcasting, do associate ourselves together to promote, by mutual cooperation and united

effort, the dissemination of knowledge to the end that both the technical and educational features of broadcasting may be extended to all.”⁵³

This document fairly well describes many of ACUBS’ early activities, roughly stated the binding together of various educational institutions. Indeed, it remained unclear what the organization’s services were to the members, and most of the early internal correspondence—until 1929—has just to do with collecting dues in the amount of \$3.00 per year. Anecdotally, in 1926 there were 41 members paying dues. By December 19, 1926, ACUBS only had a bank balance of \$74.50.⁵⁴ And in 1927 their bank closed, leaving them with nothing. The group struggled greatly in these earliest years; by 1927 membership had dropped to 37, and the group only had an end of the year balance of \$15.

As Harold Hill (1954) states in his brief history of the NAEB (which is written solely from their bulletins) members were occupied with problems of keeping their own stations on the air and trying to arouse the interest of other stations. The group looked doomed to failure by 1929, but things changed greatly after the first annual convention held in Columbus, Ohio on July 1, 1930. The meeting had been convened largely over the issue of many universities having to share bandwidths with commercial broadcasters and the Federal Radio Commission stripping, changing, or removing frequency assignments.

Taking their cue from the precedent of the “modern school”⁵⁵ and land-grant university philosophies such as the “Wisconsin Idea”, early practitioners believed that the creation of an ethereal “social center” would encourage a civic-based democratic sphere

⁵³ First Constitution of ACUBS, 1926. WHS, Box 110.

⁵⁴ Hill, H. A History of the NAEB. Wisconsin Historical Society.

⁵⁵ Reese, William. *Power and Promise of School Reform*. NYC: Teacher College Press, 1980.

that would promote social equity through continuous participation.⁵⁶ In determining how technology “should” be used for educational purposes, basic tenets were repeatedly emphasized to inform the process of organizational construction. In internal correspondence that reported internal progress about the association, three basic topics are repeatedly discussed by ACUBS before 1934: 1) educational radio should be a nonprofit institution, 2) educational radio’s purpose as not appealing to broad demographics but serving underrepresented populations and educational efforts, and 3) providing an account of the number and type of new shows being debuted at university stations.

The social outlook of the organization was rooted in contemporary philosophies of education, most prominently Dewey’s concept of experiential learning.⁵⁷ But in terms of practice, the introduction of correspondence from the National Committee for Education by Radio (NCER), a reformist group underwritten by the Payne Fund and distantly affiliated with Ohio State University, incited ACUBS members to first crystallize their position. Tracy Tyler of the NCER maintained constant contact with the ACUBS and reported regulatory events to the group. He also provided the ACUBS with the earliest and strongest vision of the purpose an organization like the NAEB might serve for noncommercial media.⁵⁸ For example in a 1929 letter he encouraged the organization that its members would need to supplement, but not try to supplant, the

⁵⁶ Between the 1880s and 1920s public schools and land-grant universities endeavored to expand public education to reach every citizen in a state via different distance learning initiatives and satellite institutions. The philosophy of universal public education is most famously articulated by Charles Van Hise’s concept of “The Wisconsin Idea”, that the university should be available to every citizen in the state for the purposes of that specific citizen. This applied to basic skills such as reading and writing, as well as modern agricultural techniques. Once public extensions were created, they also tended to act as sites for democratic exchange in the form of town hall meetings, which Reese describes as “social centers”.

⁵⁷ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980.

⁵⁸ Tracy Tyler on the NCER, to the NAEB. May 24, 1929. NAEB Papers, Box 1.

private system to survive in the regulatory environment of the 1920s. As has been chronicled by McChesney, the various Radio Conferences and Orders passed in the buildup to 1934 had promoted a commercial-friendly environment. In a particularly rich passage, he posited that universities had “one of the most powerful and effective existent tools for popular education” and also for adult education. “[D]evelopment of programs of adult education will help offset the present tendency toward centralization and network monopoly.”⁵⁹ The NCER, so well chronicled by McChesney in his seminal work, must be understood as a foundational influence for the philosophy of noncommercial media.

Tyler’s letters, as evidenced by many personal memos, persuaded B.B. Brackett of KUSD South Dakota, ACUBS’ Secretary at this time.

“What is the fundamental purpose of any school owned broadcast organization? To educate as many persons as possible and to disseminate as much accurate and reliable information as it can...the persons directing our college and university stations are as capable as any persons in the world to decide whether the material presented is educational or otherwise and surely no class of persons are more honest or more certain to report exactly what they believe is true.”⁶⁰

Other core members – the majority at Midwestern land-grant university stations, especially those at Wisconsin, Iowa State, Iowa, and Ohio State – were more occupied with experimentation of classroom extension services. However, the NCER staff consisted of, at most, a dozen researchers, practitioners, and activists. This is to be

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Internal Correspondence from Brackett to Baird on March 1, 1932. NAEB Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

contrasted with the educational broadcasters, which in numbers, depending on the document (and there's wide inconsistency between reports) hovered between 170 and 220 station licenses for much of the early 1930s through 1934. Besides the inner circle of ACUBS members that paid close attention to NCER reports—numbering perhaps 14 universities at most—there is no paper trail showing that other stations actively addressed the relationship between political questions and station practice.

1.3 Early Development of Educational “Best Practices”: WOSU, Ohio State

While the philosophy of educational broadcasting began to unite a core group into one institutional vision in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the commercial networks achieved unprecedented progress in the development of their economy of scale. Commercial networks and stations developed an advertising system to fund program development without the need for manufacturer support,⁶¹ mastered production techniques for effective and popular programming,⁶² and mounted aggressive lobbying operations to obtain new frequency assignments.⁶³

Meanwhile the institutional concept of educational broadcasting remained stronger than its practices. The few remaining documents are not entirely clear, but of the roughly 70-80 stations accounted for by ACUBS' peak internal survey, only 8-10 were actively on the air more than a few hours per day, if at all. Universities had obtained licenses before 1925 on behalf of engineering and physics departments' experimentation with

⁶¹ Smulyan, Susan. *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

⁶² Vancour, Shawn. *The Sounds of Radio: Aesthetic Formations of 1920s American Broadcasting*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison Doctoral Dissertation, 2008; Russo, Alexander Todd. "Roots of Radio's Rebirth: Audiences, Aesthetics, Economics, and Technologies of American Broadcasting, 1926-1951." Ph. D. diss., Brown University, 2004; Socolow, Michael. "To Network a Nation: N.B.C., C.B.S., and the Development of National Network Radio in the United States, 1925-1950." Ph. D. diss., Georgetown University, 2001.

⁶³ McChesney, *ibid*

radio waves⁶⁴—before the rise of commercial network broadcasting—and had largely taken their licenses for granted. Stations went underfunded and without administrative support, and sometimes acted as toys for local “amateurs”.⁶⁵

Programs further lacked a coherent educational project. Anecdotally, there were reports of professors with high nasal voices speaking indistinctly into a microphone at unannounced times during the week, the development of programs on the west coast dedicated to state residents learning to use “modern plumbing”⁶⁶, and a proud report from B.B. Brackett himself that he had started a humorous program for local residents in “low German dialect”.⁶⁷ As strongly as Brackett supported the concept of protecting a nonprofit motive in radio, his station, like most others, was clearly confused about what pedagogical content would entail, let alone how it might attract audiences.

In contrast to the trend of seemingly “random” program schedules, two schools in particular—Wisconsin and Ohio State—put a substantial amount of effort and resources into educational broadcasting development. The discrepancy between institutional quality and broadcasting was strongly noted quite early by Ohio State, which had begun to develop early research in educational film and visual education via monies from the Payne Fund.⁶⁸ Wisconsin’s School of the Air began in 1931, directed by future NAEB presidents Harold McCarty and later Harold Engel, focused primarily on the incorporation of education and entertainment. McCarty had been trained in theater before his directorship. But Ohio State was utterly serious about classroom instruction extension

⁶⁴ Douglas, Susan. *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987; Shepperd, Josh. “Radio Pioneers in Madison.” Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, 2008.

⁶⁵ Douglas, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ NAEB Ledgers, 1925-1930, NAEB Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

⁶⁷ “What Educational Stations are Doing”, NAEB Papers, Box 1.

⁶⁸ See Edgar Dale Papers, Unprocessed, Box 141-151-6. Ohio State University.

services and related research, and they created the first effective correspondence classes by radio.

For example, WOSU's adult education series, *Emergency Radio Junior College*, was instituted as a college level radio course in 1932. The series was run on a budget of \$2000 a month to office help, postage, and printing. The program was underwritten by the state, enrolled around 400 students, and some classes were directly broadcast from university class rooms. Students were issued a book, as well, with enrollment.⁶⁹ The program was described as a series of 'special courses' prepared for radio presentation by regular faculty on every major subject, presented three to four days a week. Their goal was to offer five to eight courses per quarter in a structure similar to classes, with proficiency examinations and mimeographed texts distributed free of charge. Between 1932 and 1933, enrollment mounted from 624 to 1538 total, with 1200 in a single class. Approximately 80 Ohio counties were represented in the registered listening audience, with students' ages ranging from 17 to 80, with a median age of 31. 18% of students were under 20, with 12% over 60. Of those students, women were three times as numerous as men, and 88% were high school graduates.

Courses such as this, with demographic evidence still extant in records, reveal just how strong OSU's investment in instructional broadcasting was, but also how difficult it was to streamline an administrative infrastructure for educational broadcasting. Educational radio was not merely a replacement of classroom lecture through a microphone but a wide bureaucratic enterprise requiring many employees. One internal

⁶⁹ Higgy on history of Ohio Emergency Radio Junior College, Letter on Sept. 9, 1935. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

report noted that at least 15-20 radio supervisors were needed to assist in publicizing the classes throughout the state. The program had none on hand.

Internal reports worried that the entire educational endeavor was impractical. Much of the time classes had to be assembled so that large groups could sit around a radio. Why not just go to the lecture hall or have an on-site teacher? (The obvious answer was that radio courses carried a higher potential audience.) Their concern over the question of best practices led to the creation of the first academic degree program dedicated to radio research in 1931, from which future president of CBS Frank Stanton, also of the Princeton Radio Research Project (Chapter 3) would graduate.⁷⁰

In the early 1930s Ohio State was the only university that attempted to help other educational broadcasters improve their practice. They held yearly radio education conferences, and in 1931 announced the formation of an institute for Education by Radio that would be devoted to examining technical aspects of radio, program management, and broadcast administration. To encourage other stations to devote time to developing good broadcast practices they held drama contests that demanded significant work in preparation on subjects like memorization, voice intonation, aural spatialization, etc. Plays were capped at 40 minutes, as a one-act of a longer adaptation. Each school was judged on presentation and effectiveness of broadcast material. Ohio State studio rehearsals were arranged so each drama group could produce the “perfect synchronization of lines and sound effects” necessary for the performance. It was recommended that the play should have a limited cast and adhere to certain requirements:

1. “The fewer the scenes the easier to follow

⁷⁰ Higgy in NAEB Bulletin. March 31, 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 19, Folder 1931.

2. A play with a *sound basis* permits the introduction of substitutes for lighting and staging. Music can be used to suggest emotional tone or background
3. Cues must be quickly picked up and tempo is faster in radio drama. Pauses for action suggest only mechanical trouble.
4. Conversational mode is required due to the psychology of the home audience.
5. Diction, pronunciation and breathing are to be noted.
6. Definite characterizations help ‘put the play across’.
7. The play should be timed carefully.
8. Perfect synchronization of lines and sound effects are necessary.”

And strangely, the last point included a short note about guarding against “eye prejudices cast by voice.” What this means I can only speculate in terms of racial biases of this period.⁷¹ Yet, Ohio State had correctly calculated that official activities and related “rewards” for improvement of best practices, through participation, would benefit educational broadcast institutions. But their efforts understandably were dwarfed by the widespread nascence of the field of educational broadcasting. Of roughly 200 stations, it is safe to say that 90% of radio licenses went either underused or inappropriately applied to educational extension.

1.4 ACUBS’ Attempt to Encourage Best Practices Within its Membership

Between 1930 and 1932, as described above, it became clear to core ACUBS members that classroom practices could not simply be transferred to radio. It required in the minimum special lecture techniques, an understanding of radio’s technical properties,

⁷¹ Higgy to NAEB, Dec. 17, 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 19, Folder 1931.

and an organized administrative structure of production. Few stations understood this. Indeed between 1931 and 1933 almost every posting in ACUBS bulletins or within internal correspondence spoke to the pervasive problems of producing educational content on a shoestring budget, with a lack of trained practitioners and little understanding of radio as a medium. Shows were poorly promoted, would air once or twice and then never again, and, frustratingly for universities, the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) was constantly changing station frequencies.⁷² The result, of course, was low listenership. In one letter B.B. Brackett wrote that the “larger perception is that universities don’t broadcast well and are hard to hear”.⁷³ Merrill Denison, a playwright who also served as a consultant on many educational programs for a network-affiliated organization called the Radio Institute of Audible Arts, aptly said of educational radio best practices:

“Radio has given education a new medium, but it has also presented it with a rather overwhelming challenge. There is an audience for every program, provided the program is technically well constructed and is presented to that section of the audience for which it is intended. An audience of millions is waiting to lend attentive ears to anyone who can interest it and holds its attention. But the successful use of the new medium challenges many time honored traditions of the classroom and campus. It challenges first and foremost the professors’ sacred right to be dull. The educator if he wishes to grasp the remarkable opportunities afforded him by radio, must go to school to the showman, the journalist, the

⁷² B.B. Brackett to Ted Beaird, 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁷³ Brackett, internal note, on Feb 6, 1932. NAEB Papers, Box 110.

feature writer, the populizers of scientific themes and to those men who have made a study and profession of broadcasting.”⁷⁴

F. H. Lumley, Frank Stanton’s advisor at Ohio State, set about trying to develop the earliest precursory forms of demographic research to account for trends in listener reception to programs. In 1932 he devised a document for ACUBS regarding “five conditions” that he felt “handicapped the development of the educational medium”.⁷⁵ Among the problems were lack of publicity for educational programs, “appropriateness of presentation”, and “adequate remuneration for talent.” These very basic tasks, at the heart of commercial practice, went unaddressed by educational practitioners before 1934.

B. H. Darrow, an early pioneer of educational broadcasting at Ohio State, had similarly attempted to address problems of “best practices” with a 10-point Special Bulletin to the ACUBS in 1931.

“1. Stations need to provide satisfactory equipment. 2. Radio education should be conducted in small listening groups in classrooms. 3. Make sure each class listens only to the features intended for them and insist on close attention. 4. Develop interest in every broadcast by providing the necessary groundwork by which a lecture is significant and to prepare the audience for the following information. 5. Learn to speak to motor activities and visual activities by directing students to maps drawings outlines, etc. 6. Ameliorate lectures with imaginative activities such as dramatization and description. 7. Treat radio received information the same as other information and include it in exams so students dutifully listen. 8. Provide retention from discussions by making it a requirement to keep notebooks.

⁷⁴ Denison to NAEB, correspondence. NAEB Papers, Undated, Box 101.

⁷⁵ Lumley to NAEB, “The Needs of Educational Broadcasting, 1932. NAEB Papers, Box 19.

9. Foster discussion of broadcasts heard both at home and at school. 10. Look for every suggestion for the improvement of the broadcasts.”⁷⁶

But the ACUBS did not hold enough influence among stations to persuade practitioner reforms. And as the FRC moved closer to permanent broadcast regulation between 1931 and 1933, the NCER moved from providing information and conceptual arguments to sounding alarm for educators. As McChesney has shown, the NCER was acutely aware of impending regulatory changes and began to realize just how close educators were to losing their frequencies due to inefficiency. Armstrong Perry of the NCER wrote to NAEB officials that the “average listener” was in a state of “hopeless confusion as far as knowledge or programs”.⁷⁷ Some system for distribution of quality programs would be necessary, perhaps a wire transmission between stations. Further, besides being scheduled unpredictably, educational programs were rarely longer than 15 minutes. Longer programs featuring dialogue, drama, and music would be necessary to persuade the FRC that quality programming was being produced at universities.⁷⁸

One of the earliest federal supporters of noncommercial media, the Department of Agriculture, attempted to notify educational stations of an impending regulatory crisis. Morse Salisbury, in a departmental report titled “Educational Broadcasting in 1928-1933,” painted a grim picture of the performance of educational radio through 1933. “Previous hopes surged high and public prints teemed with glowing predictions”, but by 1933 the poor quality of educational broadcasts had “exploded” his belief that radio had

⁷⁶ NAEB Special Bulletin, Oct 9, 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 19.

⁷⁷ Armstrong Perry to NAEB, 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

⁷⁸ Perry to NAEB, 1931.

“magical powers of education”.⁷⁹ This had led the Department of Agriculture to cease its support of educational broadcasting as an alternative to the networks just before the regulatory decisions of 1934. Radio education simply could not compare in effective instruction value with courses given in residence to a few people, the Department of Agriculture had concluded.

“You can’t expect the radio organization of a university or a college to do a good job unless you give it authority. Further, stations need the editorial workers and production men and women and clerical help necessary to ask the good radio talent of the faculty and assist that talent in preparing and producing and following up really educational programs. And you can’t expect the good radio talent of the faculty to continue indefinitely piling more and more radio work on top of a full-time teaching or research program.”⁸⁰

Similarly the Office of Education had noticed that the predominantly state and region-based experiments of universities little resembled the progress made by public education’s development of curricular standards. In a 1931 letter on behalf of the Commissioner of Education in D.C., the Office of Education implored universities to prepare speakers through broadcast instruction, and to train listener groups in how to understand live lectures, especially adult listeners. The letter noted that broadcasting had shown itself to be a “highly specialized art”, and that microphone technique related to diction, pronunciation, articulation, tone quality, accent, and general cultural effect

⁷⁹ Morse Salisbury, Chief of Radio Service at U.S. Department of Agriculture. “Educational Broadcasting, 1928-1933.” NAEB Papers, Box 19.

⁸⁰ *ibid*

needed to be addressed. To add insult, the letter instructed educators to ask themselves: “Did broadcasts make sense? Did audiences enjoy them?”⁸¹

Core ACUBS members took note of these warnings but could offer little in the way of solutions to the problem of curricular standards. ACUBS president and University of Illinois professor Joseph Wright wondered if educational stations should look to the “radio-formatting success of NBC?” as a way to streamline content. He then followed with an unofficial set of ACUBS recommendations for radio practices:

1. “Program contributors should be at station at least ten minutes before advertised hour for broadcasting. Observance will save announcer many anxious moments.
2. Faculty members responsible for musical programs should furnish the names of those appearing on each program at least one week in advance and the numbers to be presented at least 2 days in advance
3. Every address offered must be written in full and read into the microphone, not rapidly, and with clear enunciation in times of 10-12 minutes.
4. Copies of each address should go to program director one week before performance
5. Care should be exercised not to talk in a quotation including profanity and avoid controversial subjects like partisan politics, religion, prohibition, etc.
6. Make sure that no advertising is included during the talk.”⁸²

But stations simply could not afford experienced staff or remuneration of talent. In 1932, one report of educational stations noted that of 49 stations that were surveyed, 17 were forced to sell time to advertisers to subsidize the station’s activities and fees just to pay

⁸¹ Letter from Bess Goodykoontz. Dec. 17. 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 19.

⁸² Joseph Wright, internal memo 1931. NAEB Papers, Box 19.

for transmitter or line rental costs.⁸³ These same stations put little if any of those funds into actual production development. Support from Congress was famously half-hearted, as detailed by Slotten. And the NCER notified ACUBS members that a concerted effort would be necessary to influence communications deliberations.⁸⁴ As an example, Senator Dill introduced a Bill (#S 5201) that offered to charge educational stations less in taxes. But even these fees were much too high for educational station budgets.

By the time the Communications Act of 1934 assigned favorable frequencies to the technocratic-minded, technologically strong, and content-rich interests of NBC and CBS affiliates, it was clear that educational broadcasting was very far from meeting criteria for facility management or educational broadcasting content. They had barely been aware that such legislation was impending at all. The provisions of the Act itself will not be covered here due to the amount of attention it has received in other works and sources. But this dissertation contends that the commercial-friendly outcome in frequency allocations was as much a response to the utter lack of a coherent alternative as it was an outcome of commercial friendly mentality.

1.5 Post 1934: E.O. Sykes, the FCC, and Educational Frequency Assignments

As Slotten has shown, the Communications Act of 1934 primarily aligned the “public interest, convenience, and necessity” with the technological, programming, and administrative practices of commercial radio, using a technocratic lens that gave preference to broadcasters with working equipment, quality practices, and consistency and freshness of programs.⁸⁵ The FCC, constituted by the Act, was required to uphold the

⁸³ Letter from Tyler to Herman James, 1932, NAEB Papers, Box 19.

⁸⁴ Letter from Tyler to Wright, Jan. 9, 1933, NAEB Papers, Box 19.

⁸⁵ Slotten, Hugh. *Radio and television regulation: broadcast technology in the United States, 1920-1960*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

stipulations of this legislation. But existing academic literature has neglected the corresponding story of how the FCC provided a clear path for educators to gain future frequency allocations, and helped support advocacy efforts to meet these expectations. In collaboration with the Office of Education, policymakers ended the experimental phase of educational broadcasting while setting groundwork for media advocacy over the next fifteen years.

Upon passage of the Act, FCC Commissioner E.O. Sykes convened a series of hearings between October and November of 1934 in which 1,535 frequency allocation cases were reviewed, in consultation with twenty-one additional overseeing administrators, departments, commissions, and offices of the government.⁸⁶ One hundred and thirty-five witnesses testified at the hearings and fourteen thousand pages of testimony were analyzed by the Commission to define the terms of broadcast license assignments. Infamously, nearly every educational station was stripped of its frequency in favor of the basic functional expertise of commercial interests. An under-examined component of these hearings included a criteria by which commercial operators gained merit by “showing the service rendered by broadcasters to particular types or kinds of non-profit activities”.⁸⁷ The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) presented evidence that 75,773 hours, or 11.3% of all network broadcasting, counted as educational or non-profit public service programming. NAB representatives introduced statistics from 269 active stations showing that over twenty-five million dollars had been spent to ensure consistent programming. And it was asserted by the NAB that a greater percentage of the time might be considered as educational, if the FCC viewed the term “educational” in its

⁸⁶ Report of the Federal Communications Commission to Congress *Pursuant* to Section 307 (c) of the Communications Act of 1934. Rockefeller Archive Center, RF, Box 360, Folder 3710

⁸⁷ *ibid*

broadest sense to embrace all programs having a cultural or informative value.⁸⁸ Whether the NAB's rhetoric was specious or not, the FCC weighed this information as evidence that regulation preference stipulations framed with some reference to public service responsibilities. And since network affiliates could offer evidence that they provided some educational programming, as well as guarantee that at least one dependable radio signal would be available to residents of their community, they were viewed as the most likely purveyor of "equal access" to broadcasting.

However, this should not be interpreted as mere FCC support of commercial broadcasting. Shortly after the hearings, in a document produced by FCC Chairman E.O. Sykes titled *Report of the Federal Communications Commission to Congress Pursuant to Section 307 (c) of the Communications Act of 1934*, the FCC argued that its treatment of "non-profit" broadcasting was in large part based upon the Commission's attempt to meet the criteria of the Act for basic access – which did not include guaranteed access by specific groups.⁸⁹ Each group would have to substantiate their allocation by showing how they met stipulations of the act:

The Commission shall study the proposal that Congress by statute allocate fixed percentages of radio broadcasting facilities to particular types or kinds of non-profit radio programs, or to persons identified with particular types or kinds of non-profit activities, and shall report to Congress, not later than February 1, 1935, its recommendations together with the reasons for the same."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ Letter from Allen Miller to David Stevens. March 12, 1935. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 284, Folder 3394.

⁹⁰ FCC *Pursuant*, *ibid*

The FCC noted that all types of non-profit stations were represented during the study, but also that “no unanimity of thought or plan on the part of these organizations is apparent from the record.”⁹¹ Educators had not shown up to make their case as the commercial broadcasters had.

The FCC, directed by the law, was charged with the responsibility of licensing stations solely in accordance with “public interest, convenience, and necessity”—and the primary point to be taken from these deliberations is that the Commission interpreted assignments according to what extent “equality” was served in terms of the licensee’s ability to provide a basic broadcasting service to listeners. The Act, in other words, was written with a citizen model of reception access in mind, but little to no evaluative grounds for the quality or content of programming during deliberations. According to the FCC, all license holders were sent notice of these requirements by direct mail, and wide newspaper publicity was given to the matter of frequency assignment deliberations.

Interestingly, the Commission lamented that “few definite proposals” for dedicated educational station licenses were made by colleges or universities, and in fact several prominent educators had come out *against* stand-alone educational stations, hoping to protect “present cooperative efforts being carried on between commercial stations and non-profit organizations”.⁹² Further, according to the report, in their own testimony many non-profit organizations admitted to not being equipped or financially able to build and maintain full-time broadcasting stations. Noting limitation in “physical laws” and “number of available frequencies”, the FCC wrote that considerations “absolutely prevent any general enlargement of the number of broadcast stations”, and

⁹¹ FCC *Pursuant*, *ibid*

⁹² *ibid* (continued below)

that the addition of any appreciable number of new stations would “necessarily result in interference with existing stations and in consequent reduction of service areas with the tendency to limit broadcast service to areas immediately surrounding the location of transmitters”. Before undertaking to provide “special services” through the addition of new stations, Sykes reported that the first fundamental requirement for serving the general public under available laws would be fulfilled by providing at least one radio service of general interest and dependable signal quality.

While in hindsight non-profit broadcasters should not have been punished so dramatically for their experimental use of their stations licenses, FCC deliberations need to be viewed as constitutive of their bureaucratic responsibility that every region had access to some kind of content. This provision was not *necessarily* to eliminate educational or non-profit broadcasts, contrary to what McChesney has argued, but to ensure that educational programming would still be available given the unreliability of exiting non-profit licensees.⁹³ Commercial stations were tasked with the production of “sustaining” programming, understood to be at least in part educational or public service. That no provisions were made to allocate “special” frequencies for educators was reflective of the lack of stability on the part of educational broadcasters as of 1934.

However, the FCC remained open to educational broadcasting allocations if educational broadcasters were able to meet the basic criteria of operation in the “public interest”. On behalf of the FCC Sykes offered a provision for “flexibility” for “growth and development in the art of broadcasting...for the best interests of the public as a

⁹³ Letter from E. O. Sykes, FCC Chairman of Broadcast Division, to Raymond D. Fosdick, President of Rockefeller Foundation, December 3, 1936. Box 332, Folder 3950.

whole”.⁹⁴ Access to airwaves, Sykes contended, would be contingent upon “a certain amount of showmanship, if I may use that term...in presenting programs that will attract and hold radio audiences. The commercial broadcasters have taken great pains to learn this art of attractiveness, and the educators need their help in acquiring this attractiveness in their technique of broadcasting”.⁹⁵ Thus if noncommercial broadcasters (including labor, education, religion, and civic groups) were able to prepare for consistent, high-quality broadcasting, the Commission felt that “present legislation had the flexibility essential to attain the desired ends without necessitating at this time any changes in the law”. Educators seemed to grasp the reason for policy deliberations, and among who attended the hearings, including members of prominent Schools of the Air at Wisconsin, Ohio State, and Iowa State, educators did not resist the notion that future assignments would be available to educators equally as commercial broadcasters, if cooperating institutions were able to meet the same FCC standards.

The result was that the FCC recommended that no fixed percentage of frequencies be put aside for nonprofit programming. Noting that “flexibility in the provisions of the law” would be necessary for future regulatory decisions, coupled with insufficient broadcast facilities and a lack of feasible plan by educators, the FCC concluded that nonprofit stations were also best served by the “use of existing facilities” and that fledgling stations would best be served by cooperation with commercial broadcasters. Cooperation seemed to be the pragmatic decision, if one views deliberations through a federal technocratic lens. However, the results were the same—the end of educational experimentation with radio for a majority of stations in the U.S., at least for several years.

⁹⁴ FCC *Pursuant*, *ibid*

⁹⁵ Sykes, undated quote on Educational Broadcasting, Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 358, Folder 3693.

It is crucial to point out that educators were largely in agreement with the FCC about problems with programming practice, because their activities after the Act must be viewed as strategies to develop solutions to their internal problems. Educators did not want to share airtime with commercial stations, though in just a few years they would find benefit to collaborating with commercial broadcasters in the development of research methods.

In the conclusion of Sykes' report, he arranged to hold a national conference at which mutual cooperation between broadcasters and nonprofit organizations could be discussed, in order to "combine the educational experience of educators with program technique of broadcasters, thereby better to serve the public interest".⁹⁶ The conference would also, it was hoped, consider complaints by nonprofit groups against actions by commercial broadcasters that had prevented access to non-profit station signals. The conference was planned in coordination with the Commissioner of the Office of Education of the U.S. (discussed below), who, the FCC reported, had conducted a survey about how to begin a "secondary service" to large metropolitan populations for nonprofit and public interest programs. Sykes further made note to permit appeals by "persons interested in the preservation of broadcasting facilities of educational institutions against the procedure under which licensees are required to defend their assignments", but he was resolute about his conclusions—educational stations needed to produce quality programming that would attract audiences before any special provisions might be provided, let alone would educational stations receive the standard assignments of commercial stations. Without repurposing the logic of assignments, the FCC hoped to lay groundwork by which future allocations could be provided for educational stations.

⁹⁶ FCC *Pursuant*, *ibid*

During planning for the conference, Congressman Anning Prall was appointed head of the FCC. He had previously served on commissions in the Department of Taxes and Assessments. Described as “a handsome figure of a man”, Prall was also a subscriber to Roosevelt’s New Deal and the former head of the New York Board of Education. In an interview with Martin Codel on NBC, aired March 30, 1935, Prall argued that while the progress of commercial radio as an art and as an industry had wildly eclipsed expectations since broadcasting’s inception, he did not think broadcasting had taken the “fullest advantage of its cultural, educational, and public service possibilities”.⁹⁷ He had noticed that underprivileged students had taken kindly to children’s programs in New York. While he believed that radio presented an unequalled opportunity to expose “juvenile talent,” it was not yet meeting obligations with regard to the effect it was having on the “child mind of America”. And he believed radio was having a deleterious effect on children when programs removed educational components.

It was Prall’s belief that “good clean adventure programs can be made educational”, though the purpose of the FCC was not to exercise direct control over radio programs. He argued that the fullest possible use of radio as an educational medium had not yet been found, and that educators had not cooperated to the fullest extent with stipulations of the Act. Noting that Sykes’ conference was forthcoming, Prall proposed that educators would have to be trained in radio practices as a planning outcome of the conference. Under the New Deal, Prall’s FCC would render “satisfying service to the people of the country” by “aiding the broadcasting industry in every possible and legitimate way, and to bring to the administration, to which we are responsible, honor and

⁹⁷ Transcript of Codel Interview with Anning Prall, March 30, 1935. RF, Box 332, Folder 3950.

credit in this particular field of its activity”.⁹⁸ And that vision meant , like Sykes, Prall believed that educators would be expected to catch up instead of receive special treatment.

In the buildup to the conference Sykes continued to engage Commissioner of Education John Studebaker on the subject of increasing the viability and stability of educational broadcasting. As he wrote, “The Commission intends actively to encourage the best minds among broadcasters and educators alike in order to develop a satisfactory technique for presenting educational programs in an attractive manner to the radio listener.”⁹⁹ That the FCC had hoped for more educational assignments, and that other federal wings of the government intended to utilize radio for civic purposes, inspired new life into the prospects for educational broadcasting, just as early experiments had been eliminated. The proposed national conference sought solutions by which mutual cooperation between commercial broadcasters and non-profit organizations could be made to combine educational experience with successful commercial program techniques to better serve the public interest.

1.6 John Studebaker and the Motivation for the Office of Education’s Investment in Educational Radio

As discussed in David Goodman’s work on civic broadcast history, John Studebaker cannot be underestimated as a New Deal proponent for noncommercial public service ideology in the early stages of the development of noncommercial media. Studebaker was a serendipitous appointment in many ways.¹⁰⁰ He was the first educator

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ *Pursuant*, *ibid*

¹⁰⁰ Goodman, David. *Radio’s Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930’s*. New York: Oxford Press, 2011.

to facilitate multiple local and federal institutions simultaneously, and he carried a statesman's perspective on the task of a New Deal government. A Midwest progressive with strong institutional supervisory experience, as Des Moines School Superintendent, in 1931 Studebaker had applied for and received \$125,000 in grants from the Carnegie Corporation to begin a five-year experiment in the Des Moines Public School system in the institution of 'public forums'.¹⁰¹ As Kunzman and Tyack have illustrated, there were practical reasons to begin this experiment, the most pressing being that an expansion of public participation was viewed as a primary means to mitigate fascism then on the rise in Europe and at home.¹⁰² But Studebaker also worked from a conceptual impulse informed by progressive thought.¹⁰³ Over past decades educators had envisioned the space of public schools as a necessary extension of progressive public service ideals.¹⁰⁴ Studebaker posited that if the educational environment were to promote training, civic responsibility, and critical democratic discussion, why not expand tactics for democratic participation through free learning among a larger community consortium?¹⁰⁵

To address this question he developed the concept of the public forum, to promote discussion and democratic discourse through a weekly assembly hour comprised of panels, visual aids, and prepared speeches. Informed by an openly liberalist perspective,¹⁰⁶ Studebaker believed that civic education was capable of releasing 'the human spirit from the bondage of superstition' and should plant 'seeds for freedom' against entrenched powers of the old world. Studebaker argued that freedom of inquiry

¹⁰¹ Kunzman, Robert. Tyack, David. Educational forums of the 1930s: An experiment in adult civic education. *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (May 2005), pp. 320-340

¹⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰³ Studebaker, John W. 1936. Plain talk. Washington, DC: National Home Library Foundation.

¹⁰⁴ Reese, William. *Power and Promise of School Reform*. NYC: Teacher College, 1980. Powell, John W. *Channels of Learning: The Story of Educational Television*.

¹⁰⁵ Studebaker, John W. 1942. On managing meetings for freedom forums.

¹⁰⁶ Studebaker, Plain talk, *ibid*

was best served by a liberal education similar to the scientific method, and that learning and democratic deliberation should similarly function as trial-and-error processes. To prepare individuals for continuous growth as civic actors, he contended, education should be understood as a process that affects the future decisions of individual citizens in a democracy, and therefore must concern itself with ‘controversial’ questions, especially questions that challenged the notion that any idea or person is infallible.

“First we teach young children to read and write, second we teach or should teach the young child how to observe the kind of world he lives in, and help him by the use of his tools of learning to discover for himself what is in that world.”¹⁰⁷ Education, according to Studebaker, should urge the complete and impartial ‘survey’ of all theories and ideas, as well as critical testing of these ideas through analysis and experimentation. And in this way, education would serve as a central mechanism to prevent ethical lapses in which ideological assimilation seemed to be the most rational answer for a public during times of strife. If democratic participation were modeled around public participatory dissent, it would be less likely, he believed, that an unchallenged fascist impulse would appear as a choice in the face of widespread economic or social unrest.

The difference between democracy and fascism, he further posited, could be located in the manner in which communication takes place among constituents. At its best, democracy promoted continuous communication of alternate viewpoints, and education was the crucial component of continuous reciprocation between social agents. In his piece *20th Century Educational Approaches to the Use of Communication*, he argued that schools should be primarily concerned with providing tools for literacy and the accumulation of understanding that supported communication within a social

¹⁰⁷ ibid

environment. And education would never cease. Public forums would offer continuous civic and vocational training, continue with democratic ‘literacy’ training, and assist in the development of the ‘common fund of information and ideas which produce social cohesion’.¹⁰⁸ If public communication were continuously reciprocal, a tradition of discourse and argumentation in a public setting would be a necessary part of community participation. And this would serve to mitigate the emergence of extreme viewpoints such as turn of the century nativism.

Forum ‘leaders’ would be trained to facilitate the exchange of information and points of view among citizens to cultivate tolerance and develop ‘critical intelligence’, instead of dictating official knowledge;¹⁰⁹ no specific program for social indoctrination was planned for participation in a public space.¹¹⁰ Further, he believed that individual persons in a democracy are connected through shared community interest, and a ‘sympathetic understanding and altruistic spirit’ could be realized in the form of communicative responsibility centered around the ‘educational task’.¹¹¹ For his concept of educational initiatives to be accessible to large audiences, which he called ‘assemblages’,¹¹² additional resources would have to be funneled into extension services.

The forums were a success in his Des Moines district, and he buttressed his experiment with an expansion of the forum idea into a *Radio School of the Air* in 1934¹¹³ to supplement extant initiatives for students unable to attend school or workers unable to

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*

¹⁰⁹ Studebaker, John W. 1935. Liberalism and Adult Civic Education. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* November.182: 63-72.

¹¹⁰ Studebaker, John W. 1940. Twentieth century educational approaches in the use of communication. Office of Education pamphlet.

¹¹¹ *ibid*

¹¹² Studebaker, Liberalism, *ibid*

¹¹³ Studebaker, John W. 1941. Classification of Educational Radio Research. Report of the Federal Radio Education Committee

attend forums. As discussed in Paul Clifford Pickett's dissertation *The Contributions of John Ward Studebaker*, Studebaker's project gained the attention of officials at the United States Office of Education, who sought a new Commissioner. Originally hired as a one-year appointment, Studebaker found a national institution having 'little to do with settling educational policies', directing most of its attention to statistical measurements and minimal bureaucratic oversight.¹¹⁴ Studebaker took it upon himself to 'modernize' the nation's school system to reach additional educational audiences, combat fascism, and reorganize the administration of education. His one-year appointment turned into a three, and he eventually became the country's longest-serving Commissioner, ending his tenure until 1948 and going into the private sector.¹¹⁵ A crucial component of his tenure included translating his concept of democratic education from an Iowan experiment into a structured nationwide practice. One of his first initiatives was, predictably, implementation of public forums, which picked up additional support as the fascist threat continued to materialize. On this topic he wrote that "Americanization work is the most effective kind of work during a crisis such as war. National unity in a democracy does not imply uniformity of opinion."¹¹⁶

In the process of developing a national model for 'best standards' in forums, Studebaker realized the creation of infrastructure would not merely rely upon the expansion of communication between institutions—though increasing bureaucratic communication was another one of his initiatives—or the creation of a class of facilitators and government workers. Indeed, structuring ubiquitous events would rely

¹¹⁴ Pickett, Paul Clifford. 1967. *The contributions of John Ward Studebaker*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Iowa.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ Studebaker, John W. 1941. *Classification of Educational Radio Research*. Report of the Federal Radio Education Committee

upon subtle but central methods for gaining the attention of the broader audience, maximizing clarity of argument, maintaining their interest and enthusiasm, and organizing the course of a discussion with a clear beginning and end—organizational practices he would soon translate into the earliest plans for a national educational radio service.

For example, in *On Managing Meetings for Freedom Forums*, Studebaker laid out the basic groundwork for training ‘forum leaders.’ Studebaker argued that forums should be gatherings in which comfort, audience intimacy, and aesthetics would increase the quality of participation: 1) audiences should ‘get acquainted’ and forum leaders should learn participant biographies 2) leaders should make sure that rooms maintained a regulated temperature, 3) the tone should be set so that gatherings were informal, 4) forum leaders should be certain that the speaker could be heard without difficulty, and that speakers should be briefly introduced through a mention of their accomplishments, 5) that mood, enthusiasm, and sincerity be maintained, 6) that a speaker should have a stand of proper height, should ask questions of the audience, and that participatory applause should be encouraged, and 7) that the coordinator should work out with speakers and audiences how questioning would be conducted, including how meetings would be formally closed each evening. This example highlights the manner in which his forum was buttressed by practical implementation of ‘standard practices’.

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were both strong supporters of the forum concept, and corresponded with Studebaker several times about the project. In order to finance national implementation, \$5,000,000 was allocated by the federal government to the Office of Education. By 1937 over 10,000 forum discussions had been held with a total

of almost a million attendees; further, for the purpose of the history of public broadcasting, these forums were occasionally broadcast on radio stations across the country. Radio was effectively used as an educational extension of Studebaker's educational strategy.

1.7 The Formation of the Federal Radio Education Committee and the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting

Upon his appointment, Commissioner Studebaker wasted no time advocating for more educational frequencies. He had determined that radio was of crucial importance for the full realization of his idea of national forums. As highlighted above, Studebaker had developed an interest in radio a few years before the Communications Act. The commercialization of radio, which shut educators off from propagating public service programming, coupled with the prohibitive cost of running forums, convinced Studebaker that the Department of Education should take up the question of frequency allocations; there was almost no opportunity for Studebaker to expand his public forum concept onto the airwaves under the terms of the recent Act. Studebaker therefore decided to coordinate the creation of a research committee with the FCC.

Formed on December 18, 1935, the Federal Radio Education Committee (FREC) was organized as a group of 40 members who met in various subcommittees for the specialized study of educational radio.¹¹⁷ Governance was constructed to include educational and commercial interests, as well as federal officials. Studebaker served as Chairman, and other notable members of the executive committee included James W. Baldwin of the NAB; A.D. Ring, Assistant Chief Engineer of the FCC; Levering Tyson of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education (NACRE); and R.C. Higgy of

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

the NAEB and Ohio State University. A.G. Crane of the NCER held a subsidiary role in these discussions but in large part the activist organization was left out of proceedings. A research subcommittee of the FREC was appointed to “refine the outlines of proposed study projects” consisting of W.W. Charters of the Payne Fund and Ohio State, Hadley Cantril of Columbia University (soon to move to Princeton), Robert Lynd of Columbia University, and John Karol of CBS.¹¹⁸ A third subcommittee designed to examine conflicts between member interests included A.G. Crane of the University of Wyoming, Harold McCarty of the University of Wisconsin, George Porter of the FCC, and administrators from NBC, CBS, and ABC.

Robert McChesney has argued that, because of this involvement with commercial interests, the FREC served as a kind of extension of the FCC, which he has argued was preferential to commercial interests during policymaking¹¹⁹—but Studebaker was not specifically driven by media policy. Rather he was interested in expanding what he believed to be democratic practices related to national education, of which radio was only one of many initiatives. And while he logically held a preference for educators, he was careful not to combat extant regulation. Studebaker had entered when the terrain was already set, but through his position and influence he endeavored to devise a new terrain. Studebaker’s tenure commenced a convincing period of educational program development that eventually led to educational broadcast standards and private and public underwriting lines.

In a December 1935 letter to the Rockefeller Foundation, the OOE and the FCC jointly invited its president, Raymond D. Fosdick, to attend the forthcoming conference

¹¹⁸ Agenda for Conference on January 8, 1937, Regarding the Future of the FREC, E.O. Sykes, Presiding. RF, Box 359, Folder 3706.

¹¹⁹ McChesney, *ibid.*

planned by E.O. Sykes.¹²⁰ In the letter they announced the formation of the Federal Radio Education Committee for the purpose of 1) eliminating controversy and misunderstanding between groups of educators and between industry and educators, and 2) promoting actual cooperative arrangements between educators and broadcasters on national, regional, and local bases. FREC as constituted represented all organizations having any “conceivable interest” in the question of educational broadcasting. Its creation included a planning committee set to meet weekly for several months, commencing in February 1936. Early preliminary meetings had cataloged “difficulties” experienced by educators and discussed methods of removing the difficulties over intervening months and into the future. Noting that the federal government had not set aside funds for the specific technocratic purpose of improving what amounted to a cultural endeavor, it was requested of RF that considerable money be allocated to conduct research into what Studebaker phrased as “taking stock and to determine what can be done”.¹²¹

In the build-up to the conference, Studebaker and the Office of Education, which was housed in the Department of the Interior, began to build an argument for the significance of educational broadcasting from a federal standpoint. In a letter to Dr. Stacy May, Assistant Director of the Social Science division of the Rockefeller Foundation, Studebaker wrote that the OOE was “vitaly” interested in the development of radio as an educational instrument.¹²² Since allocations had been entirely commercialized, both the OOE and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) were in agreement that few interests were satisfactorily served by legislation. Educators had no access to frequencies, and the NAB members were not interested in the prospect of investing in a broadcast

¹²⁰ E.O. Sykes and John Studebaker to Raymond Fosdick, December 3, 1936. RF, Box 332, Folder 3950.

¹²¹ *ibid*

¹²² John Studebaker to Stacy May, October 3, 1936. RF, Box 332, Folder 3950.

structure with little hope for return on investment. This was a motivating reason for the networks participation in the Federal Radio Education Committee.

Going forward, the purpose of the FREC would be to explore possibilities for better cooperation between broadcasters and those interested in education which, if successful, would increase the scale of educational broadcasting and reduce the expectation that networks should produce sustaining programming in recompense for the sparsity of educational assignments. The FREC was initially funded by appropriations under the Emergency Relief Acts of 1935 and 1936, similar to the funding lines through which science, history, current affairs, and social science projects had been supported.¹²³ But FREC needed additional funds to explore radio as a “scientific” and educational medium, in accordance with the demands of listenership and broadcasting method. Mastery of the “techniques” of radio, Studebaker wrote to May, would aid the OOE in developing radio presentation activities of “modern” government services. Such exploration would involve collaboration of educational authorities, school students, municipal officials, and local broadcasting stations to improve the instructional value of broadcasts. Cooperation between these institutions would provide basic services previously lacking in the noncommercial infrastructure. FREC was in need of external funding lines to begin wide research into options available to advocates.

FREC was hoping to enlist the Rockefeller Foundation’s support in the development of these endeavors in line with the Foundation’s established Humanities Project goals. In early 1935, FREC developed sixteen separate projects for which it hoped to find funding, speculating a total need of \$168,620 for a comprehensive study of the possibilities for educational broadcasting before “definite remedial steps could be

¹²³ *ibid*

taken or even suggested.” They desperately needed a steady funding line.¹²⁴ The projects focused on two main areas: 1) the general question of how cooperation between educators and broadcasters could be furthered, and 2) laying the groundwork for future developments in educational broadcasting theory and practice. Their main concern was how to meet the requirements of legislation when educators knew “little of the listener interests on which broadcasting has to build”.¹²⁵ Educators, FREC determined, had to “acknowledge their lack of competence in educational matters”. However, even commercial broadcasters could benefit from such research; an inquiry into commercial methods of audience measurement pre-1934 showed that “more candid members of the industry are now admitting that little if any reliable information on listeners’ interests is available”.¹²⁶

The projects proposed to the Rockefeller Foundation by FREC were built around four basic ideas: 1) Radio would be enlisted as an instrument to distribute civic programs to an “impressively large audience”. 2) FREC would coordinate the efforts of 400 participating broadcasting organizations to promote educational programs in the fields of science, history, current affairs, social studies, and mathematics, and help to develop techniques of distribution. 3) The Office of Education would provide facilities and funds for directing the organization of such a project under the oversight of the Social Science Research Council and other public officials. 4) The Rockefeller Foundation would provide funding for studies aimed at increasing the circulation of programs and the quality of educational programming.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ “The Work of the Federal Radio Education Committee”, October 22, 1936. RF, Box 332, Folder 3950.

¹²⁵ John Marshall on the Federal Radio Education Committee, Jan. 12, 1937. RF, Box 332, Folder 3951.

¹²⁶ *ibid*

¹²⁷ “The Work of...” *ibid*

It is worth briefly introducing a few of the sixteen initiatives that derived from these goals, each crucial to the scaffolding of this history in different ways. The problems and proposed solutions in this very early report served as the inspiration for consequent experiments over the next 10 years. Each project was organized to address core concerns regarding educational broadcasting organization, program development, and research. For example, one project proposed to study how local educational stations might utilize network frequencies cooperatively for programming, with the intention that nearly three thousand “communities” could be served by different collaborations. Another was devised to explore avenues of cooperation between local agencies, broadcasting stations, and state-based institutions. Other projects were organized to measure the role of teachers and school principals in evaluating the effectiveness of school broadcasts. One proposed study suggested introducing selected teachers to the workings of commercial stations.

Project #15, “Study of Radio Influence Upon Children and Adults”, intended to “discover the effect of radio broadcasts upon the acquiring of information, the changing of attitudes and the modification of conduct of children and youth,” would grow into one of the most influential research operations in the history of broadcasting. It proposed to employ “first-rate” scholars in the fields of psychology, sociology, and education, to bring their expertise to bear on radio, to undertake research studies in their field, and eventually to organized a series of conferences about their findings. The committee proposing this particular project included Hadley Cantril of Columbia, Edgar Dale of the Payne Fund, and the well-known sociologist Robert Lynd. Cantril was appointed chairman. Soon, Project 15 would become the Princeton Radio Research Project, and

Edgar Dale would work, with Keith Tyler, on research methods at Ohio State. Lynd would remain a coordinating member of the PRP.

On the basis of these project proposals, Studebaker distributed a circular between July and October, 1936, regarding the “services which the Office of Education can contribute to the plan for a script service to aid school and other producing groups”. The proposal, simply titled *What the Office of Education Can Do*, was based upon what the OOE already offered to school districts. Soon the OOE would provide a script exchange for interested institutions. Scaffolding for later NAEB initiatives was based around the OOE intervention at this early stage, meaning that educational broadcast administration was ultimately based almost entirely upon federal U.S. public school standards for curricular research models:

1. “Supply the necessary director for organizing the work, assembling checking committees, and other administrative responsibilities.
2. Arrange for cooperation of the NAEB, school officials, and school groups, and Parent-Teacher Congress groups.
3. Mimeograph sample copies of scripts to be sent out on mailing list.
4. Mimeograph sets of scripts for those groups requesting the service.
5. Include the scripts in the permanent Radio Script Exchange service of the OOE.
6. Prepare and distribute suggestions for proper production of the scripts.
7. Prepare and distribute suggestions for accompanying publicity and follow-up material for listeners. This would include suggestions for class themes on the subject of the broadcast.

8. Try out the scripts under the supervision of production and music directors of the Educational Radio Project. Changes would be made in scripts for distribution in light of the try-out experiments.
9. Write and arrange necessary music; reproduce the music for orchestral or choral presentation.
10. Carry necessary overhead, rent telephones, telegraph, heat, light, stationary, etc.”¹²⁸

The Rockefeller Foundation’s reception of the proposed FREC and OOE activities was generally positive. An internal review by the Foundation noted a favorable response to perceived groupings provided by the proposal. “Conflicts and difficulties” noted in Proposal 1, for example, may be addressed by “cooperation in communities” in Proposals 2, 3, and 11. “Whatever educators may think of the industry’s interpretation of these factors, study of its methods cannot fail to establish their importance in broadcasting as now organized.”¹²⁹ Echoing what had constantly been mentioned by all proponents, educators would be unable to compete with commercial broadcasters until they learned methods of radio broadcasting on an industrial scale. Improving educational service would include improved production, administration, and a new understanding of how listeners received information.

But in particular Proposal 15 piqued the interest of the Rockefeller Foundation. The notion that information acquisition was related to attitude changes, which included “the modification of conduct of children and young people”, would be of interest to educators, psychologists, and sociologists.

¹²⁸ Wm. D. Boutwell to John Studebaker, “What the Office of Education Can Do”, October 3, 1936. RF, Box 332, Folder 3950.

¹²⁹ John Marshall on FREC, *ibid*

To what extent the project could go beyond establishing that broadcasting is influential in the ways enumerated, to how it gains those effects, is not yet clear. But it is clear that broadcasting could be materially bettered for young children and young people only if its effects on them were directly related to the elements in broadcasting that produced them. Certainly the influence of an authoritative and well-planned study that established such relations would be such as to warrant a considerable expenditure. If the broadcasters cannot feel such expenditures commercially justifiable, a project of this character perhaps has a special claim on funds from other sources, in promising a measure of external control in the public interest for a part of broadcasting important for society's future. Moreover, sound findings, independently arrived at, would command the attention and respect of the industry in a way that could confidently be expected to influence its policies. In short, this is a project in which educators already have a definite and pertinent competence to offer the industry.¹³⁰

The RF believed that while the FCC should ideally fund research into activities related to educational broadcasting, they should also persuade networks to support research on this topic. However, since commercial broadcasters had a different conception of public service broadcasting, the RF concluded that what qualified as "educational" in their own perspective was significantly different from how commercial broadcasters viewed the practice. An independent research line would be necessary. As an initial gesture, the Foundation granted the FREC a nominal sum of \$2,500 for an educational scriptwriter,

¹³⁰ *ibid*

with more to be determined after a representative attended the 1936 educational radio conference.¹³¹

The national conference took place on December 10, 11, and 12, 1936. In contrast to the radio conferences of the 1920s, the First National Conference on Educational Broadcasting was a milestone for noncommercial proponents. Several distinct visions of educational broadcasting were set forth by the most influential policymakers, content providers, and researchers of the day.¹³² While Ohio State had held yearly broadcasting conferences for educators since the late 1920s, they had been unable to accumulate such a strong showing. Over 700 persons registered, with over 1000 in attendance, including 177 from national organizations, 141 from colleges and universities, 109 from governmental agencies, 49 from commercial broadcasting companies, 53 from libraries and museums, and 25 representatives from 17 “foreign” countries.¹³³ The keynote speakers were David Sarnoff and John Studebaker.

Sarnoff, legendary president of RCA, stood at the peak of commercial network broadcasters, and in contrast to the educational broadcasters had recently experienced a wave of major legislative successes in concert with an unprecedented growth in economic and technical infrastructure development. He provided a humorous interpretation of educational radio’s prospects that articulated commercial broadcasters’ perception of the field. Contending that his own opportunities to obtain formal education were limited as a child and therefore he offered full support to any kind of educational extension, Sarnoff spoke about broadcasting as a service crucial to “American democracy”. Educators and

¹³¹ Grant-in-Aid, Rockefeller Foundation to Federal Radio Education Committee, October 22, 1936. RF, Box 332, Folder 3950.

¹³² John Marshall, Diary Entry, December 18, 1936. RF, Box 254, Folder 3035.

¹³³ George Zook to the Rockefeller Foundation, March 10, 1937. RF, Box 254, Folder 3034.

broadcasters were identical, he posited, in their desire to see American standards of education and culture raised to the highest level, both in recognition of the power of radio as a means to that end. But he did not think that there was agreement over the mechanics of the endeavor itself. Definitions of educational broadcasting went beyond the narrowing influence of classroom walls and campus boundaries and swept away all suggestions of a formal program, of a rigid curriculum, “of a steep and narrow path to some high summit in the mountains of specialized learning”.¹³⁴

Another approach, he argued, came from French Premier Clemenceau, who said of his colleague Poincaré that he “knew everything but understood nothing”, and of his other colleague Briand that he “knows nothing but understands everything”. Since an ideal combination of knowledge and understanding may never be fully realized, Sarnoff pontificated, the acquisition of useful knowledge was more properly what radio might offer. When, he wondered, did people actually learn while listening to the radio? Channels of information might supply food for thought, but it was asking too much of them to demand that radio should teach audiences what to think. “Radio, in common with other forms of mass communication and entertainment, belongs to the second of these two educational fields. Radio programs can be created to inform the mind and elevate the spirit, but when one seeks to impose upon them the requirements that they also furnish mental training and discipline, one narrows their appeal and risks the dispersion of the inevitable audience, thereby defeating the very purpose for which the program was prepared.” An analysis of the program structure of American broadcasting revealed a variety of presentations “truly reflecting many phases of American life”. While he did not

¹³⁴ David Sarnoff, “Broadcasting in the American Democracy”, December 12, 1936. RF, Box 254, Folder 3035.

contend that all had educational merit from a pedagogical perspective, several sustaining programs on NBC and CBS such as *American Education Forum*, *The World is Yours*, *Your Health*, *The University of Chicago Round Table*, and *America's Town Meeting of the Air*, excelled as educational programs with high talent expenses by the networks. Further, Sarnoff argued that commercial radio held an unprecedented influence upon the political process by broadcasting campaign information. Twenty seven million had voted in 1920 but the number grew to forty five million in 1936 after radio began covering elections.

This evidence and these questions, Sarnoff argued, were meeting the public service obligations of radio as defined in the 1927 Radio Act, and addressed the “public as a whole, that such a universal medium implies universal service, and that radio frequencies which are limited in number must be used in the broad interests of the general body of listeners”.¹³⁵ The mutual task of networks and educators, Sarnoff believed, was to “utilize the experience of the past in order to chart a course for the future. To be effective in this field and to reach the vast audiences that the American system of broadcasting has created, the technique of the broadcaster and the knowledge of the educator must be combined”. The commercial model provided the most democratic vision of all, since there was opportunity to be heard on the airwaves not available in other countries, and this was very much in line with many educational tenets. This vision was, of course, quite persuasive in its populist appeal, and educators would struggle against the predilection of listeners for “entertainment” over education. Eventually, though, these practices would be combined.

¹³⁵ *ibid*

The Secretary of the Interior of the United States, Harold Ickes, followed Sarnoff with a middle-of-the-road review of the prospects for educational radio. Pointing out that the conference had brought parents, “radio people”, and others to the conference, he concluded that radio had become a fact of national life and hence was appropriately considered for its potential educational contributions. The fact that educational broadcasting was still in “its infancy,” but expanding with rapid advancement, provided a foundation for general increase in educational investment by the Department of the Interior. As both a national and local institution, a regional and international apparatus available for many uses, radio permitted the dissemination of material that interests the small community as well as the state or nation. The aim of educational broadcasting, according to federal interests, would be to develop programs for all ages to constitute a “university of the air” so that those who participate would be informed and able to “know intimately the subjects with which they are dealing”.¹³⁶ As a public medium in which information was transmitted, “just as in any classroom, certain fundamentals must be adhered”, such as the “cultivation of good English” and more crucially the force of adult education to those who had been denied opportunities as a matter of course. Hence mass education and educational broadcasting provided an opportunity for equal access to information, but along with it the danger of “regimentation of minds which might result from imposing the same ideas, same thoughts, upon large groups of people”. For this reason, the Secretary favored the recent regulation that gave the populace the opportunity to obtain information to “select and modify as we will”, but he also made a case for the use of technology to “sharpen the intellect”. In the process of education the radio was a

¹³⁶ Harold Ickes, Department of the Interior, “Readin, Ritin, and Radio”. Document filed December 29, 1936. RF, Box 254, Folder 3035.

new and powerful instrumentality with capacities still being discovered “through the time honor system of trial and error”. The opportunity to disseminate information from one section of the country to another made possible, he argued, a more peaceful family within a nation.

Studebaker, in contrast to the polite waffling of the Secretary, made a strong case for educational radio in line with his approach to public forums. The power of radio as a force in American culture, progress, and democracy was evident, and only needed fruitful suggestions for a more effective utilization of knowledge and a clearer understanding of the “baffling problems of this bewildered world”.¹³⁷ Ceding that broadcasting was “one of the most expensive undertakings of modern business” Studebaker praised the networks for what educational programming they did have, as well as the extent to which networks had supplied studio facilities, engineering and directorial services, publicity assistance, and good council to educators. The Office of Education had recently worked with the networks to develop experimental educational programming. However, he lamented that the public enterprise was unable to use a utility that was privately controlled under federal licenses. To guard the distinction between public and private, for example, public schools had been separated from commercial ownership and even other agencies of the government. Schools were financed, he noted, by separate taxes and operated by separate boards.

Before the Communications Act, he continued, educational advocates had requested that a fixed percentage of broadcast facilities be allocated to educational groups, but had been denied. Since the Act, interest had only increased on their behalf

¹³⁷ John Studebaker, “Radio in the Service of Education”, Filed December 29, 1936. RF, Box 254, Folder 3035.

under the leadership of FREC. Meetings had been held since November 1935 by its 40 core members, and a number of potential projects formulated previous to the conference (the 16 initiatives addressed above). The agreed-upon goal was not that educators merely deserved a set-aside percentage of experimental frequencies, but that educational broadcasting needed to be studied intensively along executive, technical, and administrative subcommittees to “think out” questions of radio’s service to education. Noting that President Roosevelt had become interested in the advocacy project, Stuebaker described the operations of FREC’s Educational Radio Project, through which scriptwriters, program directors, and musical supervisors from the commercial radio industry had applied their expertise to the development of successful educational programming.

Following Stuebaker, the head of the OOE’s Educational Radio Project, William Boutwell, echoed that the great problem faced by educators was that their programs were not enjoyable and lacked production values. Until education developed a corps of teachers and supervisors who could write and produce “reasonably good programs”, little would be available for educators toward new frequencies. “Proof” needed to be offered regarding competence in using the airwaves.¹³⁸

The FCC also provided two representatives with technical and regulatory perspectives—T.A.M. Craven, Chief Engineer of the FCC, and Chairman Anning Prall. Craven was appointed to speak about how the evolution of the technology of radio had led to specific regulation. He argued that allocations needed to be understood in terms of scarcity, with the uses of radio increasing among aircraft, boats, radiotelephone service

¹³⁸ William Boutwell, “Increased Radio Activity in Schools is Seen by Educational Radio Script Exchange”, June 16. 1937. RF, Box 332, Fodler 3951.

between nations, networks, the “use of radio to combat the criminal”, and military establishments. In this case, the “demands of educational groups” for radio facilities were primarily understood by the FCC in terms of usage of that limited spectra for service. Considering the factors of standardization of receivers, transmitting equipment, and demand, if educational districts were all allocated radio stations, the FCC had estimated that 127,000 school districts would have to future be served alone, as well as 15,000 stations. Far from an argument in favor of networks, Craven provided the difficulty of the FCC for considering what it would mean to offer equal access for all educational interests at the same time among a set of limitations. Thus to convince the scientific interests at the FCC, Craven called upon scientists at universities to create a coordinated plan for the application of radio to education that showed the most economic use of frequency channels that may be devoted to education.

Anning Prall spoke to the FCC’s appraisal of the “present status of educational radio” and how it may be improved for public interest. An adequate concept of what radio would do for education demanded a fair consideration and study of the three types of radio systems—the British model without advertising but license fees, and the two American approaches of the advertising-based networks found in most of Europe as well as Turkey, and the largely unfunded public sector educators. While Prall believed that Americans would not stand for a tax on radio receivers or a license fee, he did believe that an educational broadcasting option was crucial, and “wholeheartedly supported” the movement toward the development of a comprehensible plan for education by radio. Echoing Craven’s lead-in that the spectrum was limited not just for cultural use of radio but for technical and military use, Prall nonetheless argued that educational institutions of

the country had provided many of the foundations of science used by the FCC, and that he had full confidence that the scholars, physicists, and scientists at such institutions would both understand the limitations faced by the FCC, find technical ways to overcome those obstacles, and consequently earn some portion of frequencies. Prall recommended that educators look to similar models in Europe, Britain, and network technical models. A special feature of European models was the systematic broadcast to the schools by recognized experts, musical and dramatic performances, and the discussion of these broadcasts by teachers and students. Further, he noted that new future frequencies would be available with *television*, and that a concerted effort by educators to link present broadcast facilities would be both “staggering” and auspicious.

But perhaps the most unintentionally influential talk came from Henry Link, in charge of market research at the Psychological Corporation in New York. In the talk he discussed new methods for understanding radio audiences. Sociological in construct, these methods were proving to be successful in gauging public reception to programming, policy, and advertising. The oldest had been developed by the Association of National Advertisers, and included surveys for audience response to content. Another method, developed by Pauline Arnold of Market Research Corporation involved making telephone calls during a program to ask what the listener was tuned into, popularized by Clark-Hooper. Activity in audience measurement, Link contended, had a critical significance for educational broadcasting, because results for such measurements proved to what extent audiences cared about what was on the air, and if the audience believed content had value.

Arguing that this kind of research would serve the improvement of educational approaches to radio, Link also ceded a pivotal gap—that methods had not revealed how much a program is listened to, and how intensively a program would be listened to, including how strong an impression of the program may make. Link called upon educators to learn measures and acknowledge that an audience would not tune in just because something was on the air. A cursory study by advertisers had found that audiences were “pitifully small in comparison with the audiences for commercial or sustaining programs, even when the relative power of the stations is borne in mind”. When listeners have unrestricted choice, unlike compulsory education, even classical subjects that had been time tested became a completely different “situation” in which educators had to abandon traditional models of pedagogical presentation. Another study by psychologists had found that there was no relation between formal education and personality, and that personality was a more important component to radio audiences than expertise. Thus a study of personalities to provide educational material would also be necessary.

John Marshall, who was in the audience (and is discussed in-depth in the next section) took close note of these talks. In his professional diary he wrote that “this was the best attended and best planned conference on education in radio” he had yet been to, and that great discussion had ensued after each session. Studebaker and Sarnoff’s speeches were of special interest, and Marshall was impressed by the FREC’s holistic approach to working with available information toward the development of quality programming that included cooperation between different fields invested in educational technology. Sarnoff had provided a sole counterpoint to the overwhelmingly pro-educator

talks at the rest of the conference, and Marshall was especially taken by his distinction between “attempting to train the mind through broadcasting and supplying materials which can nourish mental growth and extend appreciation”.¹³⁹

Lyman Bryson of Columbia University was also singled out for his talk (not extant in the records) on the editorial judgment of the broadcast industry to place unnecessary and undesirable limitations on the airing of controversial questions. Bryson contended that there was a need to train radio announcers to break content down into clear language for listeners, presented with an intimate and informal approach. Bryson thought this would best be achieved through direct classroom instruction, demonstration for listening teachers, and bringing the school room into actual life of the community through broadcasting. Marshall concluded that the conference confirmed Studebaker’s concerns both about the need for cooperation and the unlikeliness of the industry to stand critically on public questions, due to their internal necessities, profit motive, and otherwise.

Participants had agreed to have a second conference in 1937, and in the meantime FREC determined to move forward with the study of improvement of educational broadcasting under the considerations broached at the conference. From the 1936 conference on, both Studebaker and Marshall put their efforts into the improvement of educational broadcasting. Both concluded that educational broadcast advocates had little sense of how to use radio correctly, and for that matter had conducted little research into how to create programs that were genuinely educational or interesting. These two major institutions, FREC and the Rockefeller Foundation, would go on to correspond with remaining practitioners as a way to sustain radio localism.

¹³⁹ John Marshall, Diary Notes, Filed December 18, 1936. RF, Box 254, Folder 3034.

1.8 The Serendipity of the Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Project for Radio Experimentation

John Marshall's participation in the conference couldn't have been more productive for educational interests, and behind the scenes the Rockefeller Foundation already had interest in educational radio, though it had not yet determined how it would direct its funding. Marshall's attendance of the conference was so influential, that as works by Gary,¹⁴⁰ Hilmes,¹⁴¹ Buxton,¹⁴² and Tobias¹⁴³ have already noted, the field of communications research could not have emerged as it did without his patronage. This dissertation contends that American public broadcasting holds a central debt to Marshall's relationship with Studebaker, and that in fact communications research was a subsidiary outcome to Marshall's investment in educational broadcasting. Put differently, communications research originated as a Rockefeller Foundation project motivated by the FREC's desire to increase understanding of the contours of radio broadcasting. The purpose of mass communications research was devised, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, from proposals designed to rectify the problems in educational curricula and listener research. Marshall's invitation by FREC was in part serendipitous, due to the new initiatives in humanities the Foundation had already begun to pursue. And the several initial exposures the foundation received—the 16-point FREC report, the philosophy and methods (including metrics) proposed in 1935 and 1936, and the incredible outpouring of effort that had suddenly materialized into educational experiments—put Rockefeller Foundation assistant director John Marshall in an unusual position of personally

¹⁴⁰ Gary, Brett. *Nervous Liberals*. New York: Columbia University, 1999.

¹⁴¹ Hilmes, 2011, *ibid*

¹⁴² <http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/buxton.pdf> .

¹⁴³ <http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/tobias.pdf> .

overseeing the funding of nearly every single important experiment in educational broadcasting between the major regulations of the Communications Act and the Sixth Report and Order of 1952.

The Rockefeller Foundation's program in the humanities began in 1926, aimed at establishing the place of research in the humanities in terms of its "significance for creative uses and for critical understanding".¹⁴⁴ In a 1933 report, the RF trustees endeavored to underwrite projects responsible for "bringing the humanities from books, seminars, and museums into the current of modern life."¹⁴⁵ The principles of the operation were directed toward three enumerated objectives:

- 1) "Within our own country, the aim of the work in the humanities is the preservation and development of American cultural traditions with a view to their continuing growth, 2) Abroad, the aim is to promote cultural understanding among nations, and 3) If gains resulting from appropriations under old programs are to be conserved, certain continuing obligations should be recognized."

The committee was concerned that funding, up until that point, centered too strongly on non-applied research as a "sole method" of cultural uplift. "It frankly appears to your committee that a program in the humanities based on a cloistered kind of research, we have more detailed information about a great number of rather abstruse subjects, but that does not logically mean that the level of artistic and aesthetic appreciation in American has been measurably raised."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ David Stevens, "Program in the Humanities", 1933 Report, RAC, GEB, Box 29.

¹⁴⁵ "New Program in the Humanities," April 10, 1935: D.R. 491, Folder 156, Box 29, RF.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*

Funding research on historical humanities alone, they worried, might miss the target of stimulating new humanities movements and methods. They believed that research in past artistic merits *ad absurdum* would lead to the “grave danger not only of sterility but of missing the center of the target”. Underwriters searched for more direct ways of extending public appreciation and knowledge of public culture through the new media of broadcasting and film. They were especially interested in how these arts increased community influence. Hence just previous to the Communications Act of 1934, the RF had began to search for “direct ways of extending the area of public appreciation [that] called for assistance from persons with intimate knowledge of the ways in which the American public now gains its culture.”¹⁴⁷

The notion that culture needed a stronger place in public education drove many early grants. A study on adult education in public schools had revealed that cultural expression assisted by state departments of education provided a more direct service to local needs, increasing awareness of larger cultural issues while focusing appreciation of local production. The relative size and dynamism of land-grant universities seemed to provide a specifically fertile place for investment in culture. These lessons, developed out of attempts to provide popular programs that possessed educational and vocational value had made an impression on the Rockefeller Foundation board, which had come to believe that investment in an endeavor that combined community, creativity, adult education, and universities seemed inevitable. Due to the media’s ability to reach large target demographics with immediacy, as well as its unusual capacity to influence opinion and cultural knowledge through program practices, the new popular technologies of film and

¹⁴⁷ “Program in the Humanities,” (undated), 1933: D.R. 491, Folder 159, Box 29, RF.

broadcasting were a logical choice for new investment. The RF trustees commissioned investigative reports to explore possible lines of inquiry.

Working under David H. Stevens, a professor from the University of Chicago who directed the RF Division of Humanities until 1949, John Marshall began to make uncannily astute research grants that prognosticated many of the foundations of media research and practice. Marshall pulled from progressive conceptual bases to select practitioners and researchers, working with Stevens to identify the most promising areas. In his publication, *The Humanities in Theory and Practice*, Stevens wrote that the function of the humanities was to make “the individual a citizen of the world in matters of the spirit—to create within him his own forms of mental, emotional, and spiritual freedom.”¹⁴⁸ This could be accomplished, he posited, by recreating imagination “beyond the ordinary”¹⁴⁹ via the transmission of values, meanings, and critically informed research. Stevens’ conclusion was that the humanities could expand the teaching of the arts by spreading “public appreciation”¹⁵⁰ to the widest net of reception, via radio, film, drama, libraries, and museums.

The aim of the Humanities Division during this period was to preserve and develop American cultural traditions, promote cultural understanding among nations, and continue with obligations from previous programs in philosophy and education. At the program’s inception Marshall believed the best way to achieve this would be to disseminate and chronicle “regional life,”¹⁵¹ in which Native American, urban, and

¹⁴⁸ David Stevens, “The Humanities in Theory and in Practice,” March 31, 1937: D.R. 491, Folder 158, Box 29, RF.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*

¹⁵¹ Program in the Humanities, *ibid*.

southern experiences could be accumulated and curated through recording, and then spread as wide repositories of knowledge that would be available at universities.

At the conference organized by the Office of Education in 1934, Marshall observed an opportunity to improve a still-fledgling approach to pedagogy and culture via radio. His initial interest in radio was soon expanded to the question of new media in general, and by 1935 the RF had secured fifteen written reports that highlighted new methods and techniques surrounding international education and mediated communication.¹⁵² Among recommended initiatives included methods of educational radio broadcasting. In canvassing possibilities for the field of broadcasting in general, the RF noted in an April 10, 1935 report that the foundation had an opportunity to “render valuable intermediary service in promoting co-operative endeavor of commercial and educational interests”.¹⁵³ The desire to apply larger philosophical and cultural endeavors to a large public, by which the program began, was “yielding to a larger view of radio’s function in which public interest figures prominently”. Noting that, since the Act, both educators and commercial broadcasters were “coming to recognize how extensive their common interests are”, the RF believed that helping educators produce not more but better programs would be key to future advocacy, especially along the lines of classroom education, religion, labor, agriculture, and similar activities with civic foundations.

Officers at the meeting identified two points where “support may yield large returns in public service”: strong regional broadcasters where educational broadcasting had become well established, and the headquarters of national networks. The RF was especially interested in metropolitan areas where several stations could cooperate and

¹⁵² “New Program in the Humanities,” *ibid.*

¹⁵³ RF Trustees Meeting, “Radio” and “Broadcasting in the Public Interest”. April 10, 1935. RF, Box 2, Folder 11.

make available multiple educational programs for multiple purposes. While most educational broadcasting had taken place in small towns where land-grant universities were located, and thus mostly reached agrarian populations, the RF sought to consolidate talent in a large city between noncommercial and commercial groups especially in line with “dramatic force and technical finish”.¹⁵⁴ A consequence of such cooperation would be a precedent for sustaining programs and educational broadcasts with distinct cultural value, perhaps including the RF’s stated interest in folklore and folk song.

The RF also hoped that networks would cooperate in terms of providing limited support for the training of personnel. Production of educational programs with cultural value would be further improved, the organization believed, via more communication with those with mastery of educational subjects. Educators had little mastery of technical elements, according to a recent application by the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago (discussed below) and networks had little interest in the rigor of academic detail, so training educational personnel would benefit both parties via access. Conceding that a sustained relationship between educators and the networks based in network headquarters was unlikely, the RF still determined that regular workshops would provide the privilege of experience, an impartial committee, and the opportunity “to discover fresh talent and ideas...in short, by capitalizing on the network’s willingness to cooperate, skilled services which at present only a few commercial broadcasters can command, will be made generally available to educational groups”.¹⁵⁵

The committee put aside roughly \$200,000 for potential projects from the General Education Board in 1935, and began to seek an external committee to “reduce routine

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, section on “Regional Broadcasting”

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*

work and give more adequate selection on a nation-wide scale than is possible with present staff”.¹⁵⁶ Just in the first 18 months of funding, the Foundation spent roughly \$288,870 on educational radio cooperative efforts. This covered internships for educators at networks, support of the University Broadcasting Council in Chicago, and general investments in the development of RF infrastructure such as the hiring of consultants. One consultant in particular was of great interest to many members of the committee—Charles Siepmann, former director of talks at the BBC, whose vital role in the development of American educational radio is discussed in Chapter 3.

While the radio spectrum had been largely ceded to the centralized, national model of NBC and CBS in 1934, the RF noted that educational broadcasting provided the widest and most opportune counterpoint to commercial broadcasting, with the most potential to “render invaluable intermediary service”¹⁵⁷ to a listening public. The RF’s initial vision had seen land-grant public institutions as the most promising group dedicated to the use of radio for cultural localism. But with radio now inscribed as an almost exclusively *non*-public domain, Marshall noted that cooperative endeavors between commercial and educational interests would be necessary for the purpose of expanding public access to media, and he sought a way to encourage the noncommercial sector to develop its potential to serve civic interest. While Marshall began with the question of how to realize radio’s cultural potential for distributing American folklore and minority representation, the basic issue of how to disseminate cultural information quickly turned out to be the most provocative and pressing problem.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*

¹⁵⁷ RF Trustees Meeting, *ibid*.

To increase appreciation of American cultural experience, Marshall looked to methods of personnel training as a first step. Previous to the Communications Act educators had failed to institutionalize a rigorous program of best practices and broadcast techniques—two standards that commercial broadcasters had streamlined. Working along with FREC, Marshall paired researchers, networks, and fledgling non-commercial practitioners to improve educational broadcasting toward the stated regulatory stipulation of promoting public interest. The “New Program” in the humanities consequently approved seven initial projects on April 10, 1935, totaling \$112,500, in order to explore a number of broadcasting ideas to see which would work best.¹⁵⁸ And in the first two years Marshall provided startup funds to various educational broadcasting groups, such as the University Broadcasting Council (discussed below) and the World Wide Broadcasting Foundation (See Buxton¹⁵⁹, and Hilmes¹⁶⁰), as well as several long-running educational broadcasting centers such as the University of Wisconsin (see Chapter 3) and the Board of Education in Cleveland.

The goal of this funding was to determine the ways in which broadcasting could be educationally and culturally effective, discover how to recruit and train personnel with the right kind of educational and cultural qualifications, and to explore the best methods of developing interest in educational and cultural broadcasting on the part of cooperative agencies. In this brief time, several weaknesses became the focus of experimentation, especially the lack of a well-formulated working philosophy to support educational and cultural production, a lack of imagination in drawing on educational and cultural resources and in understanding the full potential of radio as a medium, and foot-dragging

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*

¹⁵⁹ Buxton, *ibid*

¹⁶⁰ Hilmes, *ibid*

on the part of cooperative agencies to back up their interest with financial support. In total, \$280,000 was actually spent in the first 18 months, well over the intended amount and directed largely at the logistics of getting different organizations up and running. In sum, the RF spent a total of \$471,249 between on educational radio 1937. The largest expenditure went to the first major administrative experiment in educational broadcasting as an alternate model to the networks, called the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago.

1.9 The University Broadcasting Council of Chicago

One of the first and most ambitious applications for funding received in 1935 by John Marshall came from a Chicago-based educational broadcasting consortium. According to the application by the University Broadcasting Council (UBC), based at the University of Chicago (UC), the city of Chicago provided an unusually rich terrain for cross-institutional collaboration in noncommercial broadcasting, with its local universities, museums, researchers, and commercial interests all dedicated to radio's improvement.¹⁶¹ The UBC was headed by Allen Miller, who had served as chair of the Radio Department at the University of Chicago. The goal of his proposal was to stimulate the production of "radio programs of cultural and educational value to strengthen the development of a regional center and to promote cooperation between radio stations and educational institutions in the Chicago area."¹⁶² Applying for \$64,500 to cover salaries and telephone line rental to connect participating stations, Miller formed a consortium composed of the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and DePaul University with a board of trustees consisting of two representatives from each

¹⁶¹ Grant-in-Aid Application, University Broadcast Council, June 21, 1935: Folder 3394, Box 284, RF.

¹⁶² *ibid*

participating university. The Council planned to coordinate, develop, schedule, and broadcast radio programs of an educational nature, coordinated by a central office in the Loop district of Chicago.

As an attempt to institute a rigorous form of educational localism, for which a major cosmopolitan center provided an opportunity for top researchers to devise new administrative structures and program forms, the UBC was an attractive experiment for Marshall. The application described the first workable vision for a non-commercial “networked” approach to radio based in urban regionalism, in which RF already had a decided interest. The UBC organized as a non-profit corporation under Illinois laws and had already put together a board of trustees by the time they applied for RF funds. Provisions had been made for the use of campus studios furnished by universities, who also agreed to pay the salaries of a staff that included a director, publicity director, office manager, secretaries, and technical and engineering personnel. The Council had also devised a procedure for measuring the effectiveness of programs through correspondence with listeners, and had a system of payments to performers rendering special service.¹⁶³ The goal of the UBC, in contrast to regional rural stations as well as commercial broadcasters, was to pool distinct nonprofit entities into an advisory committee to meet civic needs of the community, in line with public interest stipulations of the Act.

Marshall strongly supported the project, based upon a piece written by Miller for the RF in 1935 titled *The Problem of Educational Broadcasting and a Plan for Its Solution*, in which he described educational broadcasting’s problems, but also envisioned the promising capacity of radio to reach wide urban audiences. Due to the “increased complexity and variability of modern society,” Miller argued that continuing education

¹⁶³ John Marshall, Internal Memo, June 21, 1935. RF, Box 284, Folder 3394.

“throughout life” had become a need of paramount importance.¹⁶⁴ Radio held the unique potential to be the most economical and powerful medium for dissemination of information and education to a large and widely scattered adult audience. The UBC, Miller argued, would be an excellent test for educators to consolidate intellectual talent within close proximity to address an already built-in audience. A recent study of Chicago had shown that nearly fifty percent of all radio homes listened to University of Chicago radio features at some point in the week, amounting to nearly 250,000 potential listeners.¹⁶⁵ Such an experiment, based in a large diverse city such as Chicago, would address the basic problem facing educational radio: only a small fraction of educational radio’s potential had been realized, as educators had previously been “ignorant” of the problems and techniques that would make curricular broadcasting viable. Previously, Miller contended, educators had operated from the hypothesis that education was sufficient unto itself in radio, and “agitated for paternalistic legislation to increase the allocation of facilities for the use of education at this increased level”.¹⁶⁶ Any legislative attempts by advocates, such as the Wagner-Hatfield bill, had failed because the status quo had supported streamlined aesthetics and proven audience appeal of commercial radio over the unrealized civic concept of the educators.

Professors had lacked sufficient knowledge of broadcasting standards and radio as an apparatus. Stations had relied too strongly upon a professor-class of broadcasters, but wider audiences had little interest in programs based on expertise alone. Noting that the strengths of personality and technical ability seemed to be “far more important

¹⁶⁴ Allen Miller, “The Problem of Educational Broadcasting and A Plan for Its Solution,” April 8, 1935: Folder 3394, Box 284, RF.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*

considerations in educational broadcasting than academic reputations”¹⁶⁷ to the radio audience, Marshall hoped that radio could develop new instructional techniques reflective of commercial aesthetics, such as high content value, as a method for the improvement of curricular reception. The importance of methods of presentation designed to hold the attention of the radio audience could not be over-stated, argued Miller, and educators, he believed, could develop wide reputations not only as scholars but as entertainers. The need was to develop new instructional techniques through which a classroom lecture into the microphone brought out the best aspects of a classroom and did not simply apply new technology to the existing model. An efficient use of the medium, yet unknown, needed to be developed. And the best way to develop new techniques would be under the supervision of experts in overlapping departments dedicated to selection of talent, choice of subject matter, and perfection of presentation techniques. “While a single institution cannot hope to solve the problem satisfactorily, several of them together may be able to achieve this end.”¹⁶⁸ The unusual concentration of major educational institutions in Chicago provided an opportunity for this.

Previous experiments had been poorly designed, especially classroom lecture formats that were uninteresting and frequently technical. A student registered for such a course often had no pre-training for “technical jargon of a specialized subject” and no way to engage with the classroom to find out.¹⁶⁹ New instructional techniques would include talks, but also interviews, round table discussions, dramatizations, and lectures with illustrative inserts to hold the attention of the listener. Little or no experimentation with and “perfection of these forms” had occurred. Thus a wide-scale expertly guided and

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*

supervised approach would, through trial-and-error, address these problems. But such an effort needed financial support stronger than could be promised by Chicago institutions alone. Budgets provided by universities were only adequate to bear the expense of maintaining professional staff, and more funds would be needed. Miller had met with networks to discuss his idea, including Merlin Ellsworth at NBC, Fred Willis at CBS, and Phil Loucks at the NAB, and all had agreed to contribute to the experiment. A subsequent meeting with Anning Prall at the FCC and John Studebaker of OOE further strengthened early support.

The goal was to broadcast over a 200 mile listening radius in every direction and to cover subjects such as social studies, drama, music, and many more. The group aimed to provide 18 broadcasts a week at first, ramping up to 60 broadcasts a week over time. The consortium hoped to be able to pool funds for the training of new educational radio practitioners, using studio equipment that “will not be elaborate or expensive”.¹⁷⁰ They predicted they could set up one central location in the Loop, connected by telephone wires to several campuses, through a non-recurring investment. The office, it was estimated, could be supported by roughly \$55,000 a year. To reach wider audiences and school districts, a short-wave rebroadcast could supplement local Chicago broadcasts.

This arrangement would address a number of core problems educational broadcasters had faced. It would guarantee better quality programs by furnishing adequate guidance and supervision at minimum cost. It would ensure the scheduling of program at specified hours, which would increase efficiency in dealing with radio stations. The coordination of various programs of the universities in the area would

¹⁷⁰ “Plan for Education by Radio”, *ibid*

eliminate needless duplication, and make inroads toward securing sympathetic support of newspapers as contributors and publicists.¹⁷¹

Yet, the conundrum they faced was that while a more populist, entertainment-based approach was necessary to attract audiences, educational radio also needed to meet standard educational criteria. It was crucial that educational broadcasting remain in the domain of educators. Having a large and attentive population would provide for quick input on improvement. The University Broadcasting Council planned to create a centralized infrastructure in a heterogeneous environment through which localized experts would have easy access to other experts. Marshall believed that such cooperation could quickly streamline project planning on a step-by-step basis.

The UBC was able to secure the cooperation of five stations in the Chicago area, and to purchase the use of transmission wires from Bell Telephone.¹⁷² Miller spent a great deal of time thinking through what it would take to develop educational “talent”. The networks made progress by introducing conversational elements to broadcasts. The University of Chicago Round Table, which had started in 1930 noted the importance of a conversational tone and this had made it a popular show, Miller marveled. The use of simple vocabulary by its participants was also a major breakthrough. The technique of broadcasters in educational shows would need to be constructed around “short and simple words in common usage” even for complex ideas, and the utilization of non-technical vocabulary would increase audiences.¹⁷³ This simplified language with “skilled delivery” would be combined to changes in varied voice inflection and tempo in order to hold

¹⁷¹ *ibid*

¹⁷² First Annual Report of the University Broadcasting Council, “A Year’s Experiment in Cooperation”. July 1, 1936. RF, Box 284, Folder 3394.

¹⁷³ *ibid*

attention. Much educational radio was “dull,” leading to “walk out” on programs due to its inability to utilize the medium correctly, so a friendly, personal, and democratic attitude was more stimulating than a simple classroom lecture. By the end of the first year the output was impressive, including 912 broadcasts, some as repeats, for 333 hours of time that equated to \$303,231 of “commercial value”.¹⁷⁴ Shows had been broadcast on a mix of local superstations, independents, and networks, including 92 on the NBC affiliate WMAQ, 195 on the powerful clear-channel independent station WGN, 25 on WBBM (CBS), 568 on WJJD, and 37 on WLS (NBC). The consortium, including network affiliates, was largely optimistic about its progress, due to the belief that public service broadcasting would increase civic participation through popular education and the free exchange of opinion. Miller further gained collaborative support of other educational institutions such as the Field Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Chicago Public Library, and the American Medical Association. Within a short period of time an impressive consortium had been constituted that was able to take advantage of the best in education and commercial methods in the Chicago area.

Marshall’s diaries point to a level of optimism about UBC’s activities that he would not hold again until the early 1950s. If this experiment were successful, he wrote, there might be an opportunity to reproduce the model in New York City, based perhaps at NYU. Chancellor Chase of NYU was interested in the possibility, and David Sarnoff had agreed that a New York experiment would be possible if Chicago succeeded, offering Merrill Denison as a consultant should such a project get off the ground.¹⁷⁵ The goal of

¹⁷⁴ “Resume of the Broadcasting Activities of Chicago, DePaul, and Northwestern Universities with Special Consideration of the Achievement of the University Broadcasting Council”, February, 1938. RF, Box 285, Folder 3398.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Levering Tyson by John Marshall for RF, April 22, 1935. RF, Box 284, Folder 3395.

the experiment, Marshall believed, would be to see if education *could be combined with entertainment* provided that adequate staff, writers, and production managers were available. To increase this possibility, NBC assigned Judith Waller, Educational Director for NBC in the Midwest, to work with staff. Tracy Tyler, Secretary of the National Committee on Radio in Education, who emphasized the value of the council from an activist position. Merrell Dennison recommended that educators follow a basic discovery made by the networks in the 1920s—seriality, a structure that provided programs with narrative and character continuity that built up familiarity and loyalty. Educational broadcasts, Dennison advised, should focus on “the tremendous importance of continuity writing in the successful production of educational features”. Several shows took up this model. “The Old Judge” was a 15-minute program that introduced legal problems in a dramatic form. Its central character was a judge who had retired from the bench but continued to give legal advice to countless clients with a philosophical demeanor. The second character, in line with the popularity of minstrel performance of the day, which (ironically) perpetuated stereotypes in educational broadcasting was “his old negro retainer who has been with him for years, who gives a touch of comic relief.”¹⁷⁶

Other shows focused on extemporaneous book reviews in American literature, dramatic biographical sketches of great scientists culminating in their discoveries, “non-technical” discussion of business practices and events, and so on. Airtime was provided to parent-teacher organizations, the Illinois League of Women Voters, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, various musical performers, and a curiously popular show based at the University of Chicago called the Round Table, in which three speakers discussed controversial topics and contemporary news items on Sunday afternoons.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*

Yet, however promising such widespread support from major institutions initially appeared, Miller was not provided with a working cooperative as good as he and Marshall had hoped. Viewing the initiative as a peripheral experiment instead of a sustainable project, administrators at the major universities were unwilling to grant their faculty course releases to concentrate on programming and development. Worse for Miller, existing faculty had little understanding of or interest in learning the sophisticated techniques that sustained media industry production. Local radio stations would not cooperate with proposed broadcast schedules,, and unexpectedly the increase in educational broadcasts reduced the requirement for sustaining broadcasts on network stations in Chicago. One consideration that had gone unanticipated was that auditions for on-air talent encompassed an incredible amount of time, and it was impossible to coordinate faculty for audition purposes, which led to disagreement over hired talent. By the end of 1935 staff members in charge of talent scouting were being recruited, but employees Miller could afford to hire were under-experienced and ineffective. Quality programming by academics with no prior experience proved to be a nearly impossible task, and a series of documents points to the difficulty of coordinating basic functions that commercial broadcasters had long ago streamlined.¹⁷⁷ These problems were further exacerbated by a lack of consistent talent available in rotation for educational broadcasts.

Anecdotally, one musical education show run by a local school district had the problem of being staffed by hosts and an engineer prone to technical flaws and resistance to the stated educational goals of the initiative, reportedly calling recommended pedagogical techniques “high falutin’ notions.”¹⁷⁸ Yet Miller had no replacement on hand

¹⁷⁷ Letter from Miller to Marshall, July 22, 1937: Folder 3397, Box 285, RF.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Miller to Marshall, August 21, 1936: Folder 3395, Box 285, RF.

for the hosts so the show continued. One result of such difficulties was an increased reliance on transcriptions, or recordings of programs. which, as Miller claimed, could be played “100 times” before the needle wore out the record.¹⁷⁹ Yet live broadcasting was the gold standard of early radio; transcriptions were regarded as second-best and a poor substitute for live.

The Chicago Tribune, though, wrote a positive review of the experiment in early 1937.

Organized less than two years ago by Allen Miller, who now directs its activities, the council is constantly demonstrating that Nobel prize winners prove as exhilarating as Alexander Woolcott; that so-called absent minded professors are as agile in ad-libbing as Fred Allen; that savants are more effective word slingers than senators, and that the night skies are at least as mystifying as night life. In short the council is proving every day that there is entertainment in erudition”.¹⁸⁰

Problems aside, by the beginning of 1937, the UBC was providing an average weekly output of 8 hours, comprising talks, discussions, music, dramatization, and the like. The UBC was also praised by RF for its ability to be independent from both universities and networks yet able to “initiate ideas and to execute programs which are true to properly considered educational objectives and, in themselves, illustrate the integrity of academic standards”.¹⁸¹ Cooperation with commercial companies, as difficult as they may have

¹⁷⁹ Allen Miller to John Marshall, July 15, 1936. RF, Folder 3395, Box 285.

¹⁸⁰ “Entertainment in Erudition? UBC Proves It”, Larry Wolters, Chicago Tribune, February 28, 1937. RF, Box 285, Folder 3397.

¹⁸¹ Siepmann, Charles. “University Broadcasting Council”. April 19, 1937 Report. RF, Box 285, Folder 3396.

been, had assured hours of transmission over the networks as well as provided standards for educational technique.

In his 1937 assessment, Miller wrote that such problems were helpful for improving the UBC's overall awareness of best practices in radio broadcasting, and by the end of the Council's first two-year experiment, both Miller and Marshall felt that they had made some limited progress. The first year was, according to a letter from Miller to Marshall, one of initial organization in which assembling a staff and balancing educational quotients with commercial aesthetics led to a high turnover of participants.¹⁸² However, the second year helped to develop the scaffolding of an educational approach to mass-audience programming and was deemed one of "active production".¹⁸³ The burden of intensive direction of dramatic programs and faculty involvement was inconsistent but growing with the effectiveness of a "unified staff".¹⁸⁴ The task of developing new perspectives and objectives in educational broadcasting was reliant on the crystallization of the fundamentals of broadcasting in general. Newer programs would approach a mass audience with emotional appeal, and other (seemingly obvious) logistics were now clear to the board. Manuscripts should be submitted in advance of broadcasts, a cordial relationship with the community and other stations improved the quality of editorial supervision. The exploratory qualities of the UBC were repeatedly broached in letters to Marshall in lieu of excuses or apologies for execution. "The Board feels strongly that the Council is in almost all respects experimental in character. Not only is our organization an innovation in cooperative effort but our day to day activities are

¹⁸² Miller to Marshall, April 28th, 1937: Folder 3397, Box 285, RF.

¹⁸³ *ibid*

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*

distinctly experimental in character.”¹⁸⁵ The first two years, Miller estimated, were 85% directed to activities other than broadcasting. And more funds were needed for staff.

An experimental show produced by the Field Museum called “From the Ends of the Earth” attempted to provide anthropological study with background music as a way to enhance content. But the technical and talent combination directed at the project was difficult. More work was needed on editing and alteration of manuscript before the show, but the museum staff, when faced with continuity changes to the script “were shocked by the level of elements which would have been modified, to the extent that the entire field of reconstruction is now taboo with them”¹⁸⁶. Museum curators were so detail-minded that small shifts in dramatic quality seemed to appear to undermine scientific accuracy, leading to two to three rewrites before broadcasts when little time was available in the first place. The result was an “unusually heavy mortality rate among writers and would-be writers”.¹⁸⁷ The interesting result of this problem was increased attention by Miller and Marshall to the idea of training younger writers for specialized radio tasks appropriate to educational broadcasting content. But the changes resulted in older members of the staff doubting “the significance of the movement and... perhaps wondering when the axe will cease to operate”. Slight adjustments to content were received as failures by educators, not as trial and error in broadcast aesthetics.

By the third year Miller was receiving “less and less help from members of the faculty except for the few who serve on Council committees and take part in the Council’s programs.”¹⁸⁸ The result was that momentum was quickly lost. Universities

¹⁸⁵ Miller to Marshall, April 30, 1937. RF, Box 285, Folder 3397.

¹⁸⁶ Miller to Marshall, July 22, 1937. RF, Box 285, Folder 3397.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸⁸ John Marshall Diaries, Interview with William Benton, December 29, 1937: Folder 3397, Box 285, RF.

began to balk at particularly high expenses, and the Carnegie Corporation was enlisted to fund development. By the end of 1937 the UBC had spent nearly \$1.2-million dollars.¹⁸⁹ The result was that Miller's bosses at the University of Chicago—Robert Hutchins and William Benton—wrote to Marshall that such a large uncooperative consortium of local broadcasters was simply too difficult to execute, and that the university no longer wanted to support the project. Benton was, as Marshall wrote, “determined” to bring about an early disbandment” of the experiment.¹⁹⁰ The Council, Benton argued to Marshall, was not proving successful and was taking funds and faculty time from the University of Chicago. Hutchins stipulated that if the project were to continue, RF should not have to fund it so dramatically, providing more oversight by the university for future decisions. However, Benton wrote in another letter that one program that predated the UBC showed a great deal of promise: the University of Chicago Round Table. While he felt that the UBC signaled a “fledgling approach,” Benton did remain optimistic that in spite of the general propensity for UBC programs to be “of mediocre quality due to lackadaisical faculty interest,” the Round Table provided a new educational genre in which experts discussed “world events and the specificities of their findings.”¹⁹¹

The Round Table ran for twenty-two years and became the standard format for later political shows, as well as public broadcasting news interview formats. Even more interestingly, Robert Hutchins and William Benton's interest in radio had been piqued by Miller's wide-scale attempt. Benton went on to become a Connecticut Senator and one of

¹⁸⁹ John Marshall, internal memo about conversation with William Benton. December 29, 1937. Box 285, Folder 3397.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*

¹⁹¹ Letter from William Benton to John Marshall, February 16, 1938: Folder 3398, Box 285, RF

the great champions of noncommercial broadcasting in 1950s regulatory debates that preceded public broadcasting, and later became head of UNESCO's international broadcasting initiatives. Robert Hutchins continued to work with educational broadcasters until 1959 as Associate Director of the Ford Foundation, which funded educational broadcasting after the RF moved on to other projects in the early 1950s.

Ironically, it was educators themselves who undermined the UBC experiment, not the commercial networks. The tailspin the UBC experienced by the end of 1937 was, in many ways, opportune for educational broadcasting in general. Benton in particular stayed in touch with Marshall after the experiment. Beginning in advertising, William Benton became interested in the notion that a "quality" form of educational broadcasting could be set as a standard objective. However, due to interpersonal problems with Miller, and the general problem of turnover, no analysis of quality, Benton felt, had been reached regarding educational standards or listener interest. UC had no desire merely to be "on air", and after a meeting in which general faculty discussed which programs should be culled from the schedule based upon their quality, few were left that were supported. Benton's vision was that more could be accomplished for the future of educational broadcasting if a limited number of high quality programs proliferated and impressed policymakers and a general public. Quite a few experimental programs had been produced—three hundred and seventeen over two years—but the UC faculty had told Benton that they were pleased with only a small fraction of them and that the university should spend less energy on such a project.¹⁹²

Miller was predictably angered by the university's executive decision to cut ties even in light of recent successes, and wrote an indignant letter to Hutchins. Arguing that

¹⁹² John Marshall to Robert Hutchins, February 18, 1938. RF, Box 285, Folder 3398.

while he agreed that recognizing the value of radio included standards and dignity, striving merely for success inflected previous experimentation as defeat was allowing the “ballyhoo of commercial radio [to] creep into our own broadcasts”.¹⁹³ Success had been accomplished insofar as previously inaccessible educational genres had become more suitable for audience consumption. The trend at UC for “greater and more dominant type of concentration of authority in the administration creates a real danger that the faculty participants will sense a lessening of their own authority and hence responsibility for the growth of radio”. The approach he had taken, Miller wrote, was toward “greater development” with commercial radio, security of schedules, obtaining of desirable hours, and securing of freedom from censorship. His work of development of good will and cooperation between the university and networks had been depleted in just 3 months. “Quality”, Miller pleaded, was a difficult demonstration for radio evaluation, and the combination of education with technical dimensions was more difficult than usual entertainment and needed more time to develop.

The letter, clearly indicative of personal conflict behind the scenes at UC, was received poorly, and though the UBC had signed a 4-year contract between institutions, the project quickly faded. Miller wrote to Marshall that it had become necessary to violate the agreement with RF for a full-city consortium, and that he hoped that the board would continue to fund partial programming, namely the Round Table. Efforts were made by Miller to move the UBC to Northwestern, but internal strife led to decreased interest by NBC and CBS. Marshall’s diaries point to an embarrassing end for Miller at the UBC, writing in 1940 that Miller was still under contract but that his position had degraded to the point where he was operating in only “half of the office space” as

¹⁹³ *ibid*

previously and that he was “ready to move on to other work whenever a good chance offers”. Miller had further begun to doubt that educational radio could be executed. Judith Waller of NBC, herself a major pioneer of educational broadcasting, praised Miller in a letter for pioneering the idea of an educational council for broadcasting, but cautioned about “too grandiose” a method with few employees, nor did she believe Miller had appropriate leadership qualities or creative capacities to run such an organization.

The UBC was, in its way, the first substantial experiment in educational broadcasting organization. As Chapter 3 will describe, it inspired two major precursors to NET—the NAEB and the Rocky Mountain Radio Council—to try similar experiments with more successful results. Further, it introduced the dynamic William Benton into educational broadcasting. At the demise of the UBC Benton had been annoyed by Miller but convinced that an alternate system was necessary, writing that he did not hold much hope for the successful development of commercial network educational broadcasts. He conceded that Miller’s idea of an “inter-university-college exchange for local broadcasting” was a strong one and worth further discussion with Marshall. Benton would become one of the major players of educational broadcasting regulatory history just a few years ahead, and his incipient interest is well-chronicled by letters to Marshall. Benton had brainstormed quite a bit about educational broadcasting, and offered several suggestions to Marshall from the UC standpoint. Given the right personnel, organizations like the UBC would have further use to stimulate member institutions at that point only mildly interested, leading to adequate local programs.

But before such interest was there, he argued, such an approach would be too messy. Programs should begin with their own consulting groups and institutions and then

meet as a productive unit instead of as a top-down network, he wrote, and the trading of such programs at a high caliber would ensure quality. The issue at hand following the experiment and recent legislation was not quantity but quality, he reiterated, “since there is a great proliferation already”, and an audience would only receive better programs in comparison to the networks. The chief justification for the UBC as a single institution was the funding accrument, but the consolidation of multiple interests and viewpoints led to “councils and committees apt to reflect the composite fears of members...they are not apt to be creative”. A more imaginative, creative effort with some caution would lead to better programming. And although Miller maintained representatives on the Chicago and Northwestern campuses, the UBC lacked strong oversight beyond its committees. The Round Table was the most notable success, Benton believed, because it was based in a specific vision by specific members. In another letter Benton said that behind the scenes he was personally unable to keep universities in the fold. DePaul had produced a strong program called “The Changing Scene” that Miller had personally trumpeted, but in general he was not a “good program man”. One person was not sufficient to coordinate what were really separate activities, and the result was that universities had not pooled their talent, raised quality of broadcasts, developed new techniques, nor provided “leadership” in educational radio. A few of Benton’s claims were short sighted or self-serving, to be sure. But the notion that educational broadcasting foremost needed a standardized relationship between aesthetics and practice became a dominant interest of proponents until the early 1950s, with the administrative experiments increasingly improving with additional experience.

A final report was developed by Marshall in 1941, nearly three years after the UBC had been dismantled. When the UBC came into existence, Marshall noted, the broadcasting companies had done relatively little to develop educational or public service programs. There were educational stations and educational departments at networks, but little had been done to impose the requirements of communications law upon program development in public interest. Due to the UBC, commercial companies had begun to take this work more seriously. While the UBC had failed to create a sustainable alternative to the networks on a regional scale, it “undoubtedly set standards for educational broadcasting both in the companies and more generally throughout the country” by realizing new educational possibilities that compared favorably to other stations.¹⁹⁴

1.10 The Federal Radio Education Committee’s Script Exchange and the Committee of Six’s Report at the Second National Conference on Educational Broadcasting

Meanwhile, John Studebaker began to argue that recent pioneering experimentation in the classroom, studio, and university radio workshops had engendered ‘ferment’ en route to solving practical problems of production.¹⁹⁵ Through research and testing, pedagogical approaches were being seriously developed through the collection and classification of experimental data. “Its object is to provide the necessary formal structure which will be essential to the eventual creation of a basic and comprehensive plan for the accomplishment of sound education through radio.” Further, Studebaker began to voice the first persuasive rhetorical case for a diverse national radio spectrum—

¹⁹⁴ John Marshall Assessment of the UBC Project, March 1941. RF, Box 285, Folder 3403.

¹⁹⁵ Studebaker, John W. 1936. The federal radio education committee (pamphlet).

that radio was exerting a powerful educational force whether broadcasters intended it to or not.¹⁹⁶ Widespread mass attunement to the messages of radio had quickly changed the public complexion, and such a vast captive audience demanded variety beyond vaudeville acts, dishwashing liquid commercials, and populist programming. An authoritative body (such as Congress), he posited, should institute safeguards to insure that radio genuinely serve ‘public interest’ beyond basic proffered pleasures. Educators had admittedly failed to meet public interest standards in the past, but oversight from governmental institutions quickly streamlining practices, and civically-based public interest programming was immanently plausible. On this he wrote:

“While entirely sympathetic with the basic aims of educators, broadcasters were cognizant too, of the practical problems with the question involved. Limited funds, lack of training personnel, and the natural preoccupation of educators with education made it improbable, in the opinion of broadcasters, that educators alone could successfully establish and operate stations in the public interests, convenience and necessity, as provided in section B of the Communications Act.”¹⁹⁷

Educators previously lacked the production facilities or formal system of training of commercial broadcasters, and suffered ‘impairment’ in productive and economic means; but now that the FCC had delineated clear standards for obtainment of broadcast licenses, if such standards were met there should be space for educational broadcasts to function within the dominant model.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*

At the same time, Studebaker had executed his forum plan with a great deal of success. Between 1936 and 1937 the Office of Education sponsored 19 experimental public forum demonstration center experiments, which cost over \$500,000.¹⁹⁸ In that time several thousand meetings had been conducted with nearly a million attending. Attendees ranged from young students to the elderly, and discussions focused on a plethora of democratic questions ranging across economics, political science, and sociology to basic primary school curricula. Several hundred ‘forum-leaders’ had been trained, and the Department of Education developed standard publications, exhibit materials, and the like. It was an opportune moment for Studebaker. He had been given license to experiment with public forums just as radio had been regulated. With his new position he believed that national radio could complement physical meetings and eventually be developed as a kind of national public forum.

NBC and CBS agreed to develop educational broadcasts with Studebaker but not with the educators. Indeed, networks had always produced high-caliber programming with educational qualities such as NBC’s *Music Appreciation Hour* and CBS’s *American School of the Air*. But NBC and CBS were prodded by Studebaker to create programs in line with the agenda of the Department of Education and its affiliates, which now included a growing NAEB constituency. So simultaneously with the reemergence of educational broadcasters and the debut of Studebaker’s plan for material and technological public forums, commercial radio also began to increase educational programming, snowballing into a new onslaught of radio pedagogy.

In 1936 President Roosevelt endorsed a plan called the *Educational Radio Project* to fund 3 educational radio programs over network facilities, titled *Struggle for Freedom*,

¹⁹⁸ Pickett, *ibid.*

Let Freedom Ring, and *Work of the Government*, and granted \$75,000 for an 8 month production window.¹⁹⁹ With war in Europe looming, and hoping to maintain nearly complete ownership of the airwaves, the networks decided to produce an additional swath of educational programs. Between 1936 and 1937, due to pressure and funding from Studebaker and the government, the networks produced 342 total public service and educational programs (though with many as short as 5 minutes) and 8 ongoing series, in facilities from coast to coast.²⁰⁰

Much to everyone's surprise, the shows received over 400,000 letters of support in response, with only 100 of those letters being negative in sentiment. And the project began to snowball—by the end of 1937 the government had contributed \$262,700 to the *networks*, or roughly 20% of a production budget, with additional help from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Smithsonian. The enterprise was vast enough that it led to the construction of a complete production unit dedicated to education-by-radio that included wings for program development, publicity, supplies, and listener mail.²⁰¹

However, this brief period of commercial educational broadcasting was, as Studebaker reflected in a piece titled *The Educational Radio Project and the Office of Education*, a 'delicate' relationship.²⁰² Networks were predictably skeptical that educational programs could continuously attract any number of listeners, but for public relation purposes they repeatedly stated that they would gladly present educational programs as long as they could attract mass audiences implicit to the network broadcast

¹⁹⁹ Studebaker, John W. 1937. *The educational radio project of the office of education*; Savage, Barbara. 1999. *Broadcasting freedom: Radio, war and politics of race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

²⁰⁰ Pickett, *ibid*.

²⁰¹ Studebaker, *The educational radio project*, *ibid*

²⁰² *ibid*

agenda. The Department of Education agreed to allow networks to choose their own staff to develop programs, with notable advisors that included Edward R. Murrow, Franklin Dunham of NBC, and Studebaker himself. Eventually commercial producers and the Department of Education seemed to come up with a formula that satisfied both parties. Scripts and plans would be devised and sent to committees, changes were made in accordance with suggestions from both educators and entertainers, and initial adverse criticisms compelled both parties to sharpen thinking on the part of program content development. The Department of Education, upon completion of a broadcast, would archive all materials, and Studebaker quickly had the department set up an information exchange program as a kind of ‘clearing house’ for how to adapt educational programming to civic and defense-related purposes. By 1938 a catalog of radio scripts, transcriptions and recordings had been prepared and the FREC circulated them to university educators and school districts; especially popular were shows that ‘developed a clear understanding of our democratic heritage and stronger devotion to the democratic cause’.²⁰³ Once the Rockefeller Foundation began to fund the creation of a clearing house, the Office of Education experienced a boom in radio production. Based in Trenton for its convenience to both New York and Washington, the Educational Radio Project’s educational script writers quickly developed a format for educational content.

One set of scripts included offering more than 30,000 visual aids to listeners in advance of broadcasts, an effort that was quickly noted to have advanced the “educative influence” from the broadcast.²⁰⁴ Another formatting innovation began with a show called “Answer Me This” in which audiences were challenged at the beginning with a

²⁰³ *ibid*

²⁰⁴ John Studebaker, “Report of Progress of Federal Radio Education Committee”, Address given at Second National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, November 30, 1937. RF, Box 359, Folder 3705.

single fact or question with which they would be asked to engage over the course of the rest of the show. This piqued interest of listeners and similar shows expanded on this educational technique by concluding with a book recommendation for further examination of the subject. The result was that public libraries received increased requests for educational literature. Other scripts began to note radio techniques useful for any reproduction of the script, including “educational guideposts and tentative radio guideposts” for writers, committees, and practitioners.²⁰⁵

By 1938 the Educational Script Exchange employed more than 100 workers in Washington and New York, and each member eventually went to work for school districts as a specialist in interpretation of educational script production or classroom management of radio education. This latter fact increased the influence of the clearinghouse, as many participating stations received frequency allocations with stipulations for localism, of which schools were one satisfactory location. The Office of Education began to “throw its strength and support to plans which assist in the development of strong, capable school radio producing groups...springing up rapidly”.²⁰⁶ In concert with a still-developing program in educating educators to utilize radio as a technology, the script exchange further began to devise methods for assessment of the quality of scripts on-hand. Many excellent scripts were “being written, used once, and forgotten”.²⁰⁷ The Exchange then began to hold meetings and supply suggestions regarding what scripts were strong and why, leading to a standardized list of 100 model scripts by which newer scripts would be devised in reference to.

²⁰⁵ *ibid*

²⁰⁶ Office of Education Report to Department of the Interior, “Local Government Radio Script Series”, Report filed August 4, 1937 in RAC Archive. Box 254, Folder 3036.

²⁰⁷ *ibid*

Among productions that aired on the commercial networks, *Democracy in Action*, *I'm an American*, *Freedom on the March*, and the seminal program *Americans All*, *Immigrants All* were produced in conjunction between network and FREC input. *Americans All*, *Immigrants All*, as chronicled by Barbara Savage,²⁰⁸ was a particularly successful and widely-listened to program with a staff that included famous writers such as Gilbert Seldes and consultants such as W.E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. By the end of 1938, Studebaker had taken this new repository of information and constituted an Educational Script Exchange made available to schools, colleges, and radio stations, distributing more than 80,000 copies in just a couple of years.²⁰⁹ Radio workshops, similar to his forum workshops, were operated in cooperation with universities such as NYU and funded by Rockefeller, permitting more than 80 educators concerned with radio to 'profit by the successes and mistakes of the Educational Radio Project'.

The Second National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, in 1937, followed the first conference with objectives similar to the FREC's major initiative of the script exchange: 1) to provide a national forum where interests concerned with education could exchange ideas, 2) to examine and appraise situation of broadcasting for future public service, 3) to appraise listeners' interest in programs that come under general classification of public service broadcasting, 4) to examine the present and potential resources of education through radio, 5) to examine and appraise the interest of organized education in broadcasting, and 6) to bring to a large audience findings that become available from studies and research conducted by FREC.²¹⁰ In addition to the previous year's participants, many of whom returned, the American Association for the

²⁰⁸ Savage, *ibid*

²⁰⁹ Studebaker, Educational radio project, *ibid*

²¹⁰ John Marshall, Notes on Second Conference, June 10, 1937. RF, Box 254, Folder 3035.

Advancement of Science, the American Association of Museums, the American Federation of the Arts, the American Library Association, the National Council of Parent Education, and the National University Extension Association also participated. Papers were given by FCC Commissioners Prall and Sykes, Studebaker, members of NBC, William Paley of CBS, NAB spokesmen and others. By the second meeting the FREC was already taken to be a technocratic force. Prall instructed the audience to take the FREC as an “arm of the government in working out constructive cooperation” and pledged complete support for its civic purposes. Sykes reiterated that no legal provisions had been set in the Act to provide special privileges for groups and that they weren’t favored by congress, but that this didn’t mean that educators should be shut off from future allocations. Studebaker followed this by claiming that the problem of educational radio was one of paramount international importance regarding the topic of public and private utilities. Democratic participation would in the future be reliant on the capacity for scientific and intelligent study of further use of technologies such as radio, and proposed that a division of educational broadcasting in the OOE would soon appear (just for the record, no such division ever occurred). The NAB responded in kind that they were becoming apprehensive about public criticism by educators against commercialism and threatened to rescind the small funds they had offered for experimentation. William Paley responded that members of the radio industry agreed that educational broadcasting was essential and that CBS supported the FRC. But study was needed before those particular projects were deemed desirable. In response, he offered a young Ph.D. trained in sociological quantitative research named Frank Stanton for aid in future possible research, discussed in detail in later chapters. Further, over the previous year a special

FREC group called the Committee of Six—Royal of NBC, Willis of CBS, Baldwin of the NAB, Charters of WOSU, Cantril of Princeton, and Tyson of the NACRE—had conducted a study on the prospects for cooperation between commercial and educational interests.²¹¹ The committee entered into preliminary negotiations looking toward the financing of a future plan to constitute an effective educational framework, including funds needed by Tyson as chairman. They reported at the conference that obtaining equal representation of educators and the commercial operators was at the core of the debate, but disagreed over what course should be taken. In the published report of the conference, “The Report of the Committee of Six on Proposed Education Broadcasting Projects”, they had unanimously agreed that no proposal had yet been defined to solve the problems of educational broadcasting, and thus attention should be called to the fact that there were numbers of authorities that were concerned about too much centralization of government within broadcasting.²¹² While the privatized model hypothetically provided citizen access to media, and hence could be argued as the most democratic option, the model passed by the CA1934 was too severely enforced by regulatory commissions to permit genuine competition among the private sector. Conflicts in allocations were the domain of the FCC, but work needed to be conducted regarding new projects with a cooperative angle. Many of the 16 earlier proposals were reiterated, but the question of how to determine what educational broadcasting *was*, as well as what kinds of programs would be considered educational in value, rose to the fore of the conversation. What distinctions should be made between education, information, and propaganda?

²¹¹ John Marshall, internal memo, filed March 24, 1937. RF, Box 332, Folder 3951.

²¹² *ibid*

The committee took it upon themselves to rewrite Proposal 15's previous iteration to answer "certain questions of basic interest to both educators and broadcasters" through "systematic investigation".²¹³ What made radio broadcasting "effective"? The new project proposed to establish methods and techniques for conducting radio studies and answer questions about the value of listenership based upon age, culture, socio-economic level, geographic area, etc. It also proposed, for the first time, to systematize the listening habits of these different groups and to determine what information people acquired from radio. Consequently, one of the members from the committee, Hadley Cantril, applied previous to the conference to research these questions via the Rockefeller Humanities Fund.

1.11 Conclusion

Immediately after the Communications Act of 1934 federal communications and educational officers sought measures to protect noncommercial usage of radio technology. Besides federal interests, RF's philanthropic program serendipitously coincided with federal initiatives after 1934. With the UBC experiment in Chicago, educational broadcasting carried crucial support from federal educational, communications, and philanthropic funds toward future development. Meanwhile, educational broadcasting's original proponents and practitioners regrouped. Chapter 2 examines their changes in perspective about the nature of educational broadcasting, how practitioners sought and interpreted the influence of other broadcasting approaches, and the origin of several key initiatives that would become core practices of educational and public broadcasting in the U.S. in the 1950s.

²¹³ *ibid*

Chapter 2: Shifts in Strategy to the Media Reform Movement's approach to Educational Advocacy, and the Significance of Charles Siepmann for Public Broadcasting in the U.S., 1934 to 1938

This chapter looks at the origin of standards and administration for public broadcasting in the post-1934 environment. Drawing on internal correspondence and reports from reformers and practitioners, RF initiatives, BBC experts, and early educational technology researchers, it identifies the development of educational broadcasting's early structures and practices: decentralized production, the circulation of recorded programs via transcription discs, the establishment of distribution hubs and circuits, and early modes of audience measurement and content evaluation, driven by funding from philanthropic and university sources. The initiatives described here set the major precedents for the recommendations made at the formative Allerton House Seminars in 1949 and 1950, as discussed in chapter 5.

The attempt by reformers after 1934 to "system build" also signified a significant shift in tactics. Whereas the National Committee for Education by Radio (NCER) had promoted set-aside frequencies for noncommercial broadcasting before the Communications Act, after 1934 the reformers organized to find creative strategies to obtain educational frequencies by meeting the criteria of Sykes' *Pursuant*, which also now had an influence upon how the RF would disperse funds to educational experiments. This would prove to be a crucial decision. The Allerton House Seminars consolidated initiatives pursued in this period into a single institutional focus, and the apparent strength of the unified NAEB practitioners was one of the major reasons that Congress became willing to set aside special frequencies for educators in 1952.

While the FREC sought solutions for educational broadcasting through research initiatives, a series of local, regional, and national projects worked on applying and streamlining educational practices. Proponents sought the answers to fundamental questions such as “how does one produce quality educational broadcasting”? The answer, it turned out, was quite difficult to determine. A successful combination of curricular objectives and the expediencies of radio production required the creation of wide administrative, infrastructural, technological goals, and supporting research methodologies. It also required a new class of internal ‘critics’ to measure the quality of these initiatives, devise methods of communication between stations, and develop a moderated vision of their mission that could be carried forward into organization and practice.

Quite crucial to this process was Charles Siepmann, who like the American educators and the Rockefeller Foundation had a strong liberal vision of an “ethics of media”, but also had significant experience in public programming and practices at the BBC. Brought to the U.S. by the Rockefeller Foundation to conduct an assessment of educational broadcasting practice as it stood in 1937, Siepmann pushed stations to conduct rigorous self-examinations of practice and administration in accordance with their stated intentions. As will be discussed in chapter 5, Siepmann also, by a complex and unexpected web of events, became a kind of philosophical gatekeeper for educators. Siepmann was part of a growing bevy of interests with widely different views about the purpose of educational broadcasting—the networks, the Office of Education, the BBC, short-lived regional educational networks, and the Rockefeller Foundation. The

overarching vision of noncommercial media itself changed over this period from a disorganized set of good intentions into a research-oriented, standards-based approach.

This chapter examines two initiatives in detail. First it looks at how media reformers pre-1934 changed their outlook. New document findings show that educators had an opportunity to get set-aside frequencies before the Communications Act, but turned it down because those frequencies were not ready for immediate utilization. Educators continued to identify internal problems in 1934, and changing their name from the Association of College and University Broadcast Stations (ACUBS) to the National Association for Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), but the Communications Act came too soon and unexpectedly decimated their organization by revoking many members' licenses. Remaining practitioners needed a well-connected expert to help with future frequency requests. Levering Tyson of NACRE had been viewed as too friendly to commercial interests before the Communications Act, but after the Act he became an important technocrat capable of putting different researchers, practitioners, and advocates into contact. Consequently he became chair of FREC's "Committee of Six" and was instrumental in securing funds from RF for NAEB members.

Second, John Marshall at the Rockefeller Foundation was instrumental in soliciting BBC input for what steps might be taken to improve noncommercial broadcasting in the U.S. Marshall went to the United Kingdom himself and while there met a young Charles Siepmann, whom he brought to the States on a grant in 1937. He conducted a series of reviews and found educational broadcasting to be an unprofessional and disorganized affair.

2.1 ACUBS Becomes the NAEB

The 1936 joint conference between the Office of Education and the FCC was widely publicized to educational stations. Remaining ACUBS members, most prominently in the Midwest, had survived by sending representatives to Washington, as required, to show how their stations met the public interest stipulations of the Act. These stations had broadcast at least several hours a day, had conducted prescribed maintenance of transmitters or shared transmitter time with commercial stations, and most crucially had sent a representative to the 1934 FCC hearings to defend their frequency allocations. However, the vast majority of noncommercial license holders did not follow through. Numbers vary depending upon the report, but roughly 30 educational stations remained after re-allocations.²¹⁴ From this core the media reform movement would rebuild eventually to become a unified institutional force, and they would do so by studying and emulating successful characteristics of larger dominant bodies of federal, private, and philanthropic investment in civic broadcasting.

As early as 1929 the NCER had urged educational stations to create a national ‘governing board’ that could locate a sustainable funding source, create a central office in Washington to lobby, and create quality programs that could be recorded and circulated. But the committee was too small, and in its own way too forward thinking, to get these initiatives off the ground. After the 1934 Act, the Payne Fund began to reduce funding to the NCER, and several of its members moved to other positions.

By contrast, Levering Tyson of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education (NACRE) had warned educators that the networks were too well organized, and that educators should find ways to work with commercial interests to survive. This

²¹⁴ *ibid*

viewpoint was flatly rejected by the NCER, as detailed by McChesney, and as discussed in Chapter 1 major members such as B.B. Brackett had been persuaded that for educational broadcasting to remain noncommercial it must strongly dedicate itself to a nonprofit ideology and practice—a position, incidentally, that would become a permanent part of public broadcasting’s mission. However, Tyson’s openness to working with multiple organizations led to him becoming affiliated with the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation’s new Humanities Fund. Tyson conducted consulting work, joined the NAEB review board, and helped to develop the Office of Education’s 16-point initiative in 1935.

The NCER continued until the early 1940s under the direction of Howard Evans, discussed later in this chapter, but the NAEB had to develop a stronger political vision than before the Act. As illustrated in chapter 1, a strong core of stations at Iowa State, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ohio State had understood the problems they faced during the period of experimentation before the Act. If stations could gain budgetary and technological stability, members believed, institutions would be able to better secure listeners. Further, if educational stations were better organized they would be able to participate in comprehensive studies of broadcasting. These recommendations were presented at a brief conference that took place on September 18th, 1934.

Part of the conference included the drafting of a new constitution. In the preamble, members wrote:

“Believing that radio is in its nature one of the most important factors in our national and international welfare, we, the representatives of institutions of higher learning, engaged in educational broadcasting, do

associate ourselves together to promote, by mutual cooperation and united effort, the dissemination of knowledge to the end that both the technical and educational features of broadcasting may be extended to all.”²¹⁵

Members further voted to change the name of the organization from ACUBS to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), in hopes of unifying as a national practitioner movement.

In preparation for the 1934 FCC hearings, members put several initiatives into motion at the conference. Members turned their attention to what might act as feasible technological proposals that could be agreed upon by every participating institution. What if, the advisory board wondered, a standard frequency allocation range could be recommended to regulators? Instead of requesting a blanket percentage of assignments per area, could a moderately desirable place on the dial—but perhaps not the most economically competitive range—be set aside for educators? Carl Menzer at Iowa and Harold Ingham at KFKU argued in several internal memos that frequencies between the 550 and 590 AM range were undesirable enough to commercial stations that educational stations could perhaps lobby to receive permanent “medium space” there.²¹⁶ In a September letter to Ingham, another member speculated that “regional channels of low or medium frequency” might be achievable for educators if the stations could fill an 18-hour day.²¹⁷ This might be feasible if educators could find a way to tie their endeavor to a “controlled federal educational chain subsidized by the government, education department, and department of interior”.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Preamble to the Constitution of 1934, NAEB Files, Box 1, Folder 1934.

²¹⁶ Carl Menzer to Harold Ingham, August 1934. NAEB Files, Box 1, Folder 1934

²¹⁷ Willis Phillips to Harold Ingham, September 4, 1934, Box 1, Folder 1934

²¹⁸ *ibid*

The great irony of early communications policy history is that just previous to 1934 educators were provided with an opportunity to claim special frequencies before the passage of the Communications Act—they would have to wait until 1952 until this opportunity was again provided. According to NAEB records, Joseph Wright at Illinois had been in negotiations with the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) just previous to the Act. In one report to ACUBS members, he relayed that he had been offered frequencies in the 1500 to 1600 AM range.²¹⁹ However, ACUBS members decided that this part of the spectrum was too weak to sustain large regional broadcasts. Most radio tuners had not yet been built to “get frequencies higher than 1500”.²²⁰ Since educational stations would have to serve relatively focused constituencies in comparison to commercial stations, the ACUBS turned down the offer, hoping that the FRC would come back with a counteroffer of more desirable frequencies.

B.B. Brackett at South Dakota, often the most vociferous critic of the FRC previous to the Act, disagreed with this decision. He argued that they should take the frequency allocations because “disadvantages would be overbalanced by advantages”²²¹—ACUBS members would no longer have to compete with commercial stations for frequencies and, possibly, several years into the future such frequencies might be tenable for new radios. He was right, the ACUBS’ rejection of special frequencies was a huge tactical mistake. Carl Menzer reported that instead of a counteroffer, the FRC cut off further negotiation.

²¹⁹ Letter from Joseph Wright to James H. Hanley at the Federal Radio Council, August or September, 1934. NAEB Files, Box 1, Folder 1934

²²⁰ *ibid*

²²¹ B.B. Brackett to J.W. Stafford, August or September, 1934. NAEB Files, Box 1, Folder 1934

“The FRC takes the attitude that ‘you are always yelling for more facilities and you don’t use the ones you have. Come forth with a plan that is really practical and we’ll see what we think of it’. Yet no plan has ever been submitted officially because they hadn’t (sic) been proposed properly. The question isn’t, necessarily more time but more power and better frequency allocations.”²²²

The entire history of American broadcasting may have taken a different trajectory had ACUBS officials responded affirmatively to this offer and kept their frequency allocations in the AM band.

Consequently, proceeding the September 1934 conference, several committees were organized to work on educational broadcasting problems. The committee for “Federal Chain Education Program Development,” chaired by Frank Schooley at Illinois, was put in charge of finding federal support for state-based broadcasters. Another committee on “Short Wave Transmission Between Stations,” headed by Carl Menzer of Iowa, would examine methods of distribution outside of rented network wires, especially for rebroadcasts of better shows by NAEB members. As this chapter will discuss below, Menzer’s committee attempted several approaches to program distribution before settling on distributing recorded programs, called “transcriptions,” by mail. This would later be referred to as the “bicycle network,” since it relied on stations forwarding program recordings to each other in turn. A committee on “Proposed Recorded Programs,” headed by T. M. Beaird at Oklahoma and Harold McCarty at Wisconsin, was charged with looking into how to produce high quality transcription programs, though this committee’s function was ultimately folded into Menzer’s.

²²² Carl Menzer to Harold Ingham, August, 1934. NAEB Files, Box 1, Folder 1934

While a step in the right direction, these initiatives started too late to persuade policymakers. 1934 ended as a disastrous year for educators. Political decisions were conservatively made in favor of the commercial networks. A *Radio Guide* editorial from September 15, 1934 described the prevailing state of confusion in educational broadcasting. If few educational broadcasts actually attracted audiences, the piece queried, “do radio listeners in the U.S. want 25% of all stations broadcasting educational material?”²²³ These stations had not justified their existence, the article stated, because they had not made broadcasting compelling. “If they can make broadcasting interesting then they can have all the time they want on the air, right now. No one thinks that making stations educational will overcome the lure of good radio drama, broadcast of symphony, or good popular music.”²²⁴ The *Guide* was of course a National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) publication, but from the perspective of most regulators and listeners the piece was entirely accurate. As a result, as well chronicled by McChesney and Sloten, only a small percentage of educational stations remained on the air after assignments, those that already emulated the administrative and technical prowess of commercial stations.

2.2 The Rockefeller Foundation Steps In; the Influence of Levering Tyson and Charles Siepmann on Educational Radio Development

NAEB members would toil for the next 15 years, but 1934 was ultimately a serendipitous year for the beginning of a new kind of educational broadcasting advocacy. The Act unwittingly inspired a series of foundational initiatives that would improve educational broadcasting practices, lead to amendments in the Communications Act, and secure resources for broadcast experimentation. John Marshall of the Rockefeller

²²³ Editorial from “Radio Guide”, September 15, 1934. NAEB Files, Box 1, Folder 1934.

²²⁴ *ibid*

Foundation began to fund educational broadcasting after the FREC's invitation to attend the 1936 conference, but his first exposure to educational radio came from his relationship with Levering Tyson at the NACRE. As noted earlier, under David Stevens, Marshall had already set on a course of underwriting experiments in educational radio due to the new technology's ability to extend and expand local and regional culture. At the center of the new reform movement, The Rockefeller Foundation would pioneer underwriting of academic research in the U.S. and its noncommercial media practices. Part of the reason RF was so successful was that it employed expert consultants to help with its evaluation of grant utilization.

In September of 1934, Marshall commissioned a report a by State Assistant Commissioner Dr. George Wiley, of the New York State Education Department, on the prospects for funding radio. Wiley's report argued that experimental work in radio education was distinctly different than the public service programs put out by the networks due to their dedication to instructional programming. While radio had improved as an "instructional instrument", "sufficient data" had not yet been obtained with reference to its value.²²⁵ Wiley recommended that Rockefeller look to the progress of local practitioners, in Rochester in particular, to determine the "value of regular instruction of children by means of the radio".²²⁶

Wiley further recommended a 2-year period during which student achievement would be "measured before, during, and after a series of broadcasts",²²⁷ in both control and experimental classrooms, some fitted with a radio, some without. But more

²²⁵ Geo Wiley, "Radio in Education: Recommendations Relative to Experiments in Radio Education", October 4, 1934. RF, Box 360, Folder 3710.

²²⁶ Geo Wiley, "Report Committee on Radio Education" undated, packaged with 1934 report. RF, Box 360, Folder 3710.

²²⁷ *ibid*

importantly for this history, Wiley recommended that the project should begin by contacting the most successful noncommercial and instructional broadcasting practitioners in the world—the BBC. Shortly thereafter, Marshall commissioned a report from the BBC regarding their experience with instructional broadcasting.

In early 1935 Wiley received their report, written by H. A. L. Fisher of the BBC's "Central Council for School Broadcasting", discussing a 3-year experiment carried out in Britain. Wiley conveyed Fisher's primary recommendations to Marshall. It concluded that, for any broadcasting experiment to work, student reception "must be good", with a requisite number of accompanying pamphlets available. And each classroom teacher had to be knowledgeable about the aim and scope of the courses, "and of the part he himself (sic) must necessarily play in making the lessons of permanent value to his class".²²⁸ The BBC had experimented with this instructional approach by framing the value of broadcasts to schools in terms of their extant curricula, with "five or six persons, each possessing some special qualification of scholarship, broadcasting technique, or practical knowledge of the school" assigned to development of local broadcasting instruction. The addition of trained specialists who could make adjustments in their areas of expertise to educational broadcasting tended to streamline results.

For example, the BBC had concluded that science and natural history were effectively taught via radio, and broadcast speech courses were effective for improvement in speaking. Radio offered a "new angle and in a new voice" on what was already available, and students seemed to "assimilate general ideas even if they cannot recall every detail of the talk".²²⁹ David Stevens believed that RF investment in radio could

²²⁸ *ibid*

²²⁹ *ibid*

contribute to overall questions of educational “design”, much in the way that a school architect designs buildings so that “light comes over pupil’s left shoulders”, or how windows are placed for reading.²³⁰ Like constructing a building, Stevens posited, radio needed to learn how to design its programs and its conditions of reception through research. Design did not always equate to reform, he noted, since modern schools had “miserable acoustics because the new buildings, plaster on tile and the like, do not absorb sound and because by their design modern school buildings produce disturbing echoes”.²³¹ But design was a necessary first step for trial and error research. He instructed Marshall to seek research that would cover “present practices” in school broadcasting, including European, network, and local stations. Two stations in particular stood out as promising sites for regional attempts at classroom instruction—Wisconsin and Ohio State, described in the next chapter.

Noting the Payne Fund’s investment in educational stations, John Marshall reportedly consulted with Howard Evans and Tracy Tyler of the NCER in 1936 regarding what direction future underwriting might take. They discussed how the Payne Fund had long been a supporter of Ohio State’s educational station, WOSU, and had recently donated \$70,000 to further research at Ohio State for educational instruction, led by Keith Tyler; and film, led by Edgar Dale. Tracy Tyler advised that a concrete plan for the study of radio should be pursued, with mention that another NCER member, A.G. Crane, had attempted to outline a national model for educational broadcasting in the Rocky Mountain region (discussed in Chapter 3). Due to this conversation and another with Studebaker at the FREC conference, Marshall decided to fund concrete spatial

²³⁰ David Stevens, “Radio in the Schools”, Internal Memo, November 30, 1934. RF, Box 358, Folder 3693.

²³¹ *ibid*

experiments in educational broadcasting administration. Several models existed: 1) Local (the University Broadcasting Council in Chicago), 2) Regional (the new attempt by the Rocky Mountain Radio Council), and 3) National (the Office of Education's efforts and the decentralized attempt by the NAEB to network between local stations). As the Payne Fund slowly retracted money from the NCER campaign, its members moved on to other activities.

But most notably, though he had occupied a strange grey area before the Communications Act—never fully accepted by commercial interests, but seen as too pro-commercial for purists at the ACUBS—Levering Tyson of NACRE materialized in the post-Act aftermath as an unusually well-connected figure who would play a large role in connecting educational interests in the decade to come. It was Tyson who had worked with David Stevens at the RF in the early 1930s and later connected John Marshall to many of the major figures of educational broadcasting research following the 1936 FREC conference. As a ranking member at the founding of the “Committee of Six”, and later its director, Tyson managed to connect educational interests through FREC. His ‘moderate’ position endeared him to Studebaker, who was forced to engage a commercial-friendly playing field.²³² Tyson’s previous position also fit the FCC’s post-Act recommendations for cooperation between groups. After the Act advocates had little choice but to interact with networks, and in fact, as they would find out, the networks had much to teach educators about utilization of the technology. Studebaker’s consultations with Tyson in part led to the envisioned cooperative structure of the FREC.

²³² Levering Tyson, “A Proposal of the Establishment of a National Council on Radio in Education”, RF, Box 360, Folder 3709.

Tyson's influence was a major factor in the Rockefeller Foundation's willingness to fund educational broadcasting research and experimentation so broadly between 1934 and 1942. He had written an influential piece in 1930 that had piqued Stevens' interest in radio. Tyson had argued that a "fundamental organization" needed to be created to provide a "clearing house of information" about educational undertakings to advise local councils in broadcasting and enlist any interested agency that was available.²³³ Such a clearinghouse would be very similar to larger national initiatives in educational curricula, and hence entirely coherent as an extension of educational interests.

Notably, Tyson's 1930 prospectus was very similar to the course that the OOE ultimately followed. His NACRE was different in structure from the NCER. The original NACRE board only consisted of 7 members, and served mainly as a platform for Tyson to meet and greet other academic interests, including meetings with Walter Lippman and John Dewey, and the commercial networks themselves. Tyson had been dismissed by many advocates that his vision for educational broadcasting was not nonprofit enough. Unfortunately for the educators, Tyson had successfully predicted the 1934 outcome, and had argued that practitioners needed to "advance from a state of isolation" as early as 1931. The ACUBS and NCER had erroneously separated themselves from commercial interests.²³⁴ But by 1935 his approach to educational broadcasting advocacy took the fore over the NCER's activism for separate bands for educators to experiment isolated from the networks.

²³³ John Marshall, "The Webster-Case Memorandum on Broadcasting and other related aids to Education", November 9, 1936. RF, Box 360, Folder 3709.

²³⁴ Levering Tyson, "Memorandum of Points Brought Out in First Annual Assembly, NACRE, Meeting May 21, 1931." RF, Box 360, Folder 3709.

Before the 1936 conference Tyson had applied for and received a \$7,000 grant from the Rockefeller General Education Board to have a pre-conference of sorts with the FCC on whether it was a viable proposal for 15% of the radio spectrum to be set aside and still meet the mandate of “mutual cooperation” declared in the FCC’s “*Pursuant (307)*” legislation document. New York University Chancellor H.W. Chase reported on April 2, 1935 that participants in the conference had agreed that “active cooperation between the industry and educational forces in the country” would be a “milestone”; the conference would attempt to develop a sense of the “techniques” that needed to be examined by both educators and networks, which, he believed, would serve as common ground between each interest.²³⁵ He successfully persuaded attendees that broadcasting methods that included reception analysis were of central importance. When the FREC’s 16-point initiative was passed. Tyson was tasked to oversee the outcome of each experiment. Several of the projects pursued by researchers were completely in step with Tyson’s recommendations, notably the Princeton Radio Project (chapter 4), of which Hadley Cantril served on the Committee board with Tyson.

Tyson promoted NAEB applications to RF for the first few years after the Communications Act. The NAEB only indirectly met the RF Trustee’s list of “anticipated outcomes” for broadcasting experimentation: 1) practical determination of ways in which broadcasting can be educationally and culturally effective, 2) recruitment and practical training of personnel with requisite educational and cultural qualifications, and 3) development of interest in educational and cultural broadcasting on the part of

²³⁵ H.W. Chase to Trevor Arnett of Rockefeller Foundation General Education Board, April 2, 1935. RF, Box 358, Folder 3693.

cooperating agencies.²³⁶ But Tyson accurately pointed to Wisconsin and Ohio State as the strongest experiments pre-Act, resulting in much needed early funds going to these core NAEB initiatives. RF funded multiple projects from 1935 forward besides the PRP and land grant universities, including the Board of Education of Cleveland and the World Wide Broadcasting Foundation in Boston. Marshall, due to Tyson's advisement, sought to connect educational broadcasting interests with other practitioners, policymakers, and researchers as a primary goal (among several). Projects would in the future be evaluated by their ability to involve wide membership in multiple associations and state support. Tyson was also instrumental in gaining Rockefeller Foundation-funded internships for educators at the commercial broadcasting networks, through the OOE.

For better or worse, Tyson's vision of a pragmatic educational broadcasting in which practitioners interacted with commercial interests was central to educational broadcasting's rebound. To secure funding from RF between 1934 and 1940, participation with a larger research project that included "cooperation" with the commercial side was the only viable option. It became such a necessity that by the late 1930s the RF had decided that future grants in aid had to meet Tyson's requirements for a well-connected approach to educational broadcasting, echoed in a piece Marshall wrote in 1938. It was likely that at some point, Marshall wrote, RF funds would no longer be available or would "dry up".²³⁷ Funding decisions would be based on the prospects that an institution could guarantee that it would continue after RF grants were discontinued.

Fairly or unfairly to nonprofit stations, an educational institution desiring RF support would have to have access to well-equipped facilities as stipulated by the

²³⁶ Confidential Internal Report, "Radio in RF and GEB Program: Retrospect and Prospect", Jun, 1937. RF, Box 358, Folder 3693.

²³⁷ John Marshall Diaries, Internal Memo, August 31, 1938. RF, Box 5, Folder 50.

Communications Act, as well as access to other organizations and government interests who could be “tapped” for aid because they were obliged to educational broadcasting already. The development of a larger consortium of self-sustainable educational broadcasters would increase “common language about its practice”, and required the development of “organized knowledge” about radio techniques. And in anticipation of the Allerton Seminars’ decision to build educational broadcasting in university communication departments, Marshall posited that schools would need to invest in the training of a generation of practitioners and advocates in educational broadcasting. Future “jobs in broadcasting”, as Marshall put it, would appear as radio researchers, social psychologists of radio (discussed in chapter 3), and practitioners who would have the tools to successfully “make folkways explicit” for the “purpose of general welfare”.²³⁸

NAEB members were plausible partners in this plan. And in the early years after 1934, Tyson was able to clarify these emergent goals to educators. Tyson wrote multiple letters to the NAEB regarding developments at FREC and encouraged practitioners to streamline their practices in concert with developments in underwriting, regulation, and broad research discussions. And he had done so even before the Communications Act. For example, in one letter he informed NAEB members about the OOE’s new service bureau in the national press building in Washington. “It is a clearinghouse for information on education by radio, free of charge and free advice on legal matters”, he wrote.²³⁹ Such a stable federal source showed, Tyson believed, dramatic opportunity for growth, and in the least for additional connectivity to federal government initiatives by

²³⁸ *ibid*

²³⁹ Tyson to NAEB, 1933. Untitled and Undated. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

state and regional-based collectives. And that hope, Tyson wrote, was also in line with the original vision that broadcasters had developed in the 1920s.

“As long ago as 1921 enormous hopes were voiced that the then entire new phenomenon of broadcasting would revolutionize American education. Radio has become more powerful and more generally available. Radio has its uses and liabilities with difficulties pedagogically. Radio reaches many objects and audiences with enormous implications. Educators have lagged behind in developing uses for the new device, and the demagogue and the propagandist has seized it for his own. But there are huge untapped resources to draw upon. Workshops have been created in Chicago at the University Broadcasting Council, and they must realize that there is guerrilla warfare between education and commercial on the other hand.”²⁴⁰

Tyson advised the NAEB that they needed to question whether educational broadcasting was an abstraction or a practice?

In a 1936 piece titled “What is Educational Broadcasting? An Urgent Need”, Tyson wrote to the NAEB that when educational broadcasting was imagined as “for programs for the school extension, it is erroneously considered boring”.²⁴¹ However, according to the Act nearly all programming would henceforth be considered educational by regulators “because most programs influence the listener in one way or another, so it can be good or bad, the radio medium is neither until it is inscripted”.²⁴² Since

²⁴⁰ Levering Tyson, “Educational News Bulletin from Western State Teacher’s College”, October, Volume 6, #1, 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

²⁴¹ Levering Tyson, “What is Educational Broadcasting? An Urgent Need”, 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

²⁴² *ibid*

“salesmen” were “currently in charge”, the NAEB’s rhetorical model would be more sustainable in the long-term as an advocacy campaign that could match wits with lobbyists while developing best practices.

Concurrently to Tyson’s growing influence at RF, George Wiley’s recommendation for close examination of the BBC resulted in the first transnational exchange between educational broadcasting proponents in 1936.²⁴³ The Rockefeller Foundation’s BBC initiative began with a common problem that Stevens and Marshall had noted: educational broadcasting delivery. Listeners regularly complained about the educational broadcasting approach, or lack thereof, and Stevens appealed to the BBC to send a representative to address this problem. The BBC response in November of 1935 was to send Professor A. Lloyd James of the London School of Oriental Studies and the “Spoken English Committee” of the BBC to consult with RF initiatives; specifically, at first, The World Wide Broadcasting Federation in Boston (an initiative not discussed in this dissertation due to Buxton and Hilmes’ thorough work on the subject). For some years Lloyd-James had been associated with the BBC’s educational activities in various advisory capacities including broadcast development, which were reportedly the most successful of their type. He was scheduled to arrive in February of 1936, and \$11,300 was allocated for his retainer and expenses.²⁴⁴

James was a significant figure at the BBC—one of the first to promote radio speech as important for its clarity and “intelligibility”.²⁴⁵ And he would make an indelible mark upon American civic broadcasting. In an interview with *Broadcasting*, James

²⁴³ See Hilmes, 2011

²⁴⁴ Grant Application by David H. Stevens, November 15, 1935. RF, Box 52, Folder 694.

²⁴⁵ “Americans Aping British Speech Are Chided by London Linguist” Untitled News Clipping form James’ Tour. RF, Box 52, Folder 694.

expressed interest in the development of educational broadcasting methods, but noted that such an endeavor would have to begin with basic patterns of enunciation, articulation, and clarity. “Learned Englishmen do not consider American speech ‘dreadful’”, nor was English the “prerogative” of one country by any means, James proclaimed in one newspaper interview.²⁴⁶ But at the same time, James argued, “they (Americans) must see to it that English language varieties that are not intelligible shall not be encouraged”.²⁴⁷ No doubt his vision of a streamlined radio talk precluded immigrant accents, urban dialects, and rural terminologies. But his assessment of language also met a perceived need to further standardize practices in radio. Speech practices in broadcasting would grow increasingly reliant upon a specifically Anglophone pattern and concept due to this position, yet lack of standardization was also a reason that civic broadcasters had failed in the first place. Radio as a public space, James believed, required a commonly accepted mode of intelligibility for reception.

James was so well received that NBC solicited his advice on speech techniques, and universities began to request his talents. Marshall wrote that NBC and CBS had gone as far as to invite James to speak live on their network broadcasts and were eager to “impress him” with the quality of their content.²⁴⁸ James, for his part, wrote that he approached the commercial endeavor with “apprehension” and claimed, “never have I been engaged on a mission that was nearer to my heart than that of fostering educational broadcasting”.²⁴⁹ By the time he left in April, 1936, he had taken part in three speech programs at NBC, consulted with the development of WWBF speech standardization,

²⁴⁶ *ibid*

²⁴⁷ *ibid*

²⁴⁸ John Marshall Diaries, Internal Memo on Lloyd James, February 5, 1936. RF, Box 52, Folder 695.

²⁴⁹ Lloyd James to John Marshall, April 16, 1936. RF, Box 52, Folder 695.

given talks on linguistic theory in broadcasting, and perhaps most interestingly spoken with CBS about creating a method of “standard” English for press speech. This initiative included two early-1936 lunches with a young Edward R. Murrow, who expressed “manifest desire to do all that he could to promote cultural and educational broadcasting”, and who apparently was quite influenced by James’ concept that educational broadcasting would be reliant upon “execution”.²⁵⁰ When Murrow went to England in 1936 James was one of his primary collaborators.

James’ success gave Marshall an idea. What if a qualified BBC agent were able to come to the U.S. and objectively evaluate educational station practices? After consulting with James about possible candidates, RF settled on the BBC’s Director of Regional Broadcasting since 1932, Charles Siepmann. Siepmann had joined the BBC in 1927, and was one of its most vocal and open proponents of the idea that broadcasting carried “special” responsibilities. He was also known to be critical and was thought capable of offering “disinterested” reports toward the betterment of educational approaches to broadcasting. Marshall and Stevens had briefly met Siepmann on a fact-finding trip to Britain in 1936, designed to initiate internships for educators at the BBC. They negotiated the “release” of Siepmann for a 3-month period. Marshall, an exemplar of thoroughness, actually recorded the conversation in his notes.²⁵¹

2.3 Charles Siepmann comes to America

Siepmann offered to come to the States after his conversation with Marshall, in they discussed the States’ “insuperable difficulties in education on a national scale”.²⁵² Marshall observed that Siepmann was regarded as one of the “ablest members” of the

²⁵⁰ *ibid*

²⁵¹ John Marshall, personal notes from UK visit, September 3-7, 1936. RF, Box 53, Folder 696.

²⁵² John Marshall to David Stevens, September 15, 1936. RF, Box 53, Folder 696.

BBC staff. He had been with the organization since its creation, working directly under John Reith. According to Marshall's personal notes, Siepmann confided that Reith was "thoroughly able but personally difficult", and had exercised "almost magnetic control over members of staff".²⁵³ Siepmann's talent was high enough that it had seemed to infringe on Reith's power, as Reith was "inclined to view personal prominence of individual staff members unfavorably".²⁵⁴ This had led to "personal differences with Reith", further compounded by Siepmann's "liberal position on controversial issues".²⁵⁵ In a separate letter with David Stevens, Marshall wrote that Siepmann's "liberal position in the BBC resulted in his being out of favor for some time", and this had led to Siepmann being transferred from Director of Talks to Regional Director. Though Reith told Marshall that he had shifted Siepmann to the post to give him "wider scope" with more responsibility, the reassignment irked Siepmann, and he was "to go [to the U.S.], in fact broached the matter". His status had eroded enough that he might not even be sent to the states as an "official representative" of the BBC. But both Marshall and Stevens were so impressed that Marshall wrote, "I think we have a real chance of doing something of international importance" with an impending Siepmann visit.

Though it seems improbable in retrospect, Siepmann's ultimate settling in the U.S. (becoming a citizen in 1942) was in part due to his being forced out by Reith. However, part of the agreement for Siepmann's consultation included, on Reith's insistence, that "its senior officials travel (only) first class or cabin on the transatlantic

²⁵³ John Marshall, minutes from lunch with Hilda Mathieson, September 10, 1036. RF, Box 53, Folder 696.

²⁵⁴ *ibid*

²⁵⁵ *ibid*

passage”.²⁵⁶ Thus in March 1937 Charles Siepmann came to the U.S. to aid educational broadcasters in the development of broadcasting practice, in line with the liberal civic ideals of the original educational aspirations of the 1920s. His focused and reliable critiques would strongly benefit educators for the next twenty years.

The proposed grant was estimated to be sufficient to cover Siepmann’s trans Atlantic passage and his living and traveling expenses in the U.S. A definite plan of work is to be agreed on after his arrival. This will include visits to the more important university and state owned stations and to two or three centers where broadcasting of a regional character has been recognized as a responsibility by local and regional commercial stations.²⁵⁷

The plan was quite ambitious, and included travel from New York to the Pacific coast and a return, including scheduled evaluations at Ohio State, the UBC, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa City, Portland, San Francisco, the RMRC, and other locations. Apparently Siepmann had missed so few days of service at the BBC over 10 years that he was also to receive back paychecks at the BBC during his excursion equaling 3 months of vacation time. At the conclusion of his tour, Siepmann was asked to prepare and submit a report characterizing the “accomplishment and opportunities of each station visited” for the purpose of “better understanding of the needs of regional broadcasting in this country”.²⁵⁸

He was scheduled to arrive roughly March 24th on the Queen Mary and was scheduled to consult on a rigorous schedule that saw him going to Ohio State between

²⁵⁶ John Marshall, telephone conversation minutes with Felix Greene, March 8, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 697.

²⁵⁷ Marshall to B.E. Nicholls, February 10, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 697.

²⁵⁸ *ibid*

March 26 and 31st, the UBC in Chicago April 1st to 4, the University of Illinois April 5 and 6, the University of Wisconsin April 7 to 11, and so on every few days until he reached Portland on May 21st, just to return to NY by train on May 25 with a planned departure to London on June 9.²⁵⁹

Siepmann reviewed every station in detail. With cutting wit he pointed to all of the deficiencies in educational broadcasting practice at the time. For a few examples: his visit to the University of Iowa produced a document that observed that station manager Carl Menzer had “qualities I all but overlooked...like Higgy (Iowa State), an engineer, but with a difference.²⁶⁰ He understands and cares about broadcasting”. Yet Iowa’s staff was “woefully inadequate” for a 12-hour service. Menzer had run the station singlehandedly in 1932 as engineer, announcer, and program organizer and often filled time by playing the violin himself, alternating with a limited repertoire of records. Noting that Menzer was dedicated yet discouraged, Siepmann tried to encourage him by pointing out how far the station had come forward, and “he took heart. He needs all the courage and patience he can muster”.²⁶¹ The problem, Siepmann noted, was not Menzer but conditions at the University of Iowa, “a most depressing situation”, with the radio station part of an extension learning department that had no agents in the field. Menzer’s boss “Dr. Mahan” had “no mind for education, and no fundamental question about objectives”. Mahan was at best “a chatterer, controlling a routine, uncritical, specious, preoccupied with arbitrary exercise of his own power”. Mahan was, Siepmann wrote, a “bad man...his influence is fatal, obstructing all progress”. Menzer consequently “looked

²⁵⁹ “Revised Schedule for Mr. Siepmann’s Visits to Regional Broadcasting Stations, Filed April 2, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 699.

²⁶⁰ Charles Siepmann, personal handwritten notes, April 1-June 9, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 701.

²⁶¹ Siepmann personal notes, Review of Iowa, *ibid*

crushed”, and had the same low budget for 8 years. The small group of “enthusiast” volunteer amateurs that helped Menzer were “up to some mischief”, and until radio ceased to work under the current administration, it would remain an ineffective and reactionary department.

The Iowa State University station, run by WI Griffith, was viewed by Siepmann as in a similarly dire position.²⁶² It had a broadcasting range of nearly 300 miles, reaching far beyond state boundaries. But the studio was reported to be “poor and *démodé*” with a detuned piano. The audience was reputedly huge for educational broadcasters, with 138,417 pieces of correspondence received between 1935 and 1936. The station’s primary service consisted of market information for farmers with occasional gramophone recitals and a radio book club. But the station had a “pathetically limited staff”, who, to their credit, had achieved a better “and more practical realization of programme possibilities than I have found elsewhere”.²⁶³ Of Griffith, Siepmann found him to be “shrewd, practical,” though “a rather heavy uncongenial type with a rather subnormal culture”. Yet Griffith had a first rate business head and an eye for methods. His staff was described as “rough cut, pitiable, poor down at the heel people, who strangely and ironically carry with them the patient vision of the true possibilities of broadcasting”. He was “pretty sure this man deserves encouragement”.

Of the University of Illinois station, run by Joseph Wright with Frank Schooley as program director, Siepmann noted that programs were planned on a semester basis with 25% consisting of records or transcriptions, and many classroom lectures. The station now reached “90% of the state”, but had an audience “limited to women at home,

²⁶² Siepmann personal notes, Review of Iowa State, *ibid*

²⁶³ Siepmann personal notes, *ibid*

unemployed men, the sick, and possibly including farmers in the lunch hour”. Studio equipment was “rather poor and space is limited”. Wright was reported as a nice, provincial type with great loyalty to the University and a competent public relations officer, but wholly lacking in “constructive educational ideas”. This “defect in leadership has unhappy consequences”. There was no plan or purpose about programs, subordinate staff were poor, and Schooley struck Siepmann as “an efficient clerk of a rather rough sort, but he doesn’t begin to understand broadcasting as an art or education as a science”.²⁶⁴ Schooley rubbed Siepmann the wrong way, as a “insensitive and not very intelligent” man who had produced “odd” programs.

In contrast to these mid-west stations, on the west coast NBC-west (blue network) had set up collaborative activities with the 50,000-member California Teachers’ Association, the State Department of Education, Stanford University, and Berkeley. They were producing four hours of educational broadcasting a week. Compared to university stations, NBC had achieved “a great deal of good will by contact” with local institutions, and shows were notably better than many universities.²⁶⁵ Further, NBC had integrated 3-4,000 schools into their listenership. But Siepmann was similarly miffed by their educational content. Their practice was “based on the theory that in broadcasting continuous listening involves too great a strain for ordinary people and that these interludes of music are justified by rest periods. I think it a dreadful theory”.²⁶⁶ Scripts were predictably presented more professionally than most educators, but programs “lacked personality or any sense of intimate contact with the class”. The station manager (unnamed in the report) lived in “immanent fear of losing his work” to an east coast

²⁶⁴ Siepmann personal notes, Review of Illinois, *ibid*

²⁶⁵ Siepmann personal notes, Review of NBC-California, *ibid*

²⁶⁶ *ibid*

administration that did not appreciate inroads made out west, and Siepmann speculated it was because people “might easily dismiss him as a vague dreamer”. In contrast to the educators NBC was a “credible if not remarkable” broadcaster, but still fell short of anything “one might call educationally significant”.

Siepmann was surprised that educational radio suffered from such a “degree of amateurishness” in conception and execution. The infrastructure was so poor that it was liable to “endanger the reputation of educators and encourage belief of commercial chains that educators had little to offer”.²⁶⁷ The root of the problem, Siepmann argued, was the educators themselves, who featured “nowhere any general appreciation of the responsibility which educators carry to make effective in their field and for their own ends a medium of revolutionary potentialities”. Over and over the failure to secure “intelligent and dynamic direction of the service” had been compounded by inadequate and subordinate staff.²⁶⁸ Programs lacked constructive purpose even within a restricted field of opportunity. Lack of professional control was aggravated by the fact that contributions by university professors constituted more a condescension than a fulfillment of duty, as no fees were paid and no reductions in their normal workloads were granted by the university.

Broadcasting was costly and such limited resources and the burden of “filling time” prevented the development of “special skills in matters of technique and forms of presentation that might result” in the goodwill for a university.²⁶⁹ The dearth of talent was evident to the extent that students and amateurs worked for free, and at best educational

²⁶⁷ Charles Siepmann, “Radio at Universities in the United States of America: A Report to the Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation”, 60 page collection of multiple documents: evaluations, recommendations based upon his tour, and declarations of approach to educational radio, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 701.

²⁶⁸ *ibid*

²⁶⁹ *ibid*

broadcasting in the US in 1937 could be described as a “great misfortune”.²⁷⁰ The future of the medium would necessarily require “difficult technique”, a constant liaison between broadcaster and teacher, advisory committees, and trained administration. “A bad talk kills more interest than a dozen good talks can sustain”, Siepmann concluded. In his final assessment, he wrote that “the above critique, while no means exhaustive, is sufficiently destructive to warrant the impression of unfriendliness”.

Brutal and frank, Siepmann’s report was a milestone in educational broadcasting analysis, and curiously its tone was *well* received by every station, advocate, and federal committee.²⁷¹ The content of the report was pragmatic, critical, and dedicated to noncommercial broadcasting improvement. Marshall called his report “unusually forceful of the point in question”, but Siepmann responded that if education was considered from the point of view “as an extension of needs as human beings, one would likely be forced to surrender a good many a priori assumptions about what would constitute culture”.²⁷² In a philosophical addendum Siepmann made a declaration of educational purpose.

Though a study of listener capacity and readiness to hear was central to understanding information, the primary concern of broadcasting should be the determination of priority of interests that correspond to “urgent needs as a human being and citizen”.²⁷³ Radio forced a consideration of the immediate needs of humans in terms of the immediate present, with culture as a value of acquisition, relevance of broadcasts, and the relationship between information and the prospect of survival until “intermediate needs of men are intelligently provided for”. Universities had been slow to recognize

²⁷⁰ Siepmann, “Radio at Universities”, *ibid*

²⁷¹ There are a trail of thank you letters from NAEB members cited above to Marshall for Siepmann’s visit in 1937.

²⁷² Siepmann, “Radio at Universities”, *ibid*

²⁷³ *ibid*

these priorities in practice, and a mere projection of the field of adult education into radio was neither apt nor adequate. The pursuit of knowledge via technology carried its own responsibilities, including civic goals, so that knowledge might be communicated effectively. Analysis of specific stations veered into basic practices and organization, evidentially well-taken by the stations—but his broader recommendations quickly became institutional knowledge at RF and at the FREC.

First, Siepmann argued that the future of educational broadcasting would be based in state and federal securement of funds; failure to do this would make the endeavor impossible. But second, Siepmann offered a very critical view of educational broadcasting practice. Educational radio was in shambles—unorganized, unprepared, and inconsequential in its current form. Educators were in need of a “very carefully selected” committee to determine if audiences were being served by broadcasting as a resource. This would necessarily include the development of standards for special facilities and services, the use of broadcasting as an adjunct to university activities and research, and the use of broadcasting as a plausible substitution for extramural activities. A faculty committee would have to be formed on a university-by-university basis.

Successful broadcasting would include provisions for remuneration of speakers and staff, and perhaps most significantly the elimination of all “amateur” work, “classroom lecture”, and untrained practitioners.²⁷⁴ Further, best practices would have to be organized around the administrative function to encourage listener interest through rehearsal, standards, pooled resources, elimination of redundancy of broadcast style, and cooperative planning between university interests. One may note the similarity to the NAEB’s own early plan, discussed below. But Siepmann did not believe that the “present

²⁷⁴ *ibid*

distribution of activities on radio, where associated with universities, is sound”.²⁷⁵ The NAEB was not yet in a position, Siepmann believed, to strengthen their service. Though he conceded that there was a history behind educational broadcasting that was proudly educational in scope, educational broadcasters had not related their endeavor to effective areas of service or appropriate sources for microphone talent. Even if an “unimaginable” increase in staff and finance was procured, the university stations were not prepared to provide daily 12-hour service in line with FCC regulation, and if they were able to create such broadcasts they would not be useful to the public.

He suggested two “parallel developments” instead of supporting the NAEB further. First, a commission needed to be set up on a federal scale to consider broadcasting as an instrument of education and to determine basic principles of policy and “a concerted scheme of action similar” to the BBC.²⁷⁶ The commission would take “variant resources” of radio technique as applicable to education and create a report to crystalize what may be necessary to create an alternate BBC-like broadcaster to ensure legislative measures necessary to implement “the scheme”. If it was politically feasible, a parallel development in controlled broadcasting experiments would then be centered in the universities, instead of broadcasts, to develop services under experimental direction “appropriate to the medium and relevant to education”. The allocation of a special wavelength by the FCC would be necessary to do that, for universities to direct their experiments with some focus. “The tragedy of what is being done at present at universities throughout the country seems to derive from the fact that little is demonstrated beyond the incapacity of educators to realize the significance of what they

²⁷⁵ Siepmann, “Radio at Universities”, *ibid*

²⁷⁶ *ibid*

attempt or to achieve work that has demonstrable value.”²⁷⁷ Universities could be a strong center for responsive research, but not for broadcasting leadership, Siepmann concluded.

2.4 The Media Reform Movement’s Response to the Communications Act of 1934: the NAEB and NCER

The group at the center of Siepmann’s report—the ACUBS/NAEB—had just begun to plan its course. After 1934 the remaining members agreed with Sykes’ *Pursuant* that that educational broadcasting needed to better serve “public interest” through competent utilization of radio as a technology. Joseph Wright, who had warned educators in 1931 that their methods had not been up to par with commercial broadcasts, circulated *Pursuant* (307) to other members: “The commission shall study the proposal that congress by statute allocate fixed percentages of radio broadcasting facilities to particular types of kinds of non profit radio programs or to persons identified with particular types or kinds of non profit activities, and shall report to congress not later than Feb 1, 1935.”²⁷⁸ A few NAEB members were invited to the subsequent FCC/OOE 1936 conference, and a few ultimately served on inconsequential subsidiary committees constituted at the conference, such as Keith Tyler at Ohio State and Harold McCarty at Wisconsin.

Small incremental gains were made by educators after the conference, including new access to internships at networks, an introduction to John Marshall by Levering Tyson, and of course Siepmann’s evaluations. These events persuaded practitioners to invest in the question of devising strategies to meet the stipulations by taking cues from their commercial competitors. In education, this meant devising a set of curricular

²⁷⁷ Joseph Wright’s description of the *Pursuant*, internal memo, 1934. NAEB Papers, Box 1.

²⁷⁸ Report of the Federal Communications Commission to Congress *Pursuant* to Section 307 (c) of the Communications Act of 1934. Rockefeller Archive Center, RF, Box 360, Folder 3710

standards usually called “best practices”. The term appears repeatedly in letters after 1934, and became a euphemism for these goals.

Though broadcasters at first lobbied for set-aside frequencies, after 1934 they began to innovate standardized practices. A new set of questions evolved from the conceptual impulse developed by earlier practitioners, directed at the practice of radio usage itself. How to best organize radio instruction? How to most efficiently develop programming and distribution for educational content? And most difficultly, how to meet the criteria of efficient radio administration while they maintained fidelity to larger conceptual tenets related to the promotion of social parity?

In fact, educational stations were quick to respond to the new regulation, and by 1935 over 1500 educational broadcast license applications were recorded in the *Pursuant*.²⁷⁹ Nearly all of them were denied. Internally NAEB members began to chronicle trends in improved program development. Among examples noted in internal studies, for example: Oregon’s state station had begun presenting 38 educational broadcasts to its residents, including home economics broadcasts evaluated by local university researchers that also officially enrolled by 200 students. A curious side note is that Oregon also began to offer one of the strangest-sounding shows of this period: “How you can Afford Modern Plumbing”. The University of Kentucky began to equip different school centers with radio sets to enable individuals to go to local schools to tune into educational programs.²⁸⁰ One educator at the University of Washington wrote that the university was “engaging in a vigorous campaign to encourage use of radio broadcasting to schools in the state. Radio education is to encourage high schools to equip themselves

²⁷⁹ *ibid*

²⁸⁰ Update from the University of Kentucky, NAEB Papers, Box 110.

with receiving sets and to help themselves devise ways and means of how to do so. One development is the broadcasting of convocation.” Their ‘high school report’, a 15-minute program, reported on school activities, leading to wider use of educational media to report community events taking place at public schools.

Contributing to Washington State’s place in journalistic history, it was also noted to the NAEB that a successful educational model should feature cooperation between educational radio and the press. “Most editors think a radio is just a radio and are unwilling to discriminate between broadcasting stations that help them and those that hurt them.”²⁸¹ Iowa State, which at the time was a major practitioner, “had circulated 26,000 volumes in 5 years, with 1800 members” and was by 1935 planning to supplement library facilities with listening stations.²⁸² In early 1935 New York agricultural and home economics departments began to develop single programs for airing on 24 separate stations, with 125 brief “talks” developed each month. This may have been the first state-wide network-like distribution format, though it was only based around 2-3 programs that were repeated and not an institutional experiment like the UBC. Treasurer of the NAEB Ted Beard of Oklahoma started the first educational rendition of what he called the “man with the travelling mic” format – a show dedicated to “going around and asking questions about stuff”.²⁸³ Schools began to focus more intently on show availability, transparency of schedule, and interconnectivity with other state institutions and listeners, and stations began to develop of standards that could be followed with oversight by related institutional interests.

²⁸¹ University of Washington to NAEB, NAEB Papers, Box 1.

²⁸² *ibid*

²⁸³ Ted Beard, internal memo to NAEB, NAEB Papers, Box 1.

An important site of experimentation in broadcast methods and programming was the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Harold McCarty, one of the Rockefeller Foundation fellows who interned at the BBC, wrote to NAEB members that they must in the future convince voters that publically supported broadcasting would “give them something they can get in no other way”.²⁸⁴ Arguing that not many understood the quiet conflict between education and entertainment, a competition in which education was generally if not always the loser, the larger populace had failed to see the importance of safeguarding educational interests. This included, according to McCarty, a lack of interest from university presidents and “mildly interested” faculty at universities. Four basic questions would need to be addressed by members of the NAEB in the near future, which he called the “four problems of radio”: 1) facilities, 2) finances, 3) programs, and 4) promotion. Education, he joked, had “come too late to the banquet of radio and must feast on crumbs, or lack thereof”.²⁸⁵ But he remained optimistic that there was “rich talent” for educational broadcasting, should they be given training and provided with standards.

The NAEB devised a plan for educational broadcasting with several core objectives. The organization would henceforth “serve as spokesman for united organized education”, which would involve the assistance in the protection and extension of privileges of educational broadcasters, promote broadcasting to organized schools of all kinds and ranks, and stimulate and coordinate cooperative experimentation and research.²⁸⁶ The result, the NAEB document posited, was that such attention would stimulate the formation of state and regional boards to promote educational broadcasting and assist in the securing of time and facilities for such services. Initiatives in these areas

²⁸⁴ Harold McCarty to NAEB members, NAEB Papers, Box 101.

²⁸⁵ *ibid*

²⁸⁶ Minutes from NCER meeting in Washington, Jan. 20-21, 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 2.

could then collect, publish, and distribute information conducive to the advancement of “public welfare broadcasting” with publicity. And through increased experimentation, consolidation, and communication over how to best streamline education by radio, standards could be formulated to “appraise the quality and values” of radio programs, thus improving techniques of broadcasting.²⁸⁷

A subsequent pamphlet titled “Radio Education through Public and Institutionally Owned Stations,” produced with the NCER, broached several planned initiatives including a new investigation into program and script exchange, a proposed recording service, analysis of local audiences, a better organized educational force within distinct service areas, and reaction surveys to instructional lectures.²⁸⁸ W.I. Griffith at Iowa State wrote a memo to members stating that radio had passed its experimental stage and advanced to “being recognized as an important agency of education” with “great influence on the listener depending the material”.²⁸⁹ The next phase of educational broadcasting would be to offer instruction, but also entertain and have “worthy” programming. Broadcasters would have to envision who intended audiences might be, for example (he offered regressively) “Mrs. Thrifty housewife enjoys stories more on radio because she can listen while doing other tasks such as sewing, mending, or preparing vegetables”.²⁹⁰ Further, proponents began to acknowledge that networks like NBC had offered regular educational features that were well received and even supported by the NEA, and that CBS’s American School of the Air had produced quality educational

²⁸⁷ *ibid*

²⁸⁸ NCER Pamphlet, “Radio Education through Public and Institutionally Owned Stations”, NAEB Papers, Box 110.

²⁸⁹ W.I. Griffith, internal memo, “Some Radi Nubbins from the State where the Tall Corn Grows”, 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

²⁹⁰ *ibid*

broadcasting since 1929 on literature, history, geography, music, stories, foreign affairs, and vocational guidance. “Scripts are prepared by staff of ten authors specializing in particular subjects and supplemented by weekly issuances containing suggestions for utilization of particular programs”.²⁹¹ The difference, and the challenge for educational broadcasters, would be to match the networks’ constructive production culture.

After Prall was appointed as FCC Chairman in 1935 he spoke at Ohio State regarding the still-new FCC’s stance on educational broadcasting. He noted that he had worked on the Board of School Commissioners in New York and was interested in contributing “as far as possible” to the final and complete development of a practical and workable plan for the “extension expansion and modernizing of education by means of radio”.²⁹² He contended that held a strong interest in its cultural capacity, and his rhetoric matched his stated optimism:

“For a century and more education has been closely limited to the schools. We have overlooked the many who are not scholastic, we have left almost entirely out of the picture the large multitude of men and women beyond the compulsory school age who must find their learning the every day experience of life. Realization, growth, enrichment, and recreation come to the public over the radio and this promises to be almost as significant as an aid to the school as for those out of school in the cultivation of the larger modern citizenship objectives.”²⁹³

He mentioned how Allen Miller of the UBC had convinced the secretary of the NAB to recommend an “experimental station to be established as a laboratory by educators with

²⁹¹ *ibid*

²⁹² Anning Prall, Script from Radio Institute in Columbus, Ohio, May 6-8, 1935. NAEB Papers, Box 110.

²⁹³ *ibid*

experience” in 1935 (though the UBC had scant interaction with the NAEB). And the NAEB circulated a document that the Progressive Education Association (PEA) had just completed a study that found that children were spending over two and a half hours per day listening to broadcasting; PEA had decided to become advocates for “better children’s programming”. An “Educational Script Writers Conference” was held in 1936 in which educators reported that the FREC had encouraged educators to sample copies of successful scripts by national broadcasters, and write their own drafts to be analyzed by experts. The result was that remaining stations began to enlist writers to formulate network-like scripts directed at educational ends. Educational practitioners were on track to begin focused, seminal experiments in 1936.

2.5 The NCER

After the Act had passed the NCER initially held out hope a frequency set-aside for educational radio. Aware that practitioners had turned their attention from gaining assignments to strategies for survival, some NCER activists were inclined to take up the slack and remind educators of the purpose of the educational broadcasting movement so central pre-1934, while other NCER members decided to become practitioners and develop a noncommercial model from the ground up. Armstrong Perry had written an often-cited 1931 piece regarding the difference between educators and businesses. Businesses, he argued, simply had different objectives. Their one-sided vision had created a false conception about the “function of broadcasting systems”. An educational philosophy of radio would in contrast follow from an internally consistent concept of educational broadcasting as a public service. While other reformers were attempting to regroup and devise ways to interpret FCC policy, member Tracy Tyler argued that the

FCC's report about reallocations acted "essentially as a straddle, a defense for killing time while commercial interests become more firmly entrenched".²⁹⁴ The NCER wasn't wrong in this case—commercial ownership of the public airwaves was essentially a permanent resolution after 1934 and the NCER saw the writing on the wall. However, the group seemed to run out of ideas for what initiatives to encourage toward future opportunities.

The Communications Act had set a precedent that required educators to compare their utilization of the airwaves in terms of legality, finance, and technically qualified competition for frequencies worded to favor private interests. These technocratic parameters permitted regulators to easily find inconsistencies in applications by noncommercial groups—universities almost uniformly lacked funding for commercial-quality stations, and the FCC recommended against what would, under the terms given, be preferential treatment against those lacking capitalistic versions of competition.

But the NCER began to plan for a next wave of advocacy. In same letter Tyler openly worried that educators were ready to throw in their aspirational vision, citing a recent meeting in Kansas City had led to a "semi-persuasive" discussion about educational stations may acquire their own commercial outlets. Such a concession would amount, Tyler wrote, to a dramatic change in the entire orientation of the movement, rendering it null.

What educators really needed "was not to give in and embrace a commercial model", Tyler wrote, but fight back to secure licenses by retaining an attorney, and

²⁹⁴ Tracy Tyler letter to NAEB, Feb 18, 1935. NAEB Papers, Box 1.

continue their activism on behalf of educators by providing information about educational policy decisions and related bills.²⁹⁵

The NCER, he plainly stated, must remain faithful to noncommercial media as the “service of democracy”. A piece written by the NCER staff much in line with other Payne Fund rhetoric regarding media effects stated:

“Radio is greatest instrument since inventing of printing for entertainment, info, and education. It talks to millions of homes both far and near. It calls whole nation instantly into conference. It transforms America into one great town hall meeting. It is the most powerful instrument ever invented for effective teamwork by a whole nation. It can give all the people Americans best in thought and entertainment or it can broadcast the inferior and the poorest. The life of all America can be elevated or debased by the use made of radio. It is a public instrument for the public good. Radio should be guided and controlled to insure this nation the greatest possible social values. The needs and desires of listeners should govern the character, content, and relative extent and frequency of broadcast programs. Material detrimental to the welfare of listener groups should be eliminated regardless of commercial profit.”²⁹⁶

Further, the NCER argued, educators needed to retain their vision because the purpose of education by radio—the encouragement of social equity through access to universal public education—required a vision distinct from the networks. The networks simply did not care about social parity, though they did believe in a populist vision in

²⁹⁵ *ibid*

²⁹⁶ Proposal for “Supplemental Broadcasting System”, September 9, 1935. NAEB Papers, Box 101.

which program access and diversity of content served consumers. But the populist nature of commercialization of radio also tended to “bar minority access and representation from the air”, due to the “relative size” of minority populations.²⁹⁷ Tyler provided a counterpoint to the desire to make immediate concessions to the new network-dominant precedent of the Act.

However, one prominent member of the NCER, A.G. Crane, President of the University of Wyoming, dissented from his colleagues regarding strategy. Instead of hypothesizing and politicizing struggle over radio regulation, what if, like the UBC, a strong attempt could be made to create a sustainable alternative within the constraints of recent regulation? While the NAEB began to organize in a decentralized fashion, Crane proposed a network-like administrative experiment. The creation of a network-like infrastructure would further create demand for such an alternative to entertainment alone. An efficient counterpoint needed to be imagined that still nonetheless met the criteria set by congress, Crane believed.

In one letter Crane wrote to the NAEB that “radio should sell itself” (as in promote) so it would be “vital yet subordinate and incidental to consciousness”.²⁹⁸ While aggressiveness in “business fields” had overshadowed social welfare as a goal in broadcast development, in truth the “new instrument” was still little understood, unappreciated, and experimental.²⁹⁹ Faculties at various universities had failed to appreciate the limitations of the new medium “to hold an unseen audience”.³⁰⁰ The remaining universities had demonstrated strong public service possibilities, but what was

²⁹⁷ *ibid*

²⁹⁸ A.G. Crane, “Selling Radio to College Authorities”, note to NAEB, 1936, NAEB Papers, Box 101.

²⁹⁹ *ibid*

³⁰⁰ *ibid*

needed was a plan to “conserve radio for public services” among national, regional, and state boards. Such a “*public system*” would need to involve multiple affiliated associations and work in such a way that it would cause the “least disturbance to the present system”.

“Men have invested their millions of dollars in the present American system and it is doing wonderful things. We are appreciative of the splendid things being sent out over the create chains. We are appreciative of the services they have rendered. Many of our own educational institutions broadcast over the commercial stations, and that is fine where it can be done, where the geographical and other conditions warrant it.”³⁰¹

Hence, what after such major regulation, Crane argued, a public system had to emulate a private system, and be controlled privately, by those with public interests.

Crane had proposed a plan in 1935 that would “parallel the present private commercial system” as a “government system chain to supplement and not replace the present system, not create any undue interference, not jeopardize investments, but give programs of public interest”. Since educational radio had insufficient money or material to challenge dominant interests, all programs would be created overtly for public welfare and stimulate public service initiatives. Crane worried that the NAEB would not be up to the task of carrying responsibility for building an alternate approach in a decentralized fashion. Soon he would evaluate the UBC’s experiment in Chicago and devise his own alternative, discussed in the next chapter. But Crane never fully joined the NAEB ‘team’, and while he supported their endeavor he was skeptical about a decentralized approach. In a 1936 letter, for example, he wrote that the NAEB still had not settled on a permanent

³⁰¹ *ibid*

constitution, and Crane worried that the group was still too unfocused, as they had decided to “subordinate the acquisition of educational broadcasting provisions” as a central merit of their endeavor.³⁰² Though the NAEB had begun to move toward improvement of broadcasts in line with public interest stipulations, their careful and slow evaluation of future steps irritated NCER members, who either still held out hope that they could receive a set-aside grouping of frequencies, or who believed in a centralized network-like approach to educational broadcasting.

Yet the NCER, for all of its strong analysis, writing, and planning, had never been more than a highly qualified and concentrated activist wing of a larger Payne Fund experiment. The NCER had been up to date with political maneuverings from their inception, and often extremely accurately so. But they became an anachronism after the Act, when an era of “cooperation” replaced one of competition for future frequency assignments. Slowly members were peeled away by other offers. The last active member was Howard Evans, an astute and respected advocate who also consulted with the FCC regarding educators’ perspective about regulation. He gained the ear of education-friendly Commissioner Anning Prall and later James Fly on multiple occasions. Yet toward the end of the NCER’s tenure, Evans noted that the FCC seemed no more swayed by NCER rhetoric to educational-friendly regulation than 1934, and that the “present histories of radio control to become so entrenched that there is no possibility of successfully challenging them”.³⁰³

Evans promoted various academic and NAEB interests until the early 1940s, and when WWII broke, activist organizations such as the NCER were of very secondary

³⁰² Crane, 1936 letter, *ibid*

³⁰³ Howard Evans to Carl Menzer, February 18, 1938. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 3.

interest to the combat of fascism, even to educators. Reading the writing on the wall, and concurrently with the developments of the Princeton Radio Project, Evans suggested in a late piece written with Herman Hettinger at the University of Pennsylvania that that the NCER “proceed forthwith to assume leadership and cooperation with the industry in order to set up standards of performance which can be utilized by all as a yardstick”.³⁰⁴ Evans had been persuaded by the Princeton Radio Project that industry research would act as a crucial advocacy tool. He recommended “better methods of securing statistical data of a social and economic character” by stations. Part of outreach to communities might include additional provisions on educational stations for “local self expression by radio” as a strategy to undermine the “economic effect of super-high-power” network stations, and, perhaps, a superpower station (or several) of educational broadcasting’s own.³⁰⁵ Such a station could be based at a central institution such as Ohio State, he speculated, and if possible, educators could re-request the “high band” frequencies offered by the FRC, which still were not in mass use.³⁰⁶

At a 1939 FCC hearing he argued that the commission had focused its power to prescribe standards for educators, but a conflict arose because the commission had no adequate control over the types of programming stations offered. Smaller stations had to compete with high power commercial stations, which fostered monopoly. In light of the FREC’s recent initiatives, Evans wrote another piece titled “Toward a More Democratic Radio” that argued that “speculation on the future of broadcasting must take into account deliberations conducted by the federal government through its legislative, administrative and judicial agencies. The industry had correctly invested in talent and improvement of

³⁰⁴ *ibid*, attached document written with Herman Hettinger, attached to an FCC report

³⁰⁵ *ibid*

³⁰⁶ Howard Evans, “Toward a More Democratic Radio”, 1939. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 4.

programs in the early days of radio, which had “done so much to give radio its present technical perfection”.³⁰⁷

Evans’ rhetoric did catch the ear of Senate Interstate Commerce Committee Chairman Burton Wheeler—leader of a legislative body that would later support educators. Evans had argued that there was “no right on the part of the broadcasters to determine what listeners should receive or not over radio”. That commercial stations owned the airwaves favored the current network approach. Networks wanted “complete authority”. Since radio was being found to have such a strong influence on public opinion, his position increased in resonance. The current policy as it stood was in contrast to both free market libertarian and social justice promoting liberal values about policy. A door began to open for educators at the legislative level, and the NCER noted this progress in development of its new system building initiatives.

2.6 Conclusion:

The conceptual shift by major advocates of educational broadcasting to a system building approach signified the transition from a decentralized movement centered on obtaining special frequencies for experimentation. Practitioners directed their attention toward the creation of a new media system that would focus on educational broadcasting while meeting the requirements of the FCC’s *Pursuant*. There was some disagreement regarding how this system should look—should it be centralized or should stations remain independent? This led to a period of intensive experimental institution-building supported by philanthropic funding. The results, as discussed in the next chapter, were that educators were mostly unsuccessful at founding sustaining models to compete with the networks. However, educational knowledge of the production, distribution, and

³⁰⁷ *ibid*

development of content improved thanks to these trial and error attempts; and this period of experimentation consequently led to the perspective held by a second generation of educational advocates at the land-grant institutions that survived the Communications Act.

Chapter 3: Four Foundational Broadcasting Experiments: the NAEB, the Rocky Mountain Radio Council, The University of Wisconsin, and Ohio State

Part of educational broadcasting's rebound was due to a series of experiments in programming development, distribution, and measurement. This consisted of quite a few constructive but unsuccessful attempts to organize around localism and regionalism, as well as develop the first self-reflexive techniques for programming measurement. This chapter looks at the strategies NAEB and NCER advocates attempted after 1934.

This chapter further looks at how the NAEB developed its first organizational precedents through the influence of the Office of Education. Over a series of initiatives in the 1930s the NAEB continued to mature as an organization, and through trial and error experiments its members developed the early scaffolding for political advocacy, program measurement, and program improvement. The most notable discovery by the NAEB in this period was the sustainability of a new model of distribution, which later became the origin of public broadcasting's famed "bicycle network". It was innovated out of necessity but became one of several strategies that practitioners tested to connect universities into a kind of decentralized "network". NAEB members also looked to shortwave radio and line rental before settling on program transcription, a term for record pressing. This method would last through the late 1960s and prove to be an inexpensive choice after an NAEB clearinghouse was built in the 1950s. This chapter also examines the most successful regional broadcast experiment, Rocky Mountain Radio Council (RMRC), founded by A.G. Crane of the NCER and based at the University of Wyoming and the city of Denver. Crane organized the RMRC and coined the first institutional

usage of the term “public radio” as a way to differentiate his attempt from commercial structures.

This chapter also looks at how the two major educational broadcasting centers in the Midwest—Wisconsin and Ohio State—attempted to devise internal gauges for program content and quality. With the addition of Illinois and Michigan in the 1950s, the NAEB would be largely based at Wisconsin and Ohio State until the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. Successive generations of both commercial and noncommercial journalists and practitioners would come from these programs and later staff the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PBS, and NPR. This legacy began with two basic approaches devised at each university. Wisconsin innovated internal research methods to improve adjustments to program content, to make sure that their productions were both entertaining and educational. Ohio State, working in the tradition of F.H. Lumley, devised a competitive alternative to the demographic survey research conducted by the Princeton Radio Research Project (next chapter). The method was different than Wisconsin’s in its attempt to understand its listener characteristics and preferences as a precursor to instructional content development. Ohio State’s programming was less “entertainment” based than Wisconsin’s, and the institution of quantitative methods discovered by the PRP and Ohio State became the foundation for mass communications measurement.

As foundational as these period’s initiatives were, they were not enough to save educational practitioners from a reputation for triviality. RF stopped funding all educational broadcasting practitioner experiments by the end of 1938, and let remaining grants run out by the early 1940s. Yet university practitioners continued to communicate,

interconnect, and improve broadcasting and political strategies, and would call upon these foundational precedents to lasting effect in the post-war period.

3.1 The Origins of the Bicycle Network at the NAEB

Between 1934 and 1936 letters between NAEB members began to identify strategies for new organizational practices. At the 1936 Ohio State conference only roughly 20 institutions sent representatives. Core members decided that they needed a central headquarters with personnel who would work on increasing the number of educational programs, improving their quality, and “stimulating leadership” through understanding of the fundamentals of broadcasting. Internal discussions turned from the “character” of noncommercial broadcasting philosophy to discussions by which radio “may become a more effective instrument” and “enable all phases of subjects” so that listeners could become acquainted with their educational station and “exchange ideas and experiences”.³⁰⁸ Concern was broached at the conference that remaining stations might turn to populist programming in their attempts to gain audiences. One discussion cited a broadcasting station that had replaced a “women’s hour” with a program hosted by Myra Kingsley, who ran show on astrological predictions, much to other members’ chagrin. The conference concluded with an agreement that classroom pedagogy should remain the primary goal of the organization, which would henceforth include methods of program development. And program development would need to be conducted with reference to successful models embodied by commercial broadcasters and institutions like WHA at the Wisconsin and WOSU at Ohio State. The FCC’s mandate for increased attention to program techniques seemed like an important place to start, especially with new

³⁰⁸ Minutes from March National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, Washington DC, Document filed December 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

opportunities provided by RF to intern at commercial stations, as well as a few internships available at the BBC.

Through a series of memos and correspondences, by 1936 members concluded that attending to FCC expectations included the need to “stimulate the formation” of state or regional boards to assist in securing time and facilities as well as to improve programming techniques of educational broadcasters by formulating standards.³⁰⁹ Ted Beaird, treasurer of the NAEB, argued in a letter to Griffith at Iowa State that the NAEB needed a facility capable of providing an adequate script writing bureau, that would conduct all program distribution on behalf of the organization, and find ways to procure funds to maintain a clearing house and develop broadcasting in a sustainable manner. The three “Projects in Educational Broadcasting” devised at the 1934 meeting took additional weight in this environment.

The first initiative, headed by Frank Schooley at Illinois, led to a search for potential allies in the federal government. One individual stood out: John Studebaker, who had sent a letter in lieu of attendance at the 1936 conference stating fidelity to their cause. While supportive, Studebaker argued that the main difficulty was that educators were not agreed upon what they wanted from radio,³¹⁰ echoing the FRC’s earlier correspondence with Carl Menzer. But Studebaker assured them that the OOE was interested not just in a federal educational extension, but licenses for local, state, and regional educational stations. Studebaker had, after all, run a successful educational radio program in Des Moines just a few years previous.

³⁰⁹ Reported in letter with NCER, September 1935. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

³¹⁰ Studebaker to NAEB, 1936, NAEB papers, box 19.

Schooley became the primary correspondent with Studebaker, though in large part it was due to serendipity and not acumen for tactical politics. A minor practitioner at a major Midwestern university, Schooley was the secretary of the NAEB and had made his name by handling busywork other members refused to do. He had edited their newsletter, signed new members, relayed copyright statements to member inquiries, and “aided” in the compilation of names of “former educational personnel now in commercial radio”.³¹¹ But he had not done a great deal of intellectual or political work. Schooley’s position would eventually be one reason that Illinois would be able to hire such an impressive array of major scholars in early communications research history—Wilbur Schramm, Dallas Smythe, and Robert Hudson were all hired by the University of Illinois between 1946 and 1950.

Schooley corresponded semi-regularly with Studebaker, and their letters well anticipated that reservations would be set in the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio band (later retitled FM) in the future. Looking ahead to FM frequency assignments was broached as early as the late 1930s in their letters. And Studebaker advised the NAEB through School that the organization had to create a vita of accomplishments that they regularly distributed to appropriate legislative and regulatory bodies if they wanted to be taken seriously. Studebaker cited his own study on community cooperation and radio listening groups as one example for the NAEB.

Through Schooley the NAEB gained privy to Studebaker’s methods, though the NAEB were almost completely left out of tactical deliberations for policy work until the 1950s. In another example Studebaker argued that for educational broadcasting to flourish, university stations would have to be granted additional funding to train radio

³¹¹ Frank Schooley, List of past duties as Secretary of NAEB, 1938. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 3.

personnel, and to improve technical standards.³¹² Broadcasts should focus on primary and secondary school audiences to supplement regular school instruction. And he noted that state radio committees needed to be formed that would work with educational associations and create local, state, and regional cooperative broadcasting networks.³¹³ In support of Studebaker's proposal, Schooley wrote to the FCC and cited 'Studebakerian' lines, such as that university radio workshops had engendered "ferment" en route to solving practical problems of production.³¹⁴

In one letter to Schooley, Studebaker suggested that the NAEB draft strong statements in defense for new allocations utilizing the same language as the Office of Education. The request, Studebaker requested of Schooley, should strongly and clearly state how radio would inevitably aid instruction.³¹⁵ Schooley's terse statement to the FCC and FREC symbolized a clear progression in framing of the educational agenda: "I would say we are representatives of institutions of higher learning, engaged in educational broadcasting to promote dissemination of knowledge to the end that both the technical and educational features of broadcasting may be extended to all (from preamble)."³¹⁶ But it was not rhetorically persuasive. The FCC was advised in one rhetorical flourish by Studebaker, for example, to conduct their own comprehensive studies if they intended to advise against educational frequencies.³¹⁷ Letters by Schooley, and later Richard Hull of Iowa State were drafted with increasing repetition to the FCC, often buttressed by new experimental data from the FREC regarding improved curricular effects of educational

³¹² Studebaker, John W. 1936. Report of the radio committee to the national association of state universities.

³¹³ *ibid*

³¹⁴ Studebaker, John W. 1936. The federal radio education committee (pamphlet).

³¹⁵ *ibid*

³¹⁶ Schooley to Kirwin at FREC, undated 1940, Princeton Radio Project, FREC papers

³¹⁷ Studebaker to FCC Commissioner Fly, undated 1944, Princeton Radio Project, FREC papers

radio. Dallas Smythe later took up what became the Illinois-centered tradition of communications advocacy when he was hired in the 1940s.

The second Project pursued by the NAEB in 1934, an evaluation of short wave radio distribution by Carl Menzer, resulted in two outcomes. The first result of the project was that Menzer undertook the first educational evaluation of educational broadcasting technical standards. The second was an unsuccessful experiment program with “rebroadcasting” that led “program transcription” to become the preferred choice of the organization. With NAEB funds, Menzer began to look into and report on different technological strategies that the NAEB could pursue in the development of program exchange. If the NAEB were to advance, sufficient programs needed to be produced as examples for other stations, or where funds were lacking entirely for local production, as a way to fill station schedules.

In 1936 Menzer purchased and testing equipment for two different methods for program production and distribution, record pressing and shortwave broadcasting. Though it wasn’t clear yet what approach educators might take to standardizing programs, they did know that line rental was too expensive for live broadcasting, new frequency assignments would not arrive quickly except to well-funded stations, and a larger network was impossible because educational stations would remain in the domain of universities. They’d have to interconnect through initiatives such as the ones currently under investigation. With centralized live broadcasting out of consideration, new ideas were pursued.

Menzer wrote to McCarthy in December 1936 that if each station invested in an “HRO Receiver,” programs could hypothetically be rebroadcast from station to station

not over expensive wires but by shortwave. This would, Menzer believed, “tie-up” network stations from Kansas to Wisconsin to South Dakota. “I can visualize an educational chain which would extend over the United States with contributing stations at any desirable location.”³¹⁸ The idea was plausible as long as stations were willing to buy shortwave devices, and experiment for a period of time. In 1937 Menzer’s plan was described by Joseph Wright at the University of Illinois in a letter to Harold McCarty and to Griffith at Iowa State. Potentially titled the “Educational Broadcasting System”, a central school—in this case Purdue—would originate a program in its station and send it out over shortwave to Illinois, which would broadcast it to Chicago, and so on. Though no physical “EBS” would actually exist, Wright joked, this use of an official moniker would sound impressive to listeners.³¹⁹ Menzer had determined, with the help of a new station at the University of Minnesota, that a minimum power of 5000 watts would be useful.

And upon first tests this seemed to be a workable idea. Iowa first relayed a program to Iowa State by shortwave seamlessly, and they planned to create a rebroadcast network of “Iowa Educational Stations”. Another report from Illinois found “satisfactory listening conditions” for rebroadcasts within the state itself for up to 3.5 hours per day.³²⁰ However, once the signal had been rebroadcast further than a couple hundred miles, “unsatisfactory” overlaps with commercial stations occurred and the quality of transmissions receded. So stations began to record broadcasts and then rebroadcast them for transcriptions. However, this caused top of the hour announcements with station IDs

³¹⁸ Carl Menzer to Harold McCarty, December 3, 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

³¹⁹ Joseph Wright to Carl Menzer, Harold McCarty, and W.I. Griffith, October 1937. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 3.

³²⁰ James Ebel to Carl Menzer, September 1937. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 2.

to be replayed at other stations, confusing audiences, and the same problem of varied reception remained. Purdue, which would later host the Midwest Airborne project in the 1960s, instead located a grant to “tie together conventional lines in the middle-western educational stations to facilitate exchange of programs during the day”, though this only lasted a brief time due to ongoing expense and the unrenovable nature of the grant.³²¹

A more successful idea, begun roughly the same time as shortwave experiments, was to just produce an educational broadcast as a performance, record it, and distribute it through a clearinghouse to other schools on an as-needed basis, eliminating the use of wires or shortwaves. In a sense, educators were experimenting with an early form of syndication that had already been successful for the BBC and for the Mutual Broadcasting Service (MBS) of regional radio stations.³²² Several stations had already begun to archive programming, especially the usual suspects of Ohio State and Wisconsin, and the NCER advocated that other stations take up such a project. All it required was that stations buy efficient record recording equipment. Menzer tested several models in preparation for this, to “determine the feasibility of using present day recording equipment for producing electronical transcriptions”.³²³ Menzer tested metal, duraltone, and acetate transcriptions, as well as the difference between 78rpm and 33.3rpm players. His results showed that the “Presto 33.3rpm was the worst record presser, and the Universal Professional was the best”.³²⁴ Subsequently all NAEB stations began to purchase Universals for record pressing.

³²¹ Gilbert Williams to Carl Menzer, April 19, 1938. NAEB Papers, Box 2.

³²² For more on program transcription and MBS, see ³²² Russo, Alexander Todd. "Roots of Radio's Rebirth: Audiences, Aesthetics, Economics, and Technologies of American Broadcasting, 1926-1951." Ph. D. diss., Brown University, 2004.

³²³ Carl Menzer, internal memo, “Report of Tests Conducted at Station WSUI on Recording Equipment”, 1936. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

³²⁴ *ibid*

As could be imagined, since daily programming was already being produced at stations around the country, fairly quickly a large backlog of drama, civics, home economics, music appreciation, and other shows began to accumulate. And consequently “local and national transcription services” by the NAEB members to enable members purchase transcriptions for \$2 a record quickly became popular among regional stations with new licenses.³²⁵

By 1937 *Variety* magazine began an investigative story on behalf of the NAB to inquire if universities believed that they “owned common law rights”, and pressed station members for data, including fan mail, rate cards, oldest programs on the station, merchandising, and rules of acceptance of foreign language programs.³²⁶ While the NAB was suspicious of this new production method that might or might not violate copyright, the practice was mostly supported because it could make educators self-sufficient in ways that did not require “cooperation” from commercial stations.³²⁷

By 1938, technical standards had been devised for educational program development and broadcasting, meeting one of the criteria of public interest. In the process educators also began the first major educational technology study. They examined equipment specifically for the purpose of its pedagogical quality. An internal report on transcription tests showed standard vetting of new equipment for frequency response, noise level, turntable stability, dubbing tests, and mechanical construction.

By 1939, the auspice of an efficient program distribution network, later called the “bicycle network”, had been set up between NAEB affiliates. A program would be

³²⁵ NAEB Release, March 27, 1937. NAEB Papers Box 2.

³²⁶ Internal notes on 1937 *Variety* article. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 2.

³²⁷ “Cooperation” was a typical euphemism for the use of commercial station facilities by educators after 1936.

produced at one station, recorded onto a transcription disc, be deposited in a clearing house at the OOE or Michigan (later Indiana), and then be sent out to requesting stations for rebroadcast: basically, a system of non-commercial program syndication.. The quality of programs continued to improve into the 1950s, partly due to the aid of another, better-funded federal clearinghouse set up by the FREC. This model of distribution, as a “decentralized network” of sorts similar to the commercial Mutual network and to the BBC’s Empire Transcription service, became the core of NAEB practices until the 1960s, though in the 1940s content still lacked overlapping standards for research, administration, method, and content.

It’s worth pointing out that this period of NAEB/media reform activity presented a stark contrast to the decentralized disorganized nature of pre-1934. Their approach to advocacy had shifted to the creation of suitable content, connectivity between stations, and meeting criteria of “public interest” broadcasting. But still the group was not taken seriously, and internal letters voiced concern that they could not obtain RF support or convince Studebaker (and even some members of Ohio State) to attend conferences. But the NAEB would later absorb the accumulated wisdom of the experiments of this era and become the primary organization for educational broadcasting production, research, advocacy, and meetings. However the most successful overall experiment for educational broadcasting in the late 1930s came from a prominent NCER member, A.G. Crane, who believed that building an educational broadcasting network that met the criteria of the FCC’s *Pursuant* would provide the best chance for a sustainable advocacy.

3.2 The Rocky Mountain Radio Council

The most expansive and successful early precedent for American Public Broadcasting took place out west, and was run by a prominent member of the NCER: The Rocky Mountain Radio Council (RMRC). In 1937 A.G. Crane, President of the University of Wyoming, proposed a project similar to the University Broadcast Council of Chicago.³²⁸ Crane already had extensive experience with educational broadcasting, having worked for the Payne Fund of Ohio and its activist arm the National Committee on Education by Radio (NCER). He envisioned a wider scope for broadcasting than local stations, proposing a multi-state consortium centered in Colorado and Wyoming through which widely separated populations would have access to the same free education. He noted that the UBC had served a small but populous area, and hoped that the RMRC might extend the same concept to a wider, less populous, mountainous region with more need for such an initiative. Howard Evans put Crane into contact with John Marshall in 1937. Crane had earlier disagreed with the NAEB's decentralized approach in favor of a network-like administration, and hoped to improve upon the UBC's experiment.

Crane's early gestures to Studebaker and Levering Tyson to form an educational network had been rebuffed, and Marshall recorded that Crane complained of being "omitted" from FREC projects even though he was an affiliate. His inability to secure support was even more curious since Crane built his RMRC proposal on FREC recommendations, that "the feasibility of state-wide or regional organization for educational broadcasting" be studied.³²⁹ Noting organized experiments such as the UBC, which Marshall supported in spite of Miller's difficulties, RF did in fact give serious

³²⁸ A.G. Crane, Preliminary Prospectus for a Rocky Mountain Public Radio Service, April 29, 1937. RF, Box 279, Folder Folder 3320.

³²⁹ John Marshall Diaries, interview with A. G. Crane. April 13, 1937. RF, Box 277, Folder 3307.

consideration to the RMRC. But in a April 1937 letter Marshall worried Crane was too ambitious and not practical enough with his proposal to reach such a wide radius, as no technical infrastructure had yet been built and commercial telephone wire rentals were few and far between in that area. “Crane tended to assume that educators are already prepared for effective work in broadcasting.”³³⁰ However, Crane had already gained the support of quite a few local organizations, and the allure of trying an educational project with a multi-state audience, as well as the support of public land-grant universities and connected state departments, led Marshall eventually to support the project. It was an ambitious initiative. Crane not only proposed an experiment in educational radio regionalism in line with the 1934 Act, but intended to increase the technological development of radio technology itself, *while* creating a sustainable supplementary teaching aid via radio, as conceived and coordinated through multiple institutions and associations separated by vast expanses of land. Having worked first as an activist for educational broadcasting before 1934, and then as a university president, Crane was in a serendipitous position to conceive a sustainable educational “network” that still maintained fidelity to fundamental civic goals and educational philosophies. The radius of broadcasts would cover Colorado and Wyoming and parts of Nebraska, Kansas, and New Mexico.³³¹

Charles Siepmann was sent to survey the RMRC in 1937 as part of his analyses. He agreed with Crane that individual universities were too small to provide a base for educational broadcasting, and that a ‘regional’ broadcasting approach was preferable. But Siepmann’s review was mixed. “Dr. Crane has, I think, a proper understanding of the

³³⁰ John Marshall Diaries on A.G. Crane, April 13, 1937. RF, Box 277, Folder 3307.

³³¹ Rocky Mountain Radio Council, “A Need Discovered”, undated, probably 1939 or 1940. Box 278, Folder.

importance of professional standards”, Siepmann wrote. But the RMRC would “achieve nothing effective if it becomes a mart for ineffective salesmanship of the wares which the different adult educational associations have to offer.”³³² Crane was the one educational proponent who had developed a friendly rapport with local commercial interests, which impressed Siepmann. Yet, “He seems to me to be altogether over-sanguine on the score of finance.”³³³ Crane had anticipated that the greater part of funds could be raised through associated members of the council, but Siepmann correctly predicted that RF would have to send grants for the RMRC to succeed.

In early 1938 Crane went ahead with plans for his project, despite a lack of philanthropic funding. He had, after all, limited but stable finances at the University of Wyoming and a working relationship with Colorado educators.³³⁴ Marshall kept tabs on the experiment as Crane developed its contours, and reported in his diaries that “preliminary conversations have enlisted the interest of about 30 organizations active in the area”. Crane’s efforts had “stimulated the feeling of local broadcasters that some such organization of this kind is in order”.³³⁵ Crane almost immediately secured the cooperation of ten stations in the region. His initial plan was “closely analogous” to the UBC, in that it proposed a central production agency responsible for producing and airing broadcasts over local stations.³³⁶ By February 1939 Crane had enlisted the support of twenty-six institutions in the region, including every Colorado State university and local adult education groups, parents and teachers organizations, women’s clubs, medical

³³² Charles Siepmann review of RMRC, Filed June 14, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 701.

³³³ *ibid*

³³⁴ John Marshall Diaries, from a conversation with Crane at the Institute on Education by Radio, Columbus, May 3-5, 1937. RF, Box 277, Folder 3307.

³³⁵ *ibid*

³³⁶ *ibid*

societies, public libraries, schools of theology, farmer cooperatives, and most significantly the Wyoming Department of Education.

The RMRC wrote a constitution and by-laws, scheduled visits of the director or staff to each participating agency once a month, selected a “place for central office and studios”, and purchased recording and technical equipment.³³⁷ Further, unlike the UBC, the RMRC proposed a 4-6 month training periods for educational radio directors and staff, at 4-6 months. Trained staff would be placed at different broadcasting nodes to run day-by-day operations, oversee equipment function, and maintain contact with the central unit.

In the RMRC’s development notes, Crane wrote that it appeared as though technological development in radio was further ahead in the Rocky Mountain region than in the east. His staff seemed to be better prepared than the UBC’s to execute daily broadcasts to “the hundreds of isolated schools in the mountains and on the plains”.³³⁸ He also marveled that in contrast to Payne Fund affiliates in the Midwest and New York, that Wyoming residents’ “avowed willingness to work together on a public radio program is the most favorable token of success, through an important cooperative radio project will come their realization of the potency of radio as a medium for education”. He hired a staff with some background experience in radio and a “keen appreciation of its potentiality and limitations as a medium for education” to develop, produce, and evaluate programs directed at specific and general audiences. The organization arranged to hire consultants with expertise in public school education, music, drama, radio, radio script writing, radio production, publicity, research and evaluation. Further, his new staff, he

³³⁷ A.G. Crane to John Marshall, February 1, 1938. RF, Box 277, Folder 3307.

³³⁸ *ibid*

wrote, was fully aware of the instrumentality of their place in development. “They recognize the cold logic of a cooperative experiment.”³³⁹ Crane further offered “evidence” of success based in agency and listener response, having immediately begun to compile data on listener preferences. Early program experiments included titles such as “Makers of the West”, “The Story of Regional Products: Sugar Beets”, “What is a University?”, and “Dude Ranching”, as well as programming on history, geography, English literature, language, astronomy, music, vocational guidance, botany, art, health, and geology. The NCER was excited enough about Crane’s project that Howard Evans, then acting Secretary, promoted Crane to ranking Chairman of the NCER committee, though it was largely an honorary position at that point.³⁴⁰

Crane also consulted for the NAEB on occasion. In 1938, for example, he advised the University of Minnesota station to create programming as a “socially desirable service that must be useful, attractive, and acceptable. It must meet successfully the standards of the better grade of commercial programs. Your plan for thirty hours of broadcasting per week is a stupendous task. Most in the field are inexperienced amateur producers.”³⁴¹ He was also responsible for the NAEB’s decision to institute a standard of two rehearsals for each broadcast, instead of the usual zero. “This means forty rehearsals or equivalent attention in script editing, program planning, for twenty unit broadcasts per day.”³⁴²

But he never saw eye to eye with NAEB staff, and resolutely believed in the need for an alternate network system. One of the problems with the NAEB’s decentralized

³³⁹ Crane to Marshall, *ibid*

³⁴⁰ A.G. Crane to John Marshall, August 13, 1938. RF, Box 277, Folder 3307.

³⁴¹ Crane to Guy Ford at University of Minnesota, March 1938. NAEB Papers, Box 2, Folder 2.

³⁴² *ibid*

agenda, he argued, was that “to maintain a program of this magnitude day after day demands very definite and extensive plans be made to establish training centers and to furnish all needed facilities.”³⁴³ Further, space had to be assigned “for transmitting apparatuses and equipment, full time staff, a working set for live broadcasts, a reception room, a storage room, a recording studio, training rooms, and a recording studio.”³⁴⁴ Since this was still usually inaccessible to smaller stations, he agreed that NAEB transcriptions would be central to educational broadcasting’s development. “To make satisfactory master records, the same care in sound treatment of the studio and in placing stationary equipment in control and receptions rooms must be maintained for live broadcasts.” Basic services and a centralized organization were needed to oversee general management, script editing, general program planning, recording, supervision of schools service, clerical work and correspondence, testing listener response, evaluating programs, providing listener services, interregional services, publicity, and training broadcasts.

Crane further innovated the idea of hiring broadcast announcers from local commercial stations to both announce for the RMRC and train younger broadcasters. In an August letter to Marshall at RF, Crane wrote that “our program for training local and institutional broadcasters is vitally dependent on recording studios which we hope will eventually be established in each of the major institutions or communities. In the establishment of these local recording studios we shall need expert advice and counsel or there will be many mistakes or money wasted.”³⁴⁵

RMRC planned to broadcast its programs on commercial stations by renting airtime and wired connections, similar to the UBC. Crane proposed to “establish an

³⁴³ Crane to Ford, *ibid*

³⁴⁴ *ibid*

³⁴⁵ Crane to Marshall, August 20, 1938. RF, Box 277, Folder 3308.

organization and facilities for producing cooperatively public radio programs to be known as the Rocky Mountain Public Program. This program of broadcasts is to be made available for transmission to both commercial and educational broadcast stations in the area".³⁴⁶ The goal of the project would be to "bring schools things which are not now available and which can be presented to the schools better by the medium of radio than by other means", and to further educational advocacy by demonstrating "best practices in teaching", including strong preparation in advance and follow-up monitoring of effectiveness.³⁴⁷

"Listening Schools" were equipped with facilities, technology, teachers qualified to stimulate discussion around broadcasts and textbooks, and attention was paid to "social and economic backgrounds of the community" in development. Listening Schools further provided teachers and superintendents an opportunity to consult with RMRC officials in advance to make sure that they had sufficient flexibility in when a broadcast could be scheduled, and to make sure that schools had satisfactory receivers and listening facilities, and had received instructions for preparation of program reception. Teachers were provided time to offer suggestions for follow-up and encouraged to file periodic reports regarding the quality and usefulness of the program. The "Broadcasting Institutions" themselves were supplied with announcers with previous experience who were then trained for educational broadcasting. And to avoid some of the troubles the UBC faced, Crane secured cooperation from institutions in which faculty or broadcasters could contribute to the design of "suitable series" built around twelve fifteen-minute

³⁴⁶ Rocky Mountain Radio Council, "A Preliminary Plan for Broadcasting Service to the Schools of the Colorado-Wyoming Region", September 21, 1938. RF, Box 277, Folder 3308.

³⁴⁷ *ibid*

broadcasts.³⁴⁸ Time was provided to review broadcasts, secure assistance in the way of musicians and dramatists, and (in an usual practice for educators), prepare in advance. Work was distributed to institutions that requested to produce specific programs—for example a program on mining was produced by the Colorado State School of Mines instead of elsewhere. And to ensure programs remained at a similar caliber, “central radio workshops” were set up for various staff.

Their organizational arrangement was more sophisticated and advanced than the UBC. Funds from RF were requested to conduct a “planning period” to “mobilize resources accordingly”—essentially to organize the administration.³⁴⁹ While a handful of volunteer broadcasters had offered to work with each show, the maintenance of a specific and continuous method was central to the continued standard of the initiative. After planning concluded, institutions further needed funds to continue contact with stations. The Rocky Mountain region was widely separated and phone conversations were surprisingly expensive between institutions, as was travel back and forth to institutions as “personal contacts and acquaintances with stations”.³⁵⁰ Crane applied for \$49,150 from RF largely to facilitate between institutions. Crane’s official release regarding the project stated that the “organizational members of the Council will contribute to the project time, talent and publicity which has a market value many times over the amount required for the maintenance of the central organization”.³⁵¹ The project had three overt purposes: 1) To create a working organization through which educational institutions and agencies,

³⁴⁸ *ibid*

³⁴⁹ Rocky Mountain Radio Council, “Rocky Mountain Radio Project: A Plan for Cooperative, Regional, Broadcasting in Public Interest”, July 22, 1939. RF, Box 278, Folder 3310.

³⁵⁰ Rocky Mountain Radio Council, “Program Preparatory to Opening of Rocky Mountain Public Radio Program”, May 22, 1939. RF, Box 277, Folder 3308.

³⁵¹ Rocky Mountain Radio Council, “Rocky Mountain Radio Project: A Plan for Cooperative, Regional, Broadcasting in Public Interest”, July 22, 1939. RF, Box 277, Folder 8.

service departments, and citizens groups could mobilize and coordinate broadcasting resources; 2) To demonstrate the emphasis and value of radio as an instrument of democracy; 3) To demonstrate a cooperative method of maintaining working relationships between broadcasting stations and the producers of non-commercial programs; and an offshoot fourth goal of providing a “wider range of choice” in the area in line with public interest stipulations.³⁵²

While John Marshall considered Crane’s application, the project opened offices in Denver as the “natural center of the region” and staffed it with five employees along with transcription and communication equipment to aid associates in the “planning, preparation and presentation” of production and research. A broader non-office staff consisted of a director, a production specialist, “workshop” assistants, and a group of part time employees competent to plan programs, schedules, evaluate presentation, provide transcription service, etc. Further, assistants were delegated to help universities as consultants to “determine the place of broadcasting in their institutional pattern and to develop it and dignify it as a tangible service specifically directed”.³⁵³

Marshall agreed to fund Crane on one condition—that he hire Robert Hudson of the Adult Education Council of Denver to monitor the quality of programming.³⁵⁴ Hudson was trusted by Marshall because he had done evaluations for RF in the past and had professional radio experience. Crane agreed, and Hudson quickly proved to be the right choice. According to Crane, Hudson “adjusted to the work of class instruction easily”.³⁵⁵ However, an early evaluation by Hudson noted that he did not feel that the

³⁵² *ibid*

³⁵³ *ibid*

³⁵⁴ A.G. Crane to John Marshall, May 22, 1939, RF Box 277, Folder 3308.

³⁵⁵ A.G. Crane to John Marshall, July 22, 1939, RF, Box 278, Folder 3310.

project was close to implementation. He speculated that perhaps within two years a basic administrative structure “could” be achieved—which was, Hudson joked, better than a statement like “I hope we can”.³⁵⁶ It was true: stations at Colorado universities were received so well by residents that the Denver station was broadcasting full 16-hour days. When this negative review returned, Marshall temporarily cut off funding for the project. Marshall wrote that “I gather from some remarks that he has not yet appreciated the full force of this argument. He feels it inevitable, for example, that information will come from the centers”.³⁵⁷

Crane appealed to Marshall for a smaller \$5,000 for continuation in 1939, by which time Marshall looked to Paul Lazarsfeld of the Princeton Radio Project for a professional analysis. Lazarsfeld examined the RMRC documents with disapproval, arguing that the RMRC seemed like little more than an organization in “the business of manufacturing educational records and induc[ing] stations to broadcast them”. Lazarsfeld was skeptical that a centralized “network” that manufactured educational records could act as an efficient counterpoint to commercial broadcasting. However, he lauded Crane’s unusual ability to successfully coordinate the first operating educational infrastructure to include distribution and production.³⁵⁸ That such an infrastructure worked led to renewed interest by Marshall under the condition that measurement be taken of the curricular success of specific programs.

Robert Hudson was appointed to replace Crane as director of the RMRC and due to Hudson’s relationship with Marshall, support was extended. Upon receiving a second wave of RF funding in 1940, Hudson expanded services to include divisions of workshop

³⁵⁶ Robert Hudson to John Marshall, July 25, 1939. RF, Box 278, Folder 3310.

³⁵⁷ John Marshall Diaries, September 15, 1939, RF, Box 278, Folder 3310.

³⁵⁸ Paul Lazarsfeld to John Marshall, February 26, 1940, RF Box 277, Folder 3307.

centers in which studio auditoriums were available for educational listenership. He also set up a trained, experienced, public relations center on behalf of the Council. By 1940 the RMRC had produced thirty-two programs in eight continuous series, broadcast one hundred and nine times over its thirteen affiliates.³⁵⁹ But the most unexpected boost for the RMRC had come in 1939 from the FCC, who anticipated a need to distribute governmental information and propaganda during wartime. Studebaker's "forums" went into use by the FCC briefly in the late 1930s, and the RMRC offered its services and institutional connections to this endeavor. Offering a mix of entertainment and government information, the RMRC gained support from federal interests looking for a reliable western connection. Of this Crane wrote to Marshall:

"...our council is non partisan, non political, democratic, organized and operating in accordance with American ideas. The council's organization, procedure, and objectives demonstrates the ideology of democracy as contrasted with the ideology of totalitarianism. I believe war times would give us better hearing in this region than would more peaceful times."³⁶⁰

His letter was accompanied by a letter of support from James Fly, now Chairman of the FCC, who congratulated the RMRC "on the occasion of its initial broadcast of the Rocky Mountain Civic Series", and its "27 educational broadcasting institutions and 17 commercial broadcasting stations coordinating commendable effort". Fly's commission had recently put out a ruling that stated that "just as it may be a powerful instrumentality for public good, so a broadcast station has potentialities of causing great public harm, and

³⁵⁹ Robert Hudson to John Marshall, March 4, 1940, RF, Box 278, Folder 3311.

³⁶⁰ A.G. Crane to John Marshall, September 25, 1939. RF, Box 278, Folder 3311.

it is accordingly imperative that the limited broadcast channels belonging to the public should be entrusted to those who have a sense of public responsibility". Fly believed the RMRC had meet such stipulations and promised continued support of frequency allocations.

With a coherent plan and appropriate support in place, a report devised by Hudson to John Marshall in 1940 detailed the RMRC's slow development. "The Council plan is basically a plan for machinery to implement the project. It is a plan aiming to provide for cooperation between all elements concerned in civic broadcasting in this region." But thirteen series had already been contributed by members with "eager cooperation". Having a stable center to stimulate different production through training, standards, equipment, and consulting divisions seemed to be a promising approach. In specific the promotion of workshop centers equipped with control rooms, observation rooms, studios, reception rooms, and business offices had been noticed by the FREC, who had begun to recommend other regional stations go to Denver to learn at such centers. But as the NAEB had contended, program transcription resulted in the most reliable manner of broadcasting, with well-edited "technique", and excellent quality. Certain shows had been duplicated so many times over within a year that Crane reported "duplicates of duplicates" in the region. The result, Crane excitedly reported, was that while it was still too early to conclusively speak about a "rise in standards", stations were "emphatic in stating that council programs were better than the stations had been receiving from civic broadcasters before".³⁶¹ This had led to wider "public acceptance" of educational

³⁶¹ Rocky Mountain Radio Council, "First Four Months of Operations, November 1, 1939-February 29, 1940 . RF, Box 278, Folder 3312.

broadcasting as a viable alternative and incremental but notable improvement in broadcast quality.

Crane was responsible for implementation of the first organized use of transcriptions in non-commercial broadcasting, predating even the bicycle network.³⁶² Due to the initiative's regional nature, placement among public land-grant institutions, and attempt to qualify educational broadcasting as "public interest" programming, Crane began using the term "public broadcasting"³⁶³ to describe the RMRC's plan. This appears to be the first institutional usage of the term in the United States, mentioned multiple times in letters to Marshall, who recorded the term in his personal diaries. The RMRC was an early success in regional distribution. Similar to the UBC, the first couple of years were shaky and largely comprised of accumulating training staff, but by 1940 the Council had accumulated active participation from twenty-seven institutions including all of the regional universities, and was successfully broadcasting over fourteen distinct radio stations.³⁶⁴ Crane was in part successful because he began logistics so crucial to sustainable administration.

By 1941 Marshall was convinced that Crane's experiment had made a contribution under Hudson's supervision. He wrote:

"...the council is equipped to offer an unusual degree of leadership. Its programs already have a finish which is unusual for programs originating outside the industry. Furthermore, its offers have a well-defined program of leadership for the Council. They propose, for example, as a next step to undertake a careful appraisal of the problems of the region and to base

³⁶² A. G. Crane to John Marshall, July 22, 1939, RF Box 277, Folder 3308.

³⁶³ John Marshal Diaries, November 20, 1937, RF Box 360, Folder 3712.

³⁶⁴ Reported in April 1941 Application for Renewal Funds, RF, Box 278, Folder 3315.

their future program policy on that appraisal, on the assumption that such problems involve matters of direct concern to a majority of their listeners”.³⁶⁵

A three-year grant was subsequently provided by RF, and Lazarsfeld conducted a close analysis of surveys collected by Hudson.

However, due to internal politics, A.G. Crane was ousted as president of the University of Wyoming in 1941. Crane’s career did not end there though, and he went on to become governor of the state of Wyoming. The RMRC, which during WWII became a crucial site for the dissemination of official governmental information to the region, disbanded in 1950. Of note, Robert Hudson’s working relationship with Marshall on the project launched his prominent career in the educational broadcasting movement—he later moved to CBS, and then the University of Illinois, where he participated in the Allerton House Seminars and acted as their official correspondent to the trade presses. Hudson applied his knowledge of administrative practices from the RMRC directly to the famed Illinois research program. As an ironic side note, Allen Miller of the UBC, on which the RMRC modeled their experiment, replaced Hudson at RMRC after he left for CBS.

But in some ways the most sustainable initiative of all was the development of techniques for the production of empirical data regarding the worth of educational broadcasting—so central to satisfying the *Pursuant’s* mandate, and conducted concurrently to the official FREC Project 15, discussed as the Princeton Radio Research Project in the next chapter. Once educational stations were able to balance production, training, and research together in ways that satisfied university faculty and

³⁶⁵ *ibid*

administrators, stability was achieved for a slower and more efficient development. The first two experiments, as stated above, took place at the flagship NAEB stations of the 1930s, WHA and WOSU.

3.3 Ohio State: Instruction by Radio and Early Communications Research

While the RMRC experimented with a regional network, two prominent NAEB members—Ohio State and Wisconsin—continued to further the cause of university-based educational broadcasting. The most significant site of development for educational broadcasting research until the 1950s was Ohio State. Supported by an active Cleveland public School of the Air, a large elementary school audience, and generous Payne Fund support during the 1920s and early 1930s, Ohio State organized yearly conferences (discussed in chapter 1) regarding educational broadcasting development, and each year all proponents, including NAB members and network employees, converged upon Columbus to discuss educational broadcasting. The NCER, strongly supported by the Payne Fund but located in New York, was only distantly involved with Ohio State, though Ohio State served as the best case analysis for NCER political deliberations.

Run by educational pioneers B.F. Darrow and R. C. Higgy in the 1920s, by the early 1930s Ohio State had expanded its educational research to cover both visual instruction and broadcasting. Visual instruction was run by Payne Fund liaison Edgar Dale, a student of W. F. Charters, who had received funds from RF's General Education Board prior to the Communications Act.³⁶⁶ By the mid 1930s, a new generation of broadcasting advocates had appeared, most notably Keith Tyler. Keith Tyler was the brother of prominent educational consultant Ralph Tyler of the University of Chicago,

³⁶⁶ John Marshall Diaries, Reporting on the University Bureau of Radio Research, Document filed March 10, 1938. RF, Box 226, Folder 2163.

and Hull had come up at Iowa State under Griffith. Richard Hull would later join Ohio State in the 1940s, become president of the NAEB, and would turn out to be the most important NAEB advocate in the early phase of the organization. Tyler would remain a central figure in instructional broadcasting history until the 1980s for his thorough technocratic interconnectivity with almost every major figure in public broadcasting history.

Tyler was a ‘true believer’ in the promise of educational instruction as classroom extension. When public broadcasting finally gained federal support in the late 1960s, Tyler was reportedly *disappointed* by its more cultural and less instructional tone.³⁶⁷ He had put 40 years of work into the creation of equal access to universal public education through technology, even spearheading the major Midwest Airborne project in the early 1960s, which continued after passage of the Public Broadcasting Act into the early 1970s. Under Tyler’s direction, methods of instructional technology expanded significantly. Tyler was not actually an NAEB member. He was invited to participate in FREC, along with W.C. Charters (also at Ohio State) in 1936, and his time with the FREC was foundational for his development of classroom instruction standards.³⁶⁸ For a time in the mid-1930s Ohio State had soured on the NAEB and stopped paying dues. Just after the Act, Higgy had proposed that one way to advocate would be to abandon the moniker “broadcasting” completely and just become a full “college” of instruction by radio. Yet Ohio State had trouble producing consistently effective instructional broadcasts and sought both funds and administrative consultation from RF.

³⁶⁷ Keith Tyler Papers, Ohio State University, boxes largely unprocessed: Tyler reflections of public broadcasting show up in 141-25-6, and 141-24-4.

³⁶⁸ John Marshall Diaries, internal note, March 15, 1937. RF, Box 361, Folder 3719.

Charles Siepmann's 1937 report on station WOSU at Ohio State noted potential but significant need in terms of improvement. Siepmann reported that the staff was "quite inadequate in quality and quantity".³⁶⁹ Station manager Higgy was an engineer by training and, while a very nice man, "lacked the ability and imagination to conceive of the dynamic possibilities of broadcasting. He provides no stimulus of criticism to his staff. Lacking education, he tends to defer to members of his committee and fails to insist on the peculiar demands techniques of broadcasting. He seems timid in the face of opposition".³⁷⁰ His primary staff were described as "keen, cheerful striplings" who lacked "necessary qualifications". Standards of effective broadcasting were not "yet anywhere above the horizon". WOSU's studio was acoustically poor, ill equipped, and not sound proof, and the station carried very little funding. The vast majority of programs, by design, were classroom instruction by professors and visiting speakers, with almost no heed to broadcasting aesthetics. This approach, Siepmann worried, had "disregarded" difference in audience and the differential need of listeners in form, style, length of broadcast, and content. More so, Ohio State seemed to exhibit a "confusion of thought about main educational objectives and the distinctive field of service through broadcasting". Staff had been most concerned with PR for the university, perhaps as a means to gain more attention and funding. Shows consequently lacked interest in "good controversy", as well as educational research about poverty, problems of industry, and activities of the state. The station lacked focus and functioned with a "primitive understanding of broadcasting technique" that was likely to prove a "fatal limitation" to development.

³⁶⁹ Charles Siepmann review of Ohio State, Filed June 14, 1937. RF, Box 53, Folder 701.

³⁷⁰ *ibid*

Siepmann's report had confirmed many problems that Ohio State had already begun to address due to the influence of the FREC. Ohio State had decided in early 1936 that educational broadcasting been "hindered by lack of evidence" as to what may be expected to gain from pedagogical broadcasts.³⁷¹ Similarly teachers had difficulty selecting which programs to use. The Ohio State board decided that if radio were to become a wider part of education and an effective educational tool, methods would have to be improved. "This lack of evidence has not only stood in the way of a widespread acceptance of the radio but it has also made the task of the educational broadcaster difficult if not impossible."³⁷² Programs had been planned, Ohio State conceded, without adequate knowledge of the results, and a study would need to be constructed to "make a possible number of generalizations regarding results to be expected from certain types of school broadcast programs". Such a study would furnish guidance to teachers in selecting and utilizing broadcasts, and inform the larger national movement in determining criteria for building new programs.

In 1937 Ohio State proposed to reconcile several problems in broadcasting practice, including the development of techniques for evaluating school broadcast programs, instruments of evaluation, and the collection of "abundant evidence as to the effectiveness of specific selected broadcasts".³⁷³ The formulation of a series of generalizations regarding the results would be distributed and analyzed for their contribution to local, national, and regional programs. And the project proposed to develop effective cooperation between broadcasters and teachers as a basis for

³⁷¹ Keith Tyler, "Proposal for an Evaluation of Radio Broadcasts for Schools", Filed March 25, 1937, RF, Box 360, Folder 3716.

³⁷² *ibid*

³⁷³ *ibid*

improvement of existing school broadcasts through evidence. Ohio State, in a slightly more advanced “concept” than Wisconsin (discussed below), also set the first demarcations of conclusions from evidence. In their application they named five objectives for educational technology research, which influenced later communications research in the 1950s:

- 1) “Acquisition of important information and concepts in various fields of human knowledge through objective tests, written examinations, and records of oral discussion.
- 2) Application of important facts and principles extrapolated from group discussions, interviews with pupils, parents, and follow-up examinations.
- 3) Development of interests through voluntary activities, records of free reading, choices of movies and culture, and recording of chosen leisure-time activities through diaries, interviews, and questionnaires.
- 4) Development of social sensitivities through analysis of group discussions, interviews, and tests on awareness of social problems.
- 5) Development of attitudes toward significant issues in modern life in terms of scales of belief measured by group discussions, interviews, questionnaires, and samples of writing.”³⁷⁴

Marshall sent the application for review to Levering Tyson. And while Tyson had some disagreements regarding tactics with the Payne-funded NCER, he responded on

³⁷⁴ Keith Tyler, “Illustrations of Kinds of Evidence Which Seem to be Appropriate in Connection with a Sampling of the More Important Objectives of Some School Broadcasts”, undated, 1937, RF, Box 360, Folder 3716.

behalf of the Committee of Six that the project was a contribution, and quite similar to another one Hadley Cantril of the Committee had formed at Princeton (chapter 4). Keith Tyler actually made a special personal trip to discuss the proposal with the Committee, and convinced them based upon 5-point list of standards from his influential brother Ralph Tyler's methods of evaluation in the 8-year education experiment, also funded by RF. John Studebaker predictably took interest due to its connection to past GEB-funded methods, and along with the Princeton Radio Project, Ohio State became a hub for communications research.

The project itself was green-lighted for 5 years, and would evaluate "on the air" responses through a cooperative of teachers, broadcasters, and staff. They evaluated not just the status of broadcasts but the "potentiality" and "relative importance" of broadcasting in the classroom. By gathering and clarifying meta-conditions of educational broadcasting such as objectives for broadcasting per se, Ohio State planned to set strong standards for program development. "Instruments and techniques in collecting evidence" would result in conceptualization of objectives with regard to application to methods, in order to "obtain certain inferences and to formulate criteria and generalizations regarding the effectiveness of educational broadcasting, methods of utilization, place of broadcast, and the like".³⁷⁵ The early form of the project was planned in seven phases. It was the first to attempt to qualify trends in responses from audiences, framed in quantitative terms, though it should be noted that it was much less successful than the Princeton counterparts discussed in the next chapter.

The first phase was comprised of gathering and clarifying educational objectives by listing, classifying, and revising objectives until unnecessary "duplications" were

³⁷⁵ Keith Tyler, "Evaluation of School Broadcasts, Ohio State University", RF, Box 360, Folder 3716.

removed. The second phase tentatively selected particular objectives to which educational broadcasts would appear to most likely make a significant contribution, including discussions and determinations about contributions, objectives, and a selection process based upon those meetings. The third phase collected, organized, and interpreted numerous examples of pupil behavior indicative of achievement of objectives, and administered tests, instruments, measurements, anecdotal records, and examined pupil diaries. The fifth phase gathered descriptions of methods for broadcasts and logged those methods for exchange among teachers of experience. The sixth phase devised techniques and constructed instruments for collecting evidence of pupil achievement through a trial and error process, leading to validation of specific instruments to alter observed behavior. And finally the seventh phase refined such instruments and techniques to continuously improve validity, reliability, objectivity, and practicability.³⁷⁶

The FREC's response was that the project was quite original "from both practical and scientific" points of view. It requested that the educational worth of programs be systematized until specific generalizations "felt to be true and important" could be applied to future production of effective programs.³⁷⁷ A study such as Ohio State's was of interest to the networks, especially toward the stimulation of a "general use of such programs" toward effective development of methods of evaluation. The Committee of Six, which included Princeton researchers Hadley Cantril and Lyman Bryson until 1938, recommended that Tyler incorporate "incidental values" in case "more and less tangible effects" be discluded from evaluation.³⁷⁸ Cantril also recommended that more attention

³⁷⁶ *ibid*

³⁷⁷ "Report of the Reviewing Committee: Ohio State University Radio Evaluation", undated, 1937 or 1938. RF, Box 360, Folder 3718.

³⁷⁸ *ibid*

be given to psychological changes and reactions of pupils to radio programs by calling attention to levels of learning and with evaluation by a consulting staff.

The project resulted in a reimagining of production phase protocols. In final analysis they stipulated that 1) attitudes and appreciations, 2) interests and self motivation, 3) critical thinking and discrimination, 4) creative expression, 5) social behavior and personal social integration, 6) skills and techniques, and 7) informational background were at the core of phases of educational analysis. Ohio State was so invested in this list that they wrote:

“...this work with objectives was extremely important in the radio study. It made it very clear that the purposes for which teachers carry on their work embrace a larger field than that of imparting information alone. Similarly it became evident that broadcasts were being planned to contribute to most of these categories and that an evaluation of the effectiveness of broadcasts should likewise be concerned with much more than information. Most of the previous studies on the effectiveness of radio programs have been based upon information alone and it is probable that the distinct contribution of radio programs is to fields other than information”.³⁷⁹

These findings were supported by one of the most exhaustive early pieces of research literature, which Ohio State called a “dictionary” of radio behavior. Experimental test results were qualified into categories from curricular intent into receptive reaction. For example, in public education, if a goal of English instruction was to “develop a

³⁷⁹ “Brief Progress Report: Evaluation of School Broadcasts, a Study Sponsored by the Federal Radio Education Committee of the Federal Communications Committee”, November 29, 1938. RF, Box 360, Folder 3718.

purposeful interest in current social problems”, the procedure would be to read a series of modern novels dealing with the problems, to develop interest in significant questions of education.³⁸⁰ Similarly, they posited, a delimited set of instructional possibilities and reactions would be traceable. If a goal for radio education was to “enjoy all forms of literature, including radio programs”, the report would, after evaluation, define literally 200 possible outcomes of the project, from “compares various types of humor” to “writes publishers”, to “reads critical discussions”, to “withdraws an increasing amount of reading matter”, to “asks his teacher or librarian questions about various poems”, and so on.³⁸¹ Should one of these occurrences follow a radio broadcast, the event was tallied and quantified into trend analysis.

The dictionary also predicted “expected” curricular outcomes from radio pedagogy, including adjusted methodological language. Previous to the study educational broadcasting intended for students to receive information and be able to account for that information either in test form or civic/cultural disposition. But the Ohio State approach replaced these expectations with terms like “developing interest”, “shifting attitudes”, “shifting interests”, “effects between”, and in longest legacy “effectiveness in achieving educational objectives”.³⁸² This last notion can to some extent be traced to Ralph Tyler’s 8-year study and its influence on Keith Tyler. But an interesting historical overlap with educational history must be noted here—these terms were also appropriated for future public policy interest related to communications. By the 1950s early educational

³⁸⁰ “Confidential Dictionary of Objectives for Selected Broadcasts”, March 21, 1939. RF, Box 360, Folder 3718.

³⁸¹ *ibid*

³⁸² “Some Possible Findings of Present Research Studies”, April 18, 1939 internal document. RF, Box 361, Folder 3719.

technology forms of standardization were applied to the measurement of larger social phenomena.

The origins of standardization can be found as early as a 1939 evaluation on “Guiding Principles Related to Research and Service Activities” revealed the project’s goal to devise a “rethinking of the purpose of the project and the principles which should guide it in the future...define the methods and procedures which seem effective in carrying out the purposes of the project and indicate the relative importance which the staff attaches to the various elements in the study”.³⁸³ The goal of the language and procedures of new standardization and anticipated outcomes, they contended, would be to “pursue which promise most for the objectives of general education in a democracy”.³⁸⁴ Research and service activities were directed toward broadcaster, administrator, teacher, and pupil problems in achieving this goal. Wide coordination between these interests was concerned with the “dissemination of findings among educators” toward effective services in general education. By identifying “peculiar characteristics” of educational audiences, especially in rural areas, the design of the project was constructed to find ways in which to connect the naturally wide-net reception of a program with “integrated and closely knit school populations”.³⁸⁵ Ohio State had attempted to create standard criteria to account for both divisions of audience preference and reception, while unifying an audience into one listening context. In many ways their attempt reflected the immediacy of their goals—to improve their internal broadcasting approach. But second to the

³⁸³ “Evaluation of School Broadcasts: Proposal for an Extension of the Evaluation of School Broadcasts Project”, 1939, RF, Box 361, Folder 3719.

³⁸⁴ *ibid*

³⁸⁵ *ibid*

Princeton Radio Research Project, the Ohio State study had set a major precedent for research as a component of broadcasting production.

3.4 WHA, Educational Broadcasting Method, and the Bureaucratization of “Culture”

The University of Wisconsin (WHA), the oldest educational broadcaster and arguably the oldest continuous broadcast *experiment* in the world, remained a key site for educational broadcasting production after 1934. Its two primary leaders, Harold McCarty and Harold Engel, were also core members of the NAEB, both of whom served as its president at different times. McCarty was an efficient coordinator and publicist on behalf of educational broadcasting, and Engel was its mild mannered but persuasive station manager. There is so much to say about Wisconsin’s place in noncommercial broadcasting history between 1917 and the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 that a major contribution could be made with just a case study of the station.³⁸⁶ However, in terms of Wisconsin’s contribution toward the creation of a national educational broadcasting system, their contributions were quite specific.

The first, briefly discussed in chapter 1 as well as by Hugh Slotten³⁸⁷, was their approach to the development of noncommercial programming genres. They were the first to experiment with classroom extension courses, adult education, and aesthetic methods of civic broadcasting. And especially in the post-Act era, they stood out from other broadcasters for their financial stability, program continuity, and trained staff. Second, along with Ohio State, WHA was also one of the first state-based broadcasters to design courses with classroom teacher collaboration and research measurement of curricular

³⁸⁶ Jack Mitchell (UW-Madison), original producer of *All Things Considered*, has begun this project.

³⁸⁷ Slotten, Hugh. *Radio’s Hidden Voice: The Origins of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

effectiveness in mind. This led, as will be discussed below, to a high level of interconnectivity between the station and other state institutions. Their research experiment methods devised for educational broadcasting, discussed below, stands as a precursor to the Princeton Radio Project's use of surveys.

From a public educational perspective, the University of Wisconsin was already at the fore of inter-governmental practices, having founded university extension services in the 1910's. Charles McCarthy, a university administrator who worked under the direction of university president Charles Van Hise, wrote of the book "The Wisconsin Idea" in 1922, which envisioned that the university would "serve the state and all of its people and that it should be an institution for all the people within the state and not merely for the few who could send their sons and daughters to Madison"³⁸⁸. UW, elevating the progressive notion of institutional efficiency to a conceptual imperative, endeavored to bring its experts to every fireside as a means for "shedding the light of knowledge from within its walls to every home"³⁸⁹. Students were provided with pre-tests on specific topics to gauge knowledge of a subject and final tests were given after last broadcasts in company of a mimeographed bulletin providing series objectives and listening topics.

Control testing was conducted similarly, though teachers were sometimes asked to teach topics in order without radio, pre-tested and then tested. Students were measured in accordance with knowledge, attitude, interest, and behavior modifications, and supplemented with teacher observation records, a list of activities, books read, and observational records. Data was then prepared by teachers and/or observers, including test scores, to research staff who conducted statistical analysis. Analysis was demarcated

³⁸⁸ Charles McCarthy, *The Wisconsin Idea*, University of Wisconsin, pg. 35

³⁸⁹ *ibid*, pg. 42

by gross gain, changes in interest, attitude, understanding of concepts, and changes in information, and a general analysis covered qualitative responses. And (this is a key point), budget distribution for programs was built around which components needed most attention, improvement, or concentration. But budgetary concerns also raised a few problems endemic to all NAEB affiliates. How should radio instruction be paid for? Often, universities released just enough money to pay a few part-time amateur enthusiasts and students, overseen by a faculty member. The study began to demarcate the number of hours per week needed for radio instruction (transmitter, staff, talent), number and kinds of audience to be reached (publicity, census research, visiting delegates to cities), kinds of personnel involved (recruitment, training), and costs of radio instruction in general. These factors, WHA realized, were also connected to, broadly, “station relations”, which took time, effort, diplomacy, knowledge of a community, and rehearsal scheduling.

Enjoying strong support from the Wisconsin state legislature in 1936, WHA applied for a grant for the “exploration and definition of needs to be served, through direct inquiry and consultation with teachers”.³⁹⁰ WHA aimed to meet required needs of teachers in consultation with teachers themselves, and believed that “practical experimentation” in writing and production by teachers, together with “constant check on their effectiveness” (of programs) in the classroom would be of benefit to the station.³⁹¹ To measure the quality of broadcasts, WHA planned to devise “informal tests” for “controlled experimentation” to characterize “effectiveness as accurately as possible”.³⁹² Such materials would form the basis of what they hoped would be an authoritative report

³⁹⁰ John Marshall Diaries, Conversation with Harold McCarty and Harold Engel, April 24, 1936. RF, Box 362, Folder 3736

³⁹¹ *ibid*

³⁹² *ibid*

on the possibilities of school broadcasting in a state school system, together with data on such special considerations as vocabulary.

The station needed additional funds to hire an educational director, a production director, and a script editor who could focus solely on this project and travel widely to various schools in the state without the burden of a teaching course load. At the time of application WHA devoted roughly 40% of its airtime to music and 60% to “spoken word” programs such as news, farm reports, and classroom instruction, with subject matter heavy on homemaking, literature, agriculture, and politics. To correct many of the problems with “best practices” discussed in NAEB correspondence, Wisconsin endeavored to explore how to devise and test successful programs. Their seminal “Research Project in School Broadcasting” imagined WHA as a “laboratory” for an experiment on the qualities of educational broadcasting. They began with a survey of existing literature on educational theory to learn which lessons were perceived as most needed for a larger community of School of the Air listeners. Radio courses were written and prepared in advance with experimental markers in place in the broadcasts, followed by tests devised to measure the “educational value” of the broadcasts, to be presented, analyzed, and repeated by other NAEB institutions if successful.³⁹³

The project was the first to ask “fundamental” questions about educational broadcasting development as a process different from commercial broadcasting production. Questions asked in their proposal included: “What are the proper educational functions of school broadcasts? What are their limitations? How may radio lessons be correlated with the curriculum?” Further, the test incorporated classroom teacher

³⁹³ The Radio Committee of the University of Wisconsin, “Outline for a Research Project in School Broadcasting”, date RF, Box 362, Folder 3735.

questions such as “how to prepare for the lesson, teach during the broadcast, and integrate the lesson with other educational activities?”³⁹⁴ It was already qualitatively understood from previous experience that different broadcasts offered different educational benefits and elicited different listener responses—for example talk, dialogue, roundtable, and dramatization, staff had noticed, carried widely varied learning success rates, listener recidivism, and academic merit. But staff were unsure if the differences were due to style, genre, method of delivery, or production standards. What rate of delivery was appropriate for different styles of programs, and listeners? And what did students actually learn from radio lessons? Were they stimulated to read about topics discussed and did their reports improve with auditory learning? While much had been said about the “promise” of educational radio—and the report, in step with NAEB advocacy, broached the typical platform declaring radio the “most significant educational event since the event of the printing press”—little had been posited about the limits of educational radio. Wisconsin offered an opportunity to study both favorable and unfavorable broadcasting conditions.³⁹⁵

WHA also served an unusually wide and consistent audience compared to other NAEB stations. They operated at 5,000 watts, reaching a roughly 100-mile radius, and the satellite station at Stevens Point broadcast at a similar range. The School of the Air, founded by McCarty, had begun in 1931, and registration for Wisconsin distance learning broadcasts already totaled an impressive 43,000 students. Having such a “machinery” at their disposal, as well as a supportive Wisconsin Education Association with 20,000 teacher members and an active Committee on School Broadcasting, convinced the

³⁹⁴ *ibid*

³⁹⁵ *ibid*

Wisconsin legislature that radio education could complement state agriculture, conservation, and public school education initiatives. These fields had no applicable textbooks, and Wisconsin faculty included world experts in these categories. If broadcasting could be proven as pedagogically beneficial, the potential payoff included broad state investment in WHA as well as its emergence as the first station in which radio replaced textbooks as a primary curricular guide.

The project was conceived as a two-year study in which the first year surveyed existing curriculum, wrote and prepared production for courses, and devised methods for measuring educational significance. The second year would feature experimental courses, with “objective measurements taken”.³⁹⁶ An advisory committee had already been set up that included McCarty, the Wisconsin State Superintendent, the Dean of UW’s school of education, and other educational association members. The application stated that it would also be the first to formulate an educational psychology of objectives of school broadcast that would consequently be applied to actual production, as well as one of the first to publish final reports on the relationship between educational philosophy, psychology, and radio teaching methods. It would act as the broadest attempt to determine the proper form or technique of educational content presentation with a staff that would be responsive to such a study. Information would be utilized in script production, vocabulary choice, training teachers, assembling casts for dramatizations, and increased standards of presentation in general. \$22,000 was requested from RF for a full-time staff on the project.

Marshall did not approve the initial application because it did not describe the roles of different researchers within the project. McCarty’s response was to devise what

³⁹⁶ *ibid*

appears to be the first list of how an educational broadcasting “crew” would be organized, titled “Workers and heir Functions in Educational Broadcasting”.³⁹⁷ Among conceptualized positions, a “Radio Education Specialist” was defined as responsible for preliminary survey of the field, formulation of project in terms of academic research, oversight of procedure adaptation, observation of schools, stimulation of adaptation to evidence, and the writing of a final report. Basically, it was a job description of responsibilities for an educational broadcasting “station manager”. WHA also reimagined the fundamental role of “script writer” from the network model to one who determined the proper technique for effective presentation of learnable content. Script writers in an educational sense were not just responsible for meeting time formats, but assisting teachers with writing scripts, stimulating writing by students with their devised content, gathering materials from different locations, and writing sections of a final report that dealt with techniques of writing school broadcasts.

The script writer was complemented by a “production man” who was tasked with evolving special production and presentation techniques dependent on the grade level, training casts for dramatizations and roundtables, and devising a “standard of presentation” that made educational aesthetic content recognizable.³⁹⁸ University researchers would write tests and measurements, and administer tests before filing with project secretaries. And, in another major innovation, McCarty wrote that these projects might “be combined with graduate study in education toward a degree”.³⁹⁹ This apparently also seems to be one of the very first if not the first attempt to create graduate

³⁹⁷ University of Wisconsin Radio Committee, “Preliminary Survey of Fields of Inquiry in Establishing a University Program of Instruction by Radio”, March 16, 1938. RF, Box 363.

³⁹⁸ “Outline for a Research Project...”, *ibid*

³⁹⁹ John Marshall interview with Harold McCarty, October 9, 1936. RF, Box 362, Folder 3736.

research positions for broadcasting measurement, 10 years before Illinois would institutionalize such training. Ultimately nominated McCarty as one of the RF fellows to study the BBC. McCarty also secured a subsidiary role on several FREC projects.

McCarty's exposure to wider national and international progress in educational broadcasting led him to worry that his station was not yet prepared to devise successful program transcriptions of their material, and discussions around the institutionalization of Wisconsin-style programming seemed to be one of the catalysts for this research application. He participated closely with the technical experiments in program transcription at the NAEB between 1936 and 1939. WHA became centered on the question if programs could be actually proven to be educational. They consequently developed the first rigorous step-by-step development of educational broadcast series with an internally coherent economy of scale with subsidiary divisions including creative, production, editing, distribution, training, and experimentation cannot be overstated.

The WHA "method" unfolded, in a manner, very similarly to that of the commercial networks: from concept to development to product to reception. Yet unlike commercial broadcasting's approach, educational broadcasting, WHA members decided, would begin with a "statement of objectives", such as nature study, conservation, historical knowledge, etc. From the core curricular concept an intended civic outcome was stated, such as "to develop proper attitudes" or "concepts of the necessity of conservation". The next consideration would be to anticipate strategies to instill concepts in the program, stimulate students toward personal motivation regarding a topic, and provide skills to "develop the ability to interpret and evaluate facts regarding" intended curriculum. Broadcasts were then planned from a choice of topics and a designated editor

oversaw script preparation. Once the concept, intended outcomes, and script oversight was complete teacher aid materials were prepared for use with broadcasts. Those teaching materials would similarly state purpose and objective of the radio course, general directions for using broadcasts in the classroom, detailed suggestions for each topic such as follow-up activities, and a bibliography for further reading.

After airing, evaluation was employed between experimental and control groups, “matched class for class”.⁴⁰⁰ School matches were chosen based upon willingness of teachers to cooperate as control schools, but also whether the teacher was perceived as willing to put forth extra effort in analysis. The project began with small public schools in cities with 1-5,000 residents, and then moved to larger cities with 5-50,000 residents. The procedure for experimental testing was based around one 35-minute class period each week dedicated to a broadcast including preparation 5 minutes before, 15-minute broadcasts, and 15-minute follow-ups.

The project strongly interested the Wisconsin legislature by year 2, and a “Statement of Policy Relative to the Use of the Radio Broadcasting channels Licensed to Agencies of the State” report was released that announced the formation of a State Radio Council. The council was formed on December 6, 1938 under Order 21 as a transfer and “vest” to the board of regents at the University of Wisconsin to control and operate the radio station with agencies of the state.⁴⁰¹ Noting the station’s “inspiring record of the constructive and beneficent possibilities of this new agency of mass communication”, the board was tasked with maintaining the civic dimensions of broadcasting as a means to prevent misinformation or “rousing of passions of their fellows”—a clear reference to

⁴⁰⁰ “Experimental Procedure in Educational Evaluation”, undated, RF, Box 362, Folder 3736.

⁴⁰¹ State Radio Council of Wisconsin, “Statement of Policy Relative to the Use of the Radio Broadcasting Channels Licensed to Agencies of the State”, December 6, 1938. RF, Box 363.

concerns over rising fascism.⁴⁰² A fear of “domination by a factional central government through controls of instruments of coercion, and the determination to safeguard local freedom of expression and a degree of local economy” placed radio as a significant tool for cultural gatekeeping.⁴⁰³ Very much in line with Studebaker’s concept of public forums, the station was not set aside to be an opinion wing specifically, but to promote “public interest, convenience, and necessity” with the promotion of community events and bureaucratic connectivity. The committee encouraged the station to largely function as it had before, but with attention on “education and information versus advertisement and propaganda”.⁴⁰⁴ And the state released a substantial budget for technical operation of the station, though not experimentation in the way that RF had funded. The bill also included stipulations regarding the coordination of radio and visual educational services—one of the first mass attempts to combine the two for educational media, though WHA did not seem to take up a visual instructional component until after the war.

Funding was also released under the expectation that the station would act in accordance with “educational implications of school broadcasting”.⁴⁰⁵ The purpose, as stated, was to supplement and enrich classroom education instead of replace it, and be so designed that objectives be stated explicitly and devised by experts. Other expected qualifications such as the encouragement of “maximum activity”, use of “best talent”, and “integrated units of learning” were also required—but new to the state mandate was

⁴⁰² *ibid*

⁴⁰³ *ibid*

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁰⁵ Wisconsin State Radio Council, “Report of the Committee on School Broadcasting”, September 13, 1940. RF, Box 363.

“continuous evaluation of changes in pupil behavior” supported by data.⁴⁰⁶ This point was also of significant interest to other state institutions with educational needs.

Students were ‘brought in’ by means of correspondence studies. And part of station curriculum included a kind of progressive ‘rationalization’ of the public. Much of the programming related to civics or music was not simply informational or ‘appreciation’ purposive, but spoke to understanding the larger parameters at stake for becoming a citizen in the industrial age—which included self-discipline, dialect coaching, and hygiene.⁴⁰⁷ And this programming became a source of great interest to Waupun Prison officials, who after consolidating two separate prison farms in 1922, began a prison education extension program.⁴⁰⁸ Already a subscriber to UW’s extension services, Director of Education John Faville solicited Harold Engel to coordinate College of the Air program air times with prison education meet times. Engel personally visited prison premises in 1933 and issued Waupun a gift of one radio.⁴⁰⁹ By the end of that year, nearly a dozen state organizations had signed on to the program as ‘cooperating agencies’ in program development and facilitation, including the State Board of Vocational Education, the State Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Normal School Regents, the Wisconsin Teachers’ Association, The University of Wisconsin Extension School, the College of Agriculture, and the School of Education.⁴¹⁰ Wisconsin created the first inter-bureaucratic State use of radio with this initiative, and it is notable for its attempt, though the prisoner education initiative had limited success.

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁰⁷ Aline Hazard, ‘For the Love of Mike’, Aline Hazard Papers, Box 2.

⁴⁰⁸ “Prison Educational Director Tells Lecturers of Inmate Reactions to College of the Air courses”. Waupun Leader-News, Feb. 7, 1935.

⁴⁰⁹ Correspondence between Engel and Faville. Harold Engel Papers, Box 2, Folder 2.

⁴¹⁰ Internal Document. Harold Engel Papers. Box 1, Folder 17.

The Wisconsin Research Project in School Broadcasting experiment had set scaffolding for other NAEB stations to create early methods for educational broadcasting method. But from RF's perspective the experimental data had yielded "mixed results" and quantitative measurement "not large enough to be statistically significant". Attitude changes had been statistically positive, but most cases had unexpectedly favored control group practices of non-experimental broadcasts or simple classroom teaching of the same material over radio broadcasts. Teachers and supervisors wrote that curriculum was a contribution to the classroom, using words like 'enrichment' to describe popular programming. But it was not clear what else was necessary to improve experimental practice to increase classroom learning by radio as opposed to traditional teacher-based education. In truth, reliable survey methods had not yet been developed, and concurrently to Wisconsin's experiment the Princeton Radio Project was literally in the midst of devising such methods with effectiveness.

Charles 1937 's report on WHA was unusually harsh. While it began with a discussion of how well equipped the station was compared to other stations, especially in terms of studio construct, when it came to management Siepmann went right for the throat.

McCarty is a disappointment. He speaks the right language but his values seem to me to be derivative. He has a somewhat sensitive vanity and his conception of broadcasting is emotional rather than intellectual. He is not professional in his control and direction of his staff. His judgment of persons is not, I think, altogether reliable. He protests too much, and considering the potentialities open to him at this university, less

has been achieved than I should have thought was possible, even within the pitiable restrictions of finance and staff that obtain here.⁴¹¹

Engel, in contrast, was depicted as “competent” but not professional, charming and keen, but with inadequate knowledge of the Wisconsin schools he was supposed to serve. McCarty had put so much work into encouraging the development of the station that he had actually inhibited its development. “I heard a performance which was not bad at an amateur level, but I reckon there is some danger of this student having his head quite turned by McCarty’s excessive praise and lack of critical guidance.”⁴¹² Further, Siepmann felt that staff were not sufficiently professional, and the station was unable to pay speakers, rehearse correctly, and classroom lectures had been conducted in an unsound manner. But, if “regional broadcasting” was to be developed in the Midwest, Wisconsin offered the best opportunity. Indeed Wisconsin would play a major role in the development of methods, administrators, and on-air talent up through the Public Broadcasting Act.

3.5 The Consequence of Charles Siepmann’s Reviews of Educational Stations: John Marshall Drops the Axe on Educators

As mentioned above, Siepmann ultimately did not believe that educational institutions were the appropriate sites for noncommercial broadcasting. Besides the fact that NAEB institutions were largely local in practice and a decentralized group that only represented a handful of stations, broadcasts did not meet criteria of federal expectations necessary for new assignments. Universities were best designated, Siepmann believed in the 1930s, to do what they were allocated to do—develop research methodologies.

⁴¹¹ Charles Siepmann, personal handwritten notes, April 1-June 9, 1937. Review of Wisconsin, RF, Box 53, Folder 701.

⁴¹² *ibid*

During Siepmann's tour of the states he analyzed every major project discussed above. And while in retrospect it's clear that many of these projects provided crucial foundations for later noncommercial infrastructural development, on a case-by-case basis their deficiencies were all the more glaring to an expert of his stature. It's difficult to conceive that a proponent as seminal as Carl Menzer—the innovator of the “bicycle network”, who had devised the first plans for shortwave retransmission and program transcription—potentially conceived of these strategies during a lonely moment with his violin trying to meet airtime criteria to retain a station license. While the NAEB continued to wane in influence in the 1930s, Siepmann's reputation for no-nonsense analysis of deficiencies, strong liberal analysis of the civic purposes of broadcasting, and experience of administrative practices, would grow. Siepmann's negative analyses could not have come at a worse time for NAEB members, who were under surveillance by Marshall. As a last ditch effort the NAEB enlisted a reviewer from the University of Texas named T. H. Shelby to come up with an alternate review that was favorable to the NAEB. He filed his “Report of Radio in Education Study Under a Rockefeller Foundation Grant” in 1938.⁴¹³

In stark contrast to Siepmann's well-received if brutal report, Shelby characterized Mahan at Iowa as encouraging a “spirit of oneness with respect to the radio program on the campus. There appeared to be not only complete harmony but intelligent interest, not to say enthusiasm, for what was being done over the radio”. Noting the great “challenge” for educators and need for developed standards and methods, Shelby was nonetheless overly supportive of land-grant stations. In contrast to Siepmann's acute reviews, the NAEB's clever but mishandled attempt to persuade Marshall with positive

⁴¹³ T.H. Shelby, “Report in Education Study Under a Rockefeller Foundation Grant”, September 19, 1939. RF, Box 265, Folder 4.

PR failed, and by 1942 Marshall had soured on the media reformers/practitioners of the Midwest. He did not fund a new NAEB project after 1938. It was not until the third generation of NAEB broadcasters appeared, led by Richard Hull and Wilbur Schramm in 1949, that Marshall would be convinced to invest one last time in the prospects for, as A.G. Crane had framed it in 1937, a “public” broadcasting endeavor. The result of that final grant, discussed in chapter 4, would be the consolidation of all of the experiments discussed in this chapter into one institutional form that not only met the approval of Lazarsfeld, Marshall, and Siepmann, but constituted the core of a “4th network”.

3.6 Conclusion

Though the NAEB’s reputation and financial sources were battered during the 1930s, its practitioners paid keen attention to developments at the Office of Education, Rocky Mountain Radio Council, and related research projects. Of great interest to NAEB members in the 1930s, the Princeton Radio Research Project (PRP) began to devise reproducible methods for the measurement of the effectiveness of educational broadcasting. The PRP was so successful that it gained attention from multiple federal, national, and state sources. At the Allerton House Seminars in 1949 and 1950, PRP methods would constitute the final and most important component of the creation of a noncommercial approach to broadcasting production, content development, and distribution.

Chapter 4: The Most Successful Advocacy Experiment. The Princeton Radio Research Project and its Legacy in Public Broadcasting.

While Wisconsin and Ohio State had developed early approaches to radio research, their methods were not sound enough to be reproducible in any environment. The primary contribution of the Allerton House Seminars, according to the attendees, had been the idea that previous initiatives could be combined into a reflexive organizational structure of exchange between universities, based in academic departments. Such departments required methods for program production and audience measurement that could be reproducible in any environment. And those methods—training in broadcast production and performance, combined with media effects and political economy research—would be used to substantiate funding lines and advance political advocacy. Drawing on internal correspondence and previously confidential reports, this chapter argues that the origin of the field of communication research, often credited to innovators Paul Lazarsfeld, Elihu Katz, and Wilbur Schramm, more specifically has its origins in the work undertaken by Lazarsfeld and Hadley Cantril between 1935 and 1941 as a solution to problem of educational broadcasting, carried out as part of the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Princeton Radio Research Project – a conjunction largely overlooked in histories of public broadcasting. Though Ohio State had also innovated survey research and quantitative methods, the Princeton Project devised the most reliable foundation for mass communications research and public broadcasting standards measurement. This research provided a crucial element in the continued improvement and expansion of public broadcasting in the U.S. between 1952 and 1957. It worked to convince regulators that educational broadcasting was successful because it offered results that were empirically reproducible.

Educational broadcasting had a difficult case to make after 1934. As discussed in the previous chapter, advocates not only looked to construct a curriculum sufficient for distance learning, but methods for coordination and dissemination of content to an educational community. As a first step this required general competency in the management of radio station production and staff. The Rocky Mountain Radio Council project had shown that interstate coordination was possible. And media reformers who had been advocates previous to 1934 were convinced that system building in accordance with FCC directives was a more effective method than resistance to policy. But a central problem acknowledged by both advocates and detractors remained. While great strides were taken to form an institutional framework that resembled commercial broadcasting, no reliable techniques existed to gauge if this new educational production was indeed educational.

This had led Wisconsin and Ohio State to devise methods to study the quality of execution of their radio curricula. Their techniques had been moderately successful, but only specifically applied to improving their *own* station broadcasts. In addition to questions about how content might be adjusted to address intended audiences, fundamental questions about the role of broadcasting persisted, such as: What is an audience? What types of audiences are listening to radio? How do demographic differences shift interpretation of educational information? And how might findings be described in a persuasive way to the FCC? How could a methodological system be devised to reliably duplicate conclusions in different control studies? For the media reform movement to succeed, these questions needed to be addressed.

This chapter looks at four developments of the early history of communications research, under the framing that each development was intended as a solution to the educational broadcasting problems stated above and in the previous chapter. First, this chapter examines how research was shaped by the advocacy project of the FREC. The Committee of Six was comprised of both educators and networks, and consequently it was Committee of Six member Hadley Cantril who took over crucial Project 15 as research head, as described in Chapter 1. Directed by the FCC's stipulations that educators develop techniques for improvement of the effectiveness of educational broadcasting, Cantril and his chosen staff of Frank Stanton from CBS and Paul Lazarsfeld (at that time of Newark University) sought to innovate the first methods for understanding how and why broadcasting was effective upon opinion and reception under the aegis of the Princeton Radio Research Project (PRP).

Second, this chapter looks at the early methodological breakthroughs of "Project 15". Utilizing a combination of social psychological research and network survey methodology, techniques of demographic research were standardized by Frank Stanton, and applied to larger methodological directives related to civic use of technology by Lazarsfeld. Devising categories of audience, aesthetics, and short-gains methods revealed a complex composition of psychological influence from technology. Third, this chapter examines how their discoveries might be applied to the civic paradigms required by the FREC. FREC and PRP funders remained focused on their main objective: producing research that would persuade regulators to assign frequencies for civic purposes. Quantitative research had a tendency to abstract concepts findings into apparent neutralities, but it was extremely effective at measuring phenomena. Lazarsfeld sought a

“speculative” thinker to reconcile the problem of methodological reflexivity and translation into policy terms. They turned to Theodor Adorno to articulate potential problems with the method and frame empirical research as a civic contribution. But Adorno was highly suspicious of empirical results. Another RF participant, Charles Siepmann, believed their results were immanently useful for administrative, production, and political development. The result was that RF rejected Adorno’s criticisms and embraced Siepmann’s. Despite the ground-breaking research produced by the PRP, which grew beyond the bounds of radio policy to take on larger political and social issues, the project’s Ivy League researchers largely abandoned the vexed but far from defeated cause of educational broadcasting research by the early 1940s, and this chapter concludes with Lazarsfeld’s final thoughts about educational broadcasting.

4.1 “Principles of Outstanding Differences:” From “Project 15” to the Princeton Radio Project

FREC’s invitation of Rockefeller Foundation president Raymond D. Fosdick to attend the 1935 conference discussed in Chapter 1 successfully enlisted the Rockefeller Foundation’s interest in funding FREC projects. As discussed in chapter 2, in early 1936 FREC had developed sixteen separate projects it hoped to finance, speculating a total need of \$168,620 to undertake a comprehensive study of the possibilities for educational broadcasting before “definite remedial steps could be taken or even suggested”, and they desperately needed a steady funding line.⁴¹⁴ The projects worked under two main headings: 1) the general question of how cooperation between educators and broadcasters could be furthered, and 2) the laying of the groundwork for future developments in

⁴¹⁴ John Studebaker, Radio in the Service of Education. December 10, 1936 speech. RAC, Box 254, Folder 3034.

educational broadcasting theory and practice. The main concern of these initiatives was how to meet the requirements of legislation when educators knew “little of the listener interests on which broadcasting has to build”.⁴¹⁵ The sixteen projects agreed upon by RF and FREC were placed under the oversight of an appointed cooperative “Committee of Six”, discussed in chapter 1.

The Committee of Six was specifically interested in Proposal 15, regarding the question of how to determine what educational broadcasting *was*, as well as what kinds of programs could be considered educational. What distinction, Proposal 15 asked, could be made between education, information, and propaganda?⁴¹⁶ The project, aimed to “discover the effect of radio broadcasts upon the acquiring of information, of changing the attitudes and the modification of conduct of children and youth”.⁴¹⁷ In a September 1, 1936 meeting at the Baker Library, the project was discussed by Hadley Cantril, Paul Lazarsfeld, and a staff of FCC secretaries, network employees, and educational researchers. The committee marveled that no widespread study had yet been conducted on radio’s influence on public opinion, and that no research precedent for such a study yet existed. Participants concluded that their task would be to combine the relatively new methods of studying “basic psychological and social factors involved in radio broadcasting as they affected children and youth” with “specific and observable effects of radio to be properly interpreted”.⁴¹⁸ Their goal would be to devise a reliable method for measuring how audiences actually used radio. In contrast to the limited demographic research used by commercial broadcasters to study an “average” audience, the committee

⁴¹⁵ *ibid*

⁴¹⁶ Report of the Committee of Six, March 12, 1937. RAC, Box 332, Folder 3951.

⁴¹⁷ Inter-Office Report of Federal Radio Education Committee, January 12, 1937. RF, Box 332, Folder 3952

⁴¹⁸ *ibid*

set out to understand the different demographic *situations* that affected the ways in which radio was received, such as age, sex, personality, social and economic status, and general cultural background.⁴¹⁹

The final formulation of the project proposed to use these demographic characteristics to study multiple categories of experience affected by radio, such as listening habits and preferences, information acquired, attitudes, conduct, tastes and skills, language and diction, fantasy and dream life, and auditory habits.⁴²⁰ The committee rewrote Proposal 15's initial language to include a focus on "certain questions of basic interest to both educators and broadcasters" through "systematic investigation".⁴²¹ In the official description of the project, titled the *Study of Radio Influence Upon Children and Adults* for the FREC, Cantril wrote that the project would discover how radio affected patterns of information acquisition, attitude change, and the modification of conduct

For these purposes Cantril recruited scholars from multiple disciplines including psychology, sociology, and education. The original team was comprised of Cantril, Edgar Dale of the Payne Fund, and the well-known sociologist Robert Lynd, with Cantril as appointed chairman.⁴²² Levering Tyson of the NACRE, head of the Committee of Six, had worked with RF previously and was instrumental in obtaining funds for the project (as discussed in chapter 2). Due to the hybrid commercial/educational interests of the committee, it was agreed that commercial broadcasting research methodologies would be a useful complement to the development of academic methodologies. Both educators and

⁴¹⁹ John Studebaker, "Report of Progress of Federal Radio Education Committee", Address given at Second National Conference on Educational Broadcasting, November 30, 1937. RF, Box 359, Folder 3705.

⁴²⁰ Hadley Cantril on Project 15, October 15, 1936. RF, Box 359, Folder 3706.

⁴²¹ "Project I (Old Project No. 15)", Internal RF Report, March 12, 1937. RF, Box 332, Folder 3951

⁴²² "The Work of the Federal Radio Education Committee", undated 1936. RAC, Box 332, Folder 3952.

commercial broadcasters had been working on a new “survey” method of research that quantified results into categories.⁴²³ And the Committee of Six determined that such an approach would establish valuable middle ground between these interests. .Cantril recruited Paul Lazarsfeld, a FREC subcommittee member, and Frank Stanton of CBS, a recent graduate of Ohio State’s educational technology research program, to refine quantification as a repeatable method for all broadcasting interests, especially those at universities who planned to continue with radio experimentation.

In May 1937, John Marshall brought a proposal before the Rockefeller Foundation’s General Education Board requesting RF support for “Project 1 (formerly Project 15)” which he now named the Princeton Radio Research Project (PRP).⁴²⁴ In the context of humanities education and the conditions offered by FREC for broadcasting underwriting, Marshall noted that the new project would address fundamental questions such as “what is radio’s effectiveness in cultural diffusion” and “what is radio’s public?”. The PRP, Marshall wrote, was the sole group concerned with the unique characteristics of a radio public, and they had already made progress by dividing their project into sub-categories specific to radio such as who listens, where listening took place, when listening took place, and what is listened to. This information could be applied to answer why and how people used radio and to account for the effects of those receptive decisions.

The PRP proposed to established techniques to determine the unique psychological and social characteristics of radio so it could be used in the best interests of the people. In contrast to the weaknesses of previous research, the PRP planned to devise

⁴²³ Inter-Office Correspondence, Studebaker Office, FREC. Jan. 12, 1937. RAC, Box 332, Folder 3952.

⁴²⁴ John Marshall, letter to Rockefeller Foundation Trustees, May 24, 1937. RF, Box 271, Folder 3234.

methods that would enable it to understand the tastes of listeners along with their habits. Such information would be of use to educators, but also to commercial interests. “Though the Project is to be administered and carried through by the Princeton School of Public Affairs, it is an integral part of a plan of a larger program of research which will be sponsored by the Federal Radio Education Committee”.⁴²⁵ If such information became reproducible by any research body, educational content in general could be improved. The GEB committee unanimously agreed that the problem of educational broadcasting was of interest to both educators and broadcasters, and that a well coordinated research project conducted with trained investigators would extremely valuable in understanding how, when, and why radio was “effective”.⁴²⁶ Marshall was given the green light to underwrite the establishment of a wide reaching project with an indeterminate amount of time for an outcome.

The project was organized as a composite commercial/educational approach to audience characteristics. In a 1936 letter Hadley Cantril remained surprised at the complete lack of previous research to pull from for the project. On this topic, he wrote that educational broadcasters had, until the Communications Act, “too often felt that the sole remedy for an improved use of radio was to give educators more time on air”.⁴²⁷ Universities had ironically invested little research into educational broadcasting practice and assumed educational broadcasting’s civic *intention* and educational extension services to be sufficient enough of a public contribution. However, Cantril was motivated that a synthesis of methods into palpable proof on behalf of civic initiatives was a potential empirical contribution. Such a method would not only increase educational

⁴²⁵ *ibid*

⁴²⁶ *ibid*

⁴²⁷ John Marshal, “First impressions from reading projects”, Feb. 8, 1937. RAC, Box 271, Folder 3234.

broadcasting's reach but also help to actualize the progressive-era's project of using science and reason for social amelioration.

Project No. 15 had been retitled Project I, and then Princeton Radio Research Project. Researchers set out to try to quantify radio's influence upon attitudes, conduct, taste, language, "fantasy", and auditory habits⁴²⁸ and to understand the context in which information was received, the perspectives of those who received information, and how the basic formal characteristics of programs (voice, volume, speed, sound effects, music) were constructed for each audience. Cantril proposed a single centralized project that would study each audience variable, measured information collected by "broadcasting and advertising agencies", "questionnaires and case studies", and "experimental method involving segregated and controlled groups".⁴²⁹ A formulated statement by Cantril regarding project intent was circulated in May 1937. In the piece he repeated that though the PRP would be utilizing methods developed by the networks for audience demographics, the PRP was directed "in principle" to "broadcasting as an instrument of public service".⁴³⁰ The best way to promote civic broadcasting, which had no inherent line of finance, would be to substantiate its worth for future grants through appraisal of the effects of radio upon democratic thought and action. Lamenting that "all of the industry's activities" were governed by commercial considerations, Cantril argued that the industry had only been concerned with the listener as a "prospective purchaser". The examination of audiences as consumers had led to a limited knowledge of listener

⁴²⁸ Hadley Cantril, "Work Accomplished", March 7, 1939. RAC, Box 271, Folder 3240.

⁴²⁹ Hadley Cantril, "Revised Prospectus of Original Project II in the Report of the Sub-Committee on Conflicts and Cooperation, RAC, Box 359, Folder 3706.

⁴³⁰ Hadley Cantril, Internal note, May 1937. RAC, Box 271, Folder 3234.

characteristics. This project would provide a more holistic view of how information is received by audiences.

Cantril had held concerns over the limited demographic information produced by commercial broadcasters for some time. As early December 1936, in a letter John Marshall he had argued that “if radio in the United States is to develop as a democratic instrument serving the best interests of the people, it is essential that an objective analysis be made of what these instruments are and how unique psychological and social characteristics of radio may be devoted to them”. Such an analysis would require studies of “age, sex, vocational, and class differences”.⁴³¹ But “techniques for collecting these data have not been developed to any great extent”. To achieve the ultimate aims desired in this study, new methods would have to be devised and tested to procure the answers to the research problem at hand. The task of the project would be to delineate the relationship between “techniques and problems”, approached from an admittedly “educational bias” formulated within “the framework of the FREC”.⁴³² “Final technique” would progress on step-by-step basis.

The core of the project’s future discoveries, Cantril initially believed, would be the application of working psychological diagnoses into empirical evidence about listener cognition of radio information. Educational broadcasting presented a uniquely effective opportunity for such experimentation because of its wide interest, available swath of researchers, and the universal opinion that “its present effectiveness” was not “nearly as

⁴³¹ *ibid*

⁴³² Princeton Radio Project document prepared by Lazarsfeld, November 7, 1938. RAC, Box 271, Folder 3236.

great as it should be”.⁴³³ Noncommercial broadcasters, Cantril argued, too often blamed commercial interests, especially the powerful networks, for their current state of affairs, pointing out that the time allotted to educational programs in network schedules tended to be either minimal or at the most undesirable times. But in fact the problem was that there was a lack of understanding about how to “properly use the time already allowed since they did not understand the art of showmanship”.⁴³⁴ The tendency for educational broadcasters to refuse any compromise about gains made by commercial broadcasters had put them in a position in which they were “unwilling to profit” from the experience of the networks. Others had perhaps understood shortcomings in method but did not feel they could compete with the networks for audiences, so they had tried to develop something completely different, just to find that they did not have funds for experimentation and production.

Missing from the development of an alternate usage of media, Cantril had concluded, was a grappling with how “psychological variables unknown to them”, might reveal workable differences in method.⁴³⁵ He believed that “both educators and professional broadcasters” needed assistance from psychologists to answer basic questions about how to utilize the medium for specific purposes. Hence if the application of “important psychological problems basic to educational broadcasting in the elementary schools” could be conducted with the “cooperation of professional broadcasters via experiments in kindergarten through elementary school listeners among school

⁴³³ Hadley Cantril, “Radio in the Elementary School, A Psychological Analysis and Interpretation”, May 15, 1936. RF, Box 271, Folder 3233.

⁴³⁴ *ibid*

⁴³⁵ *ibid*

populations in multiple settings”, real progress regarding effective qualities of education by radio could be made in a short period of time.

In fact, Cantril believed, educators had been confronted with many urgent problems that could easily be fixed by methods in psychology. “Through a psychological classification according to the basic issues involved, however, it will undoubtedly be possible to prepare a shorter and more manageable list of topics at the heart of educational broadcasting.”⁴³⁶ Among psychological questions about audiences that could quickly be illustrated, Cantril noted an absence of work on content preferences at different age levels, the number of ideas introduced per program, the spectrum between abstract and factual information, the relationship between fantasy and imagery in appreciation, as well as logistical questions such as sampling size and learning effects. Through the application of hundreds of broadcast reception groups, data could be obtained among psychological variables for program builders, scriptwriters, and school systems. The application of surveys and questionnaires would summarize general data in that direction and make way toward solving practical problems and mental processes of children. And an educational broadcasting consortium could put such information into use in a trial and error fashion.⁴³⁷

Cantril’s hypothesis was presented to Marshall in a document titled “A Preliminary Study to Devise a Method of Ascertaining the Effectiveness and the Effects of Radio programs of a Broad Cultural Nature” in 1936. In the document Cantril argued that while commercial radio programs had already reached an advanced stage of development, programs of a cultural nature had little information for how to evaluate

⁴³⁶ *ibid*

⁴³⁷ *ibid*

audience response. Commercial sponsors had been concerned with sales, and quantitative statements of value of sales promotion, but beyond that limited purview little had been done to guide broadcasters toward rigorous social science about radio “as a social force”.⁴³⁸ The most inexplicable omission regarding radio had been the lack of knowledge regarding why programs were liked or disliked, and consequently why opinions had formed around such conditions of reception. Cantril hoped that a selection of programs which could be carefully analyzed by research directors, assistants, and broadcasters would look at by “highly trained investigators” via mail ballot techniques. And a basic working knowledge of radio as a social object would lead to discipline-building in the studies of public policy and technology.⁴³⁹

Yet the study was in a great position to pull upon a wealth of knowledge produced by the industry between roughly 1927 and 1934. Survey information had already been derived about audience characteristics from 32,000 personal interviews, and the networks had identified divisions of listeners in terms of income, size of city, and time zones.⁴⁴⁰ But they had not yet examined core questions such as age, sex, education, occupation, location, or cultural background. The industry had looked at “when listening takes place” via telephone inquiries by which sampling the size of an audience every half hour was accompanied by information related to the above stated metrics. This information was available from the Croxley Survey and the Clark Hooper firms.⁴⁴¹ And CBS had licensed

⁴³⁸ Hadley Cantril, “A Preliminary Study to Devise a Method for Ascertaining the Effectiveness and the Effects of Radio Programs of a Broad Cultural Nature”, Undated, 1936. RF, Box 271, Folder 3233.

⁴³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁴⁰ Unsigned, but likely Frank Stanton, Hadley Cantril, or Paul Lazarsfeld “What the Industry Knows”, Internal Document, April 26, 1937. RF, Box 271, Folder 3234

⁴⁴¹ *ibid*

Starch Surveys to look at preliminary information on age and sex, but only for 2500 surveys conducted across the country.⁴⁴²

Cantril noted that commercial broadcasters had planned to begin survey subdivisions related to home listening, automobile listening, and how the contexts of listening affected “ease of reception” and “favorite program” choice. However their goal (which was incidentally already titled “effects of listening” in documents) was merely directed to “terms of sales, circulation of books, attendance at certain public events”.⁴⁴³ Commercial broadcasters had only applied survey method to consumer habits. The same information, Cantril believed, could be applied to schools, listening groups, and public conveyances. In combination with psychological testing, a comprehensive knowledge of groups, subgroups, and preferences, might reveal “ambitions, attitudes, repressions, capacities, temperament, responsibilities, and overcoming environmental handicaps/limitations for social participation”.⁴⁴⁴

The survey method, combined with psychological surveys, would reveal much of the same information psychologists had begun collecting about patients, but in the context of radio listenership and technological attunement. Further, the banality of the commercial effects paradigm, Cantril wrote, could be well applied to “attitudes, conduct, information, and new interests and desires”.⁴⁴⁵ In what was a defining breakthrough, Cantril realized that not only was there overlap between psychological research and network survey research, individuals responded similarly to radio as they did to their social and interpersonal environments. Calculated adjustments to the “environment” of

⁴⁴² *ibid*

⁴⁴³ Hadley Cantril, “A Preliminary Study to Devise a Method for Ascertaining the Effectiveness and the Effects of Radio Programs of a Broad Cultural Nature”, *ibid*

⁴⁴⁴ “What the Industry Knows”, *ibid*

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid*x

radio would reveal psychological characteristics with measurable reproduction, similar to quantitative psychology.⁴⁴⁶

In a 1937 document titled “Amplified Description of Above Project”, Cantril wrote that coordinating an inventory of available resources toward the creation of a national network of educational broadcasting research required adequate broadcasting facilities and satisfactory assurance of stable time allotments for complete educational series that could be monitored. A radio series funded by the FREC’s “Project II” would be produced by “capable script writers” to design and prepare broadcasts, with talent perhaps from the networks.⁴⁴⁷ Such an endeavor would be widespread and rely upon advance agreement by school superintendents, teachers and classrooms, and weekly attention by students to an entire run of a series, supplemented by a set of instructions and protocols followed by classrooms. This would assure sufficient listening pupils to make “demonstration effective and convincing”, and control groups could pursue the same course of study as experimental groups for effective follow-up work by researchers. Cooperating agencies based in state, city, or university stations would broadcast 12 weekly thirty-minute broadcasts on 7th grade geography. The production of one program distributed over many stations would keep production costs lower, and such a series would begin with a reliably empirical subject with assuredly repeatable and testable data. However, his initial proposal was too difficult to institute. A federal-sized experiment that featured a single research center was too presented too complex a task to successfully carry out. But Cantril’s “conviction” was that a thorough analysis of techniques and later applications to broad population groups would “be of incalculable value to the

⁴⁴⁶ Hadley Cantril, “Radio”, May 1937, RF Box 271, Folder 3233.

⁴⁴⁷ FREC Report, “Revised Prospectus of Original Project II in the Report of the Sub-Committee on Conflicts and Coordination”, undated but probably 1936. RF, Box 332, Folder 3951.

educational and commercial broadcasters, and the general welfare of radio in this country”.⁴⁴⁸

Cantril's choice of Frank Stanton and Paul Lazarsfeld to lead the project hence make sense in this context. Frank Stanton of CBS had experience in both the public and private sectors of radio research. He had received a Ph.D. from Ohio State under prominent quantitative researcher FH Lumley and worked in CBS Market Research. Cantril reported that “(Stanton) knew practically all of the research men in the large companies and I believe Stanton is without doubt the best man in the field”.⁴⁴⁹ Though he would have to make a sacrifice in salary, Stanton remained interested in educational broadcasting and was intrigued to assist with further methodological innovations. Paul Lazarsfeld was brought on to the project to evaluate findings, conduct tests, and adjudicate about the value of data.

While Lazarsfeld is deservedly remembered as the founder of a dominant form of empirical research, he entered into audience research with specific civic ambitions. He was the first educational researcher to relate civic questions to aesthetic content. He wrote upon joining the project that he was concerned that radio had been recognized mainly as a tool of entertainment. But could it be, Lazarsfeld wrote, that “entertainment covers different kinds of dynamic structure?”⁴⁵⁰ He hoped to aid Cantril in developing techniques to account for program successes. Why were certain voices so important to audiences? How would a research group go about studying such facts? Lazarsfeld's interest was piqued by Cantril's combination of survey methods with empirical psychology. These techniques of measurement opened up the possibility to focus on

⁴⁴⁸ Hadley Cantril to John Marshall, December 31, 1936. Box 271, Folder, 3233.

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁰ *ibid*

“direct associations” instead of matching “the right program with an advertised commodity”.⁴⁵¹ Lazarsfeld and Stanton both believed that Cantril’s research might be able to “find a technique for an actual problem”.

4.2 Frank Stanton’s Streamlining of Listener Research Techniques

The first breakthrough of the project was not speculative or methodological, but the innovation and formalization of research categories. An inexplicably uncovered component of broadcasting history is Frank Stanton’s place in the development of media research. Later president of CBS, Stanton almost single-handedly outlined the structure of broadcasting survey research, which he later applied to program development at CBS. As Associate Director of the project, between 1937 and 1939 Stanton innovated core categories for reproducible interviews among different demographic types. Stanton described his work as the study of “primary characteristics” of available existing information. By calling upon 8-9 years of data accumulated by the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting organization, a commercial survey company, Stanton was able to standardize demographic categories and approaches to inquiry within those categories. A small amount was already known about audiences including how class, age, and sex affected buying. But comparative and competitive effects of simultaneous broadcasts were not known, nor had any method been innovated to understand how and why audiences developed preferences for and relationships to certain kinds of information.⁴⁵²

Under Stanton’s supervision broadcasting data accumulation became reproducible in diverse markets in just two years. In his confidential “Listener Research Techniques” report submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation in 1938, Stanton outlined the core

⁴⁵¹ *ibid*

⁴⁵² Frank Stanton, “Listener Research Techniques (Confidential)”, November 1938, Revised July 1939. RF, Box 271, Folder 3241.

methods of audience analysis. The audiences was subdivided into six categories: potential audience, available audience, daily available audience, station audience, daily station audience, and program audience. Based upon these categories, a subdivision of intended data was devised. The size of the audience needed to be correlated to its composition in socio-economic status, education, sex, age, and occupation, and then assessed within a “distribution” of geography. Once these compositions were determined it was not enough to state just that a demographic group had listened to a radio show, but that the researcher understood which activities the audience had conducted while “receiver is in operation”. Questions of attentiveness, co-listening, and location in proximity of a house or public space were addressed for the first time. Such demographic information was accrued through mail, telephone, personal contact, questionnaires, automatic recording devices, panel techniques, and “special” methods.

Stanton found that audiences did not always answer surveys upon prompting, so initially he devised several methods of gaining audience response, the first being “mail communications”. The most obvious method was “request mail” to listeners, much as Arbitron still conducts. But the inclusion of incentives, Stanton found, dramatically increased listener support for projects, via tickets for live broadcasts, information about artists or sponsors, descriptions of impending changes to program content, or samples of items related to broadcasts. Calling upon existing commercial mail survey techniques, a picture began to unfold regarding the relative size of different audiences, including the composition of their characteristics such as the paper they used in their letters, their use of grammar, how they signed letters, etc. This information was utilized to infer economic status, educational level, and sex in case listeners did not include such information.

Responses to solicitations were also used to infer “activities” of listeners such as use of advertised products, regularity of listening, and opinions and reactions to broadcasts.

Stanton noted that there were many advantages to mail-based survey information including that it was inexpensive, was intended to directly address a specific station or program, and was prodigious in number of responses. However, this type of mail survey research also had deficiencies, such as lack of researcher control, the inability of illiterate audience members (of which there were many) to participate, and lack of control over quality of information disclosed. Absolute empirical evidence, so crucial to curricular testing, was unobtainable by this method. Some mail was also erroneously sent to advertisers or to the wrong shows, and predictably, speculations about audience characteristics such as economic status were inconsistent at best. Yet this method persisted and was adjusted for shifts in show, region, intended audience, and advertising interests thereon after.

In part innovated by George Gallup, who briefly consulted with the PRP in 1936, Stanton also formalized empirical research into telephone interviews.⁴⁵³ The PRP classified two methods of phone research: incoming and outgoing calls. Incoming calls, or calls solicited over the radio or by mail that encouraged listeners to “call in,” were classified under the same methods as “mail response”, and were concerned with questions such as relative size of the audience. But primarily advantageous to phone research was its capacity to gauge immediate opinions of listeners. A solicitation to call after a program or newscast was inexpensive, convenient for researchers, and so successful at garnering opinion that it’s still utilized by talent shows today. However, again, phone sampling from incoming calls relied upon a limited demographic category,

⁴⁵³ Cantril, May 11 1937 letter, *ibid*

urban middle-class audiences who tended to be responsive, and offered no information about listeners in agrarian regions, nor did many stations outside of urban environments have sufficient equipment to conduct such research. So the methods turned to outgoing calls – calls made by the research organization to a listener at home -- as a primary approach. The advantage of such a form of sampling is that geographic regions were especially and consistently covered by this form of investigation, and questioning could remain extremely standardized and quantified in a short time. An unexpected outcome of this form of research was also that many receivers seemed to enjoy talking on the phone about their perception to broadcasts, though if asked too many questions they were prone to “rebel if over-interviewed”.⁴⁵⁴ Stanton divided outgoing calls into four categories: coincidental surveys, recall surveys, immediate recall surveys, and a combination of these categories.

Coincidental surveys, which were developed in their earliest form by early program ratings analyst C.E. Hooper, asked recipients which station their radio was tuned to at the moment, what show they were listening to, whether they could identify the sponsor, and other elements of informational recall based on their immediately present experience. Though the coincidental technique focused mostly on small amounts of information related to specific questions, it was still successful for gaining quick statistical information. Recall surveys, developed by Hooper’s rival, the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting or CAB, asked recipients of phone surveys what they could remember about their past radio listening. Such recall surveys were even more basic than coincidentals, and the information could be translated into trends of listening over the course of a day since it only required partial information. Heavily based upon an

⁴⁵⁴ Stanton report, *ibid*

audience's "memory factor", the CAB had concluded that many components of information were lost over the course of a day and even over the course of a single program, but that the information that remained across multiple listeners of different demographics could indeed indicate what was successful about program content and intended message.⁴⁵⁵

To streamline these approaches and to address related problems, the PRP settled on "personal contact" surveys as a primary mode of investigation.⁴⁵⁶ As a hybrid of coincidental and recall techniques, that used the demographic categories mentioned above, Stanton found that there was a great deal more control by the investigator over the tenor of information received. And most crucially, there was "advantage" to an interpersonal hybrid approach that could standardize results followed by thorough and accurate observations. A personal approach obviously permitted to the interviewer to clear up misunderstandings as well as offering respondents sufficient time to consider questions. While more costly, results more closely corresponded to the goals of the FREC project.⁴⁵⁷

The influence of social psychology immediately began to pay unexpected dividends. The intimacy and time provided by personal interviews led Stanton to devise "aided recall surveys", in which respondents were shown or told a list of programs and asked which ones they had heard.⁴⁵⁸ This new method, which he reported "eliminated memory loss to a large extent" was immensely successful in securing information about multiple programs, including details respondents may had forgotten until prompting. And

⁴⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid*

he fascinatingly found that much information heard during broadcasts was not forgotten, but quietly persuaded audiences in unconscious ways. “Recognition or aided recall is the psychological process which underlies much consumer buying in response to advertising.” Once consistency of technique was streamlined for personal interviews, Stanton began to invite additional participants for “panel technique”, basically simultaneous personal interviews, which were also sometimes conducted via telephone or mail. Several kinds of panel techniques were developed, including predictably “sales response” to programs based upon how content overtly or implicitly promoted a product, but also special responses to pleas, polling of radio editors, theater attendances, studio audience observations, and restaurant patrons.

4.3 “Effects Upon What?”: Paul Lazarsfeld and the Early Development of “Informed Hunches” and the “Media Effects” Paradigm

Panel techniques produced a wealth of knowledge and information for understanding educational radio audiences. Stanton remained primarily interested in method, and accomplished a significant task by streamlining research techniques. Paul Lazarsfeld was similarly retained for the project with the approval of the FCC to “formulate factual data”.⁴⁵⁹ His original charge was to focus on a larger, political economy-related question: in what ways does newspaper ownership of radio stations work or not in the public interest?⁴⁶⁰ But as mentioned above Lazarsfeld was interested in Cantril’s civic investments “for the value of research based on a concept of radio as a public service”. Unlike Stanton, Lazarsfeld was convinced that the “technical aspect alone” would not be enough to organize systematically and plan for actual knowledge.

⁴⁵⁹ Application for more funds (7th issued grant application, 1941), in project description history. RF, Box 222, Folder 2664.

⁴⁶⁰ Application for renewal of PRP, September, 1941. RAC, Box 273, Folder 3253.

Questions of public interest would not be exhausted no matter how thorough panel technique became, Lazarsfeld argued, and the PRP had an opportunity to synthesize multiple methods and apply them to multiple social groups. Besides its potential expansion of audience research, it was clear to Lazarsfeld that information carried “cultural effects”.⁴⁶¹

He innovated a system in which experimental and control groups listened to and responded to how information was framed, which was then correlated with trends in social reception. “It would be futile to measure isolated radio programs for their effectiveness”, he wrote, unless such information was combined with broadcasting as a whole to “form a chain of influences varying in their strength at different periods of an individual’s life”.⁴⁶² The basic objective of the project, Lazarsfeld noted in 1939, had been to provide general information of a psychological character for the use of educational broadcasters, especially information about audience reception and what could be done to improve educational broadcasting so that it could achieve its ends “more effectively and economically”.⁴⁶³

The hiring of Lazarsfeld, according to RF underwriter John Marshall, was a major step forward for empirical research, and Marshall noted that his hiring was the first time that an “impartial investigator for facts” had been sought by regulators regarding future deliberations.⁴⁶⁴ The PRP began to gauge which radio programs were popular with pre-selected interest groups. They had participants rate programs and then provide data on

⁴⁶¹ Paul Lazarsfeld to Cantril and Stanton, copied to Marshall, Memorandum, “From Technical to Social Knowledge”, January 15, 1938. RF, Box 222, Folder 2660.

⁴⁶² *ibid*

⁴⁶³ Paul Lazarsfeld, “Princeton Radio Research Project, Outline of Presentation”, found in a series of 1939 letters to John Marshall on project development. RF, Box 271, Folder 3237.

⁴⁶⁴ 1941 Application for Renewal, *ibid*

how they received program content.⁴⁶⁵ The survey was repeated in both control and experimental groups, followed by a selection of the top 25% and bottom 25% of the experimental group, who would be subject to a retest. Data would be evaluated and programs would be edited and adjusted accordingly, and the test would be re-administered. Consequent research in the early phases of the project looked at “who listens and why” as necessary groundwork for a later study on how radio affects its listeners. By the end of the initial period of evaluation, over 90 studies had been undertaken, of which 45 were primarily methodological and directed toward the development of Cantril’s “social psychology” of radio. The PRP collected information on various group reactions to content, and then demarcated *how* information was received, and what groups had “accepted” of the information presented.

Lazarsfeld in specific was responsible for the speculative work of choosing how “psychological” groupings were used to standardize evaluation. Stanton remained primarily responsible for streamlining the reliability of statistical analysis. The value of their methodological gains was immediately apparent. Techniques featuring the combination of psychological and commercial radio research quickly revealed trends in audience preference and influence upon opinion. Lazarsfeld added methods for how to delimit goals per survey measurement to the overall project methodology. To do so, he divided intended goals from standard investigative methods. Instead of relying only upon questions of “what” audiences listened to, or “what” audiences thought about programs, Lazarsfeld innovated methods to “study who listens to what, why, and with what

⁴⁶⁵ “Project I (Old Project No. 15)”, undated, 1937, RAC, Box 271, Folder 3234.

effect”.⁴⁶⁶ And to safeguard openness to adjustment in method, the PRP wrote that “we shall require principles according to which this restriction can be made; the theoretical and conceptual analysis of the listener problems confronting radio today was, therefore, one definite part of their activities”.⁴⁶⁷ The goal of the project would remain the refinement of “existing techniques and the development of new ones”.⁴⁶⁸

In “On the Use of Elaborate Personal Interviews For the Princeton Radio Research Project”, Lazarsfeld wrote that, prior to the PRP’s work, statistical procedures had already been recognized as valid social research, innovated by the University of Chicago and by the Vienna Circle. But the PRP, “directed by psychologists” was the first to deal with data as systematically as possible, as a self-reflective development of “general principles” that guaranteed that results reoccur.⁴⁶⁹ The major component of this new form of research began with detailed interviews regarding how audiences understood the visual imagery of radio dramas, which emotions were elicited by listening to music, and individual differences regarding these questions. The PRP was not as interested in profiling psychological types, as “such psychological descriptions cannot lead to generalizations”.⁴⁷⁰ Instead, Lazarsfeld imagined the project as contributing to a variable and adjustable account of the phenomena of active listening and learning.

In Vienna, Lazarsfeld wrote, they had already shown that when attempting to tie pictures to voices through rational deduction or intuition, intuition was often just as successful. He had been struck that the basic “effect” of *intuitive* reception had

⁴⁶⁶ Document by PRP members, “Research in Mass Communication for Private Circulation Only”, July 1940, RF, Box 271, Folder 3243.

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁶⁹ Paul Lazarsfeld, “On the Use of Elaborate Personal Interviews For the Princeton Radio Research Project”, August, 1936, RF, Box 271, Folder 3234.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid*

sometimes been more accurate than forcing agents to make empirical judgments. And this insight sat with him as an important reminder that mere quantified evidence did not reveal the entirety of a phenomenon. To only seek to answer questions such as “why people listen” by devising a rigid correlate between intent, personality, and reception, was a flawed approach.⁴⁷¹ There needed to be several levels of analysis and criteria.

It was important that empirical research be verifiable in line with the “value of the theory” for the project as a whole: toward civic usage of technology, and the encouragement of democratic participation.⁴⁷² “Empirical research here serves much more to exemplify the theory than to discover facts. Continuous discussion and clarification of such approaches will be necessary.”⁴⁷³ The question was less one of mere typology, according to Lazarsfeld, than identifying the relationship between “features” and “influences brought to bear upon people” toward tendencies, needs, and desires.⁴⁷⁴

And this new empirical method was effective, both in terms of being able to account for trends in psychological reception of content, as well as its intended application for measuring the effectiveness of educational broadcasting. One comparison of “what was taught in the classroom” quickly revealed major “areas of neglect” in educational broadcasting.⁴⁷⁵ Expanding Cantril’s approach to a mixture of “gestalt theory and experimental psychology”, Lazarsfeld became convinced that “variation of stimulus”, or testing programs under different conditions and with different groups, would result in the most reliable information regarding cognition of curricular content.

⁴⁷¹ Paul Lazarsfeld, Letter to John Marshall May 11, 1937. RF, Box 271, Folder 3234.

⁴⁷² “On the Use of Elaborate...”, *ibid*

⁴⁷³ *ibid*

⁴⁷⁴ Paul Lazarsfeld, “Propositions Regarding the Problems and Findings of the Princeton Radio Research Project”, March 10, 1939. RF, Box 271, Folder 3240.

⁴⁷⁵ PRP Staff, “What Research Can do For Educational Broadcasting”, September 17, 1940. RAC, Box 222, Folder 2662.

He further began to collect data on “all the indicative incidental situations in which radio has been admittedly effective in the lives of various people” to analyze common features of inculcated learning, followed by a “careful catalogue” of those trends.⁴⁷⁶ And from PRP findings he devised a system of broadcast “hunches” that could be used by educators and researchers to anticipate audience reception based upon specific content cues. Educational broadcasting would have to be concerned with analysis of the “amount and kinds of listening with other activities such as reading, interest in art, and hobbies”.⁴⁷⁷

By 1939 the PRP’s fidelity to the question of the improvement of educational broadcasting had faded somewhat, with Cantril reporting that the question of educational broadcasting had led to “the directors of the project repeatedly regretted the necessity for such a procedure”.⁴⁷⁸ Their discoveries about social psychology were more significant than their charge of contributing to advocacy for noncommercial regulations. Yet the PRP was still under oversight from the FREC, and continued to investigate this question while their research expanded to broader questions of radio reception in general. The auspice of general method had already materialized at that point, noted Cantril in a report to Marshall in a section titled “Propositions on Method”. Analysis of “technical procedures”, it had been determined, were best begun with the size of an audience of a specific program, which through “panel technique” questionnaires would evaluate representative groups of listeners.⁴⁷⁹

This basic starting point for investigation, the report argued, could potentially serve as a core for the “field of radio research”, as a method for the “measurement and

⁴⁷⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷⁷ Lazarsfeld, Internal memorandum to Cantril and Stanton, Jan. 15, 1938, RAC, BOX 271, Folder 3243

⁴⁷⁸ Cantril, “Propositions Regarding the Problems and Findings of the Princeton Radio Research Project”, Internal memo, March 10, 1939. RAC, Box 271, Folder 3240.

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid*

analysis of its effects” in different areas from program content, spheres of human activities, and combinations thereof.⁴⁸⁰ But as a disciplinary foundation, a field of effects research would be better concerned with “principles of outstanding differences” of the “auditory character” of radio to disseminate content with ubiquity. The concept of “effect” was imagined as a way to analyze the “material it conveys on the listener and on social institutions”.⁴⁸¹ An effect could be technical, such as a change in a dramatic play, or indicative of immediate or long-term audience reactions that might lead to “lasting changes in habits and attitudes”. Effects, Cantril reported on behalf of the committee, were related fundamentally to conditioning factors of the program, listener, and situational conditions. And problems in each area could be studied with survey research for “levels of effect” on radio’s “own material”, decisive features of programs, preferences of different groups, conditions that might imperil the success of broadcasts, immediate and long term effects upon habits and interests, and changes in institutions and other social patterns.⁴⁸²

There were four types of “effects” discovered during this period: 1) effects upon listeners at the time that they listened in terms of preference or mood, i.e. *impressions*, 2) effects of a longer-lasting nature upon opinion, behavior, decisions, or actions, i.e. *influences*, 3) effects upon political attitudes and habits, i.e. *changes*, and 4) *institutional* effects upon a “web of social institutions or general mores going beyond effects upon individuals or specific groups of people subject directly to the radio”.⁴⁸³ These effects, Lazarsfeld argued, could not be sharply delineated from each other. Each effect could be

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁴⁸¹ *ibid*, section titled “Propositions on the conception of ‘EFFECT’”

⁴⁸² *ibid*

⁴⁸³ *ibid*

identified in relation to program features, single or series studies, types of broadcasts, policies, and the “existence of radio”.⁴⁸⁴ And the “existence of radio” was a difficult conceptual question that Geoffrey Gorer believed could be clarified in terms of “social groups defined by the high number of their common characteristics”, and “the reactions, especially the common reactions, of individuals to known situations”.⁴⁸⁵

Effects research, Lazarsfeld wrote in 1940, was ultimately different from audience research because effects research dealt with programs provided, and audience research dealt with “conditions of listening”. When listeners were broken into categories for statistical analysis of listener characteristics, PRP researchers distinguished “gratification studies”, or the reception to adjustments in content, from “stratification studies”, or information about what people “got out of listening” to a program.⁴⁸⁶

By 1939, the PRP’s new “effects” paradigm was already hypothetically applicable to political questions. They noted in “Propositions Regarding the Problems and Findings of the Princeton Radio Research Project” that the task of its first two years was to delineate a new field of radio research through the development of method. Calling their task a “fishing expedition”, the project’s directors guided themselves by “principle of outstanding differences” in criterion of importance regarding the purpose of the “tools of communication”.⁴⁸⁷ But it was not yet clear how to translate their findings into a political approach.

This led the committee to take several steps back and seek criteria for how to understand the general effects of information, which they had defined as immediate,

⁴⁸⁴ “Summary of Discussion of Communications Seminar”, March 15, 1940. RF, Box 224, Folder 2679.

⁴⁸⁵ Geoffrey Gorer, “Confidential First Volume of the Report of the Work done by the Princeton Radio Project”, June 7, 1939. RF, Box 224, Folder 2678.

⁴⁸⁶ Paul Lazarsfeld, “Notes on Audience Research”, 1940. RF, Box 224, Folder 2678.

⁴⁸⁷ Paul Lazarsfeld to John Marshall, September 18, 1939. RF, Box 224, Folder 2674.

group, long term, and tacit outcomes. The panel technique, developed thoroughly by Stanton, convinced researchers that solicitation, selection, and psychological inclination for participation were core methodological problems that needed to be addressed before any external civic goals could be examined. Questionnaires revealed that the influence of radio upon consciousness was tied not just to radio itself but larger social influences and conditions in which listening took part.

“Effects” research was hence contingent on the “three dimensional” problem of classification according to an area in which an effect was to be studied. According to Hadley Cantril this included geographical, class, and personal context, but it also included the physical conditions and interpersonal proximity in which radio communication took place. Radio, as many noted at the time, was capable of reaching remote regions, but also fell into the danger of “centralized control” of interests and opinions. Thus any proposition of “effect” was tied to 1) the material it conveyed on the listener and social institutions, and 2) should be seen as a combination of technical artifice, personal gratifications, and the differences between other media. Further, “effects” demonstrated the relation between “conditioning factors” of a program and the characteristics of the listener in a situational context.

The future of a field of media effects research would identify “levels of effects” directed at radio’s “own material”, such as with the educational broadcasters, but also decisive features of programs as constructed for the preferences of different groups of listeners. The effects paradigm would further seek to account for how preferences of listeners were tied to and changed conditions of facilitation, including how listeners

described the effects, changes to larger institutional patterns, and most abstractly, the way in which “background information” inflected after broadcasting effects.⁴⁸⁸

This new tool of communication study carried temporal dimensions tied to “intrinsic” perspectives regarding what was happening in the present, “directive” research that might prescribe future content adjustments, and “inductive” work, such as intuition, regarding what data “means”, which necessitated some degree of informed speculation.⁴⁸⁹

Lazarsfeld made a significant point of stressing the importance of inductive radio research for the purposes of methodological clarification. “Therefore, there will always be a need for research which discloses the potentialities of radio, knowledge which then can be used for many purposes.”⁴⁹⁰ This kind of knowledge could be gained by philosophical comparison of concepts and speculative hunches regarding why effects might be described as they were. Educational broadcasting, by that point, was viewed as one “incidental study” among many, including special event studies, service studies, and “pick-up studies”, which would look at questions as posed by inquiring stations or communities. Their 1939 recommendation was that this information should be used to train special research fellows for the study of communication per se, in line with civic initiatives more expansive than noncommercial broadcasting permitted, yet core to the purpose of the development of these techniques.

The results from these initiatives were innovative, but Lazarsfeld remained concerned that effects results were ephemeral. Listening context, he wrote, always inevitably became “obsolete” as listening conditions changed. This led Lazarsfeld to post questions of his cohort: “What are the basic motivations of people, why do they act or

⁴⁸⁸ Cantril, “Propositions”, *ibid*

⁴⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid*

feel the way they do?”⁴⁹¹ Because so little information about such difficult questions was to that point unavailable, Lazarsfeld argued that additional theoretical background would need to be gained. Project methods had been directed to “actual program participation of listeners”, with the intention to identify “clustering of certain groups of programs”.⁴⁹² But Lazarsfeld worried that “problems of radio research cannot be determined with any degree of accuracy if they are divorced from the special field in which radio broadcasting is going on”.⁴⁹³ The technical elements of programs, especially in the field of music, Lazarsfeld wrote, could not easily be reduced to questions of preference. “Many isolated findings in the field of radio research get their full weight only when they are understood in the light of the total environment in which people live”.⁴⁹⁴ Cantril agreed, and followed Lazarsfeld’s document with a report on the “Inadequacy of Information as Furnished by the Newspaper, the Radio, and the Movies”, in which he argued that a closer study of their results showed that events were often presented out of context, basic “motives and mechanisms” could not be accounted for by quantification of group psychology.⁴⁹⁵

Lazarsfeld discussed these concerns with Cantril, who relayed them to John Marshall in 1939. PRP researchers had been concerned at the inception of the project whether “the techniques, developed and used in Project I, differ from the research already accomplished by the industry?”⁴⁹⁶ Since the industry had made its chief concern to “plot the size and distribution of the listening audience at various times of the day”, they had only come up with limited frames of reference that did not “embrace vital areas of

⁴⁹¹ Lazarsfeld memorandum, 1938, *ibid*

⁴⁹² Lazarsfeld memorandum, *ibid*

⁴⁹³ *ibid*

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁹⁵ Cantril, “Inadequacy of Information as Furnished by the Newspaper, the Radio, and the Movies”, Internal Memo to John Marshall, RAC, Box 273, Folder 3245.

⁴⁹⁶ Cantril to Marshall, May 11, 1937, RAC, Box 271, Folder 3233

interest to the educator and the social scientist”.⁴⁹⁷ An educator, using this methodology, would be unable to regard the “listening audience as a mass affair to be covered by a program seeking the lowest common denominator of taste or interest”.⁴⁹⁸ Lazarsfeld had similarly written in 1938 that “we have to develop techniques to test and, if possible, to prove the educability of the listener”.⁴⁹⁹ It was not enough to collect large amounts of data and “present them in a disconnected form”, Lazarsfeld posited in a letter to the Committee of Six. A theoretical framework had to be developed to guide empirical research and in interpretation of the findings. A project to derive general ideas about the possibilities and limitations of educational radio by the systematic study of “actual effects made currently with educational programs” required a researcher to “weave back and forth” between field work and conceptual generalizations.

As their research continued to reveal “unexpected facets” in 1938 not anticipated by the project’s description, a method needed to be found for conveying this information “on the present radio audience” to educators and social scientists. For one, Lazarsfeld noted a “reluctance to serious listening on lower cultural levels”, combined with a high “dependence on the radio” for news, information, and opinion.⁵⁰⁰ Radio was both a difficult medium for the passing of skills useful toward vocation and the development of critical faculties, yet unexpectedly and profoundly influential upon immediate reaction and tacit opinion. On this concern Lazarsfeld wrote in a 1941 synopsis of the early development of the PRP that “there is general interest in studies pertaining to the effects of radio. However, if one stops to consider the real meaning of this question, he will find

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹⁹ Paul Lazarsfeld, philosophy of the project to “The Committee of Six”, November 7, 1938. RAC, Box 271, Folder 3236.

⁵⁰⁰ *ibid*

that it cannot be answered without rather careful clarification of the various possible interpretations of the words ‘effects’ and ‘radio’. *Effects upon what?*⁵⁰¹ Lazarsfeld’s recommendation was that a single program effect was situated in a larger context that could be accounted for by a “semantic scheme”. This goal, in large part, had recently led to Lazarsfeld to solicit the help of critical theory toward the development of a wider analysis.

Lazarsfeld was concerned that quantitative research was “not sufficiently profound, and that empirical research was not sufficiently extensive, and thus, perhaps not adequate” for a general audience to understand the correlation between data and effect. Hence if the PRP had hoped to change “administrative policies” and encourage cooperation between civic agencies such as the FCC and Office of Education, for example, some kind of language of effect needed to be innovated and applied as a bureaucratic bridge. This led to the Lazarsfeld to solicit fellow German researchers in Frankfurt for their input on how to successfully combine concepts and empirical research evidence.

4.4 Adorno vs. Siepmann, Critique Vs. Political Economy

As Tobias⁵⁰² and Levin & von der Linn⁵⁰³ have noted, Adorno’s official task as a media researcher at the PRP was to examine the influence of music upon social psychology of listening. But document work related to the FREC project shows that underlying Adorno’s invitation to join the group was concern about the unexpectedly strong effects of radio content, as well as Lazarsfeld’s observation that quantitative

⁵⁰¹ Lazarsfeld, internal memo, May 1941, RAC, Box 222, Folder 2664.

⁵⁰² Tobias, *ibid*

⁵⁰³ Levin, Thomas, von der Linn, Michael. *Elements of a Radio Theory: Adorno and the Princeton Radio Research Project*. *Musical Quarterly*, Volume 78, No 2, 1994.

research might overly demarcate findings, and in the process separate results from their larger social context. Since the project also had to locate a way to describe its findings to the FREC and FCC in the focused context of educational broadcasting improvement, Lazarsfeld sought a researcher who could offer a strong conceptual context for the transition to policy application. With a December 1939 letter to John Marshall, Lazarsfeld sent two of Adorno's articles, highlighting the "more particular music aspects of the programs" as well as the "interpretation of its social implications".⁵⁰⁴ Adorno had been developing a model of "social critique" that Lazarsfeld felt would be of "great interest to radio educators".⁵⁰⁵ Adorno's dedication to "principles and concepts". Lazarsfeld believed, would be a "good bridge between mere theory and empirical listener research". In the letter Lazarsfeld contended that Adorno's approach to social critique could account for the larger conditions of listening specificity, as well as guided suggestions for "program policy in the field of radio music". Empirical research findings could, Lazarsfeld hoped, be supported by Adorno's "*parallel*" analysis, woven into a final text as a way to maintain a civic paradigm for results.

Adorno's papers were distributed to the wider consortium of RF researchers. His paper "On a Social Critique of Radio Music" took a particularly critical stand against an advocacy method set on incremental gains. Adorno argued that the method utilized by the PRP could be characterized as follows: "the problem of radio by studying its effects upon the population while regarding the structure of the tool, the structure of society, and the function of the tool".⁵⁰⁶ This method, based in an "if – so relation: if we do this and this,

⁵⁰⁴ Lazarsfeld to Marshall, December 27, 1939. RAC, Box 222, Folder 2661.

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁰⁶ Adorno, "On a Social Critique of Radio Music", Paper given at the Princeton Radio Research Project October 26, 1939. RAC, Box 273, Folder 3247.

we have to expect that and that result” – had merely subjected groups to different treatments to measure reactions. An approach like this, Adorno argued, was faulty because the subjection of “some groups” to different treatments to measure reactions was based in a methodological approach that selected and recommended procedures that produced effects desired by the experiment. Results of the method appeared as “something given” but only pertained to the interrelationship between aim, technique, and result, which Adorno pejoratively called “administrative technique”. Such an approach, if mastered, could be used not only to improve broadcasting content, but induction of behavior “according to the aims of the central agency”.⁵⁰⁷ The result of the project’s methods were more likely to “mold according to the idea of a skilled manipulation of the masses” than improve civic participation; indeed Lazarsfeld had recently casually called the PRP approach “benevolent administrative research”. Much of the essay describes early concepts that would later be applied to his work on Walter Damrosch and “Culture Industries”. But often not cited in this seminal piece are Adorno’s analyses of the application of empirical research to educational broadcasting practice, which occupy nearly half of the 20 page document.

In analyzing the fan mail received by land-grant Midwestern educational broadcasters, Adorno was “struck” by the apparent enthusiasm of listeners, especially the vast belief in the “highly progressive social function that this program was fulfilling”.⁵⁰⁸ Communications, he marveled, showed almost identical proclamations of “deeper feeling” about the greatness of regional cultural music. This reaction, Adorno argued, was less a response to radio as a social institution beneficial to civic participation than a

⁵⁰⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁰⁸ *ibid*

performance of appreciation of culture. Programs themselves were amateurish and planless. And fan reactions were, in actuality, a form of “standardized enthusiasm” that reflected “refuge” in the announcer’s speeches “on behalf” of culture. In fact the listener had little choice over content or production. They had the choice to enjoy or not enjoy a program; but much of broadcasting was built on the basis that a listener was provided a choice to select products for consumption, framed as a public service. Thus the utilization of empirical technique of analysis would have to take into account “the question of control and safeguard against biased imagination”.⁵⁰⁹ Merely examining an object of communication for an anticipated effect led to the danger of arbitrariness, and arbitrariness was at worst reproductive of larger inequities. How, Adorno worried, could problems like “pseudo individualization of standardized products” be applied to actual social amelioration with quantified research? The task of the project of short-gains analysis of listener research, Adorno argued, would be forced to note the “inadequacy” of typology to account for larger social structures.

Adorno’s concerns were quite similar to Lazarsfeld’s. Adorno had managed to avoid a model of analysis that relied too heavily upon pre-assumptions about audiences as had the PRP, while still pointing to a method that could continuously account for the danger of relying on contextualized empirical studies, which when presented out of context seemed to carry an inherent neutrality to civic imperatives. As Adorno’s relationship with other members of the research group deteriorated, discussed below, Lazarsfeld began to incorporate Adorno’s concerns into his own method. Instead of modeling results on how audiences responded to content among multiple variables, he

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid*

shifted his concerns to the “*situation* where public opinion is being formed”.⁵¹⁰ Radio studies had shown that broadcasting had but short-time effects on social issues, “partly because of its conservative neutrality and partly because people select elements of communications which confirm their own attitudes”. While it was safe to assume that some changes in public opinion would always come about, it was paramount to consider “who the people are who provide for social change the entrance wedge into existing social groups”.⁵¹¹ This signaled a resounding support for the original intent of the FREC project, while expanding empirical purview with at least some heed to a critical social model.

Calling his new model a “social philosophy of radio”, Lazarsfeld wrote to Marshall in 1940 that to that point researchers had neglected “a discussion of the more general social effects of radio and its position in the total context of our culture”.⁵¹² A consequent report written under Lazarsfeld’s direction in 1940 contended that it was unlikely that listeners would be able to use results of their research directly, but “certain civic and administrative groups” might find several important uses for research data, in specific the FCC, FREC, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Office of Education.⁵¹³ Research on educational broadcasting could be classified into two groups: 1) the preference of listeners and potential listeners, and 2) the effects or influences of radio on listeners. There were multiple ways to gauge such preferences including quantitative, relative, general, production, analytical, influence, stimulation, and the shifting of opinions and thinking. Broadcasters could use the PRP’s development of data on relative

⁵¹⁰ Lazarsfeld to Marshall, “Suggested Panel Study”, January 15, 1940. RAC, Box 222, Folder 2661.

⁵¹¹ *ibid*

⁵¹² Lazarsfeld to Marshall, September 23, 1940. RAC, Box 222, Folder 2661.

⁵¹³ PRP Staff, “What Research Can do For Educational Broadcasting”, September 17, 1940. RAC, Box 222, Folder 2662.

preferences to “estimate the desirability of changing educational programs to more nearly resemble preferred types”; such data would provide plenty of hints for improvement of existing educational series.⁵¹⁴

Of greater concern to Lazarsfeld was the question of the influence of educational broadcasts on the “thinking” of those who listen, which he argued was the most important of all educational aims. First-rate educational programs had significant effects on thinking of those who listened seriously, and listener research would be useful for broadcasters to make immediate use of information in designing future series. But preferences of students were inevitably coordinated to the changing of opinions and attitudes, and research was “urgently needed” to determine what types of opinions were most easily changed. Most research had been dedicated to dramatized programs, and the persuasive nature of forms of delivery, noted strongly by Adorno, needed much closer exploration. Notably missing from the letter was any recommendation for amending educational content to meet regulatory preferences. The study of the effects of media upon public opinion had taken over the original initiative, amplified by concerns about an impending war in Europe, and so, by the early 1940s, it was the relationship between media and public policy in general⁵¹⁵ that began to pre-emptively occupy PRP researchers. The cause of educational broadcasting faded into the background.

The response to Adorno’s interpretation of the PRP initiative was famously hostile. Members had deliberately attempted to create a methodology for trial and error analysis of audiences to be applied to changes in educational broadcasting production—and in the process they had innovated new and accurate techniques of encapsulating

⁵¹⁴ *ibid*

⁵¹⁵ See Gary, Brett. *Nervous Liberals*. Columbia 1999.

opinion. These methods, along with concurrent methods developed at Ohio State by Keith Tyler, would later serve as the foundation for the institutionalization broadcasting research and grant writing, and act as evidence for the civic contribution of public broadcasting in the U.S., as well as development of educational programs. Adorno had been brought to the project to translate findings into larger social application, in specific a language of necessity to convince FCC regulators that educational broadcasting had sufficient methods to meet stipulations of the *Pursuant* of the Communications Act. Geoffrey Gorer wrote to Marshall that the content of Adorno's paper was the "reaction of an extremely sensitive person to the sound of transmitted music", and at best a hypothesis about public reaction to music. He was intrigued by Adorno's conclusion, but could "see no evidence to presume" that Adorno's statements were applicable to understanding listeners, calling his work an "unproven hypothesis".⁵¹⁶ Policy analysis required evidence to present as argument, and to an audience unfamiliar with the German philosophical canon, the Critical Theory model seemed to be a hypothesis that needed correlation to actual "stimulus and responses".⁵¹⁷ Marshall agreed.

Marshall was reportedly engaged by the originality of Adorno's approach, but he responded that "the real issue is the utility of the study, and that utility must be measured by the effect which can be anticipated for it in remedying the present deficiencies of broadcasting music". Marshall was inclined to kick Adorno off the project unless his work could be translated into a statement of limitations on how to adjust research, which would necessarily have to include a positive statement of what Adorno believed could be done for music through broadcasting (his official task), phrased in such a way that could

⁵¹⁶ Geoffrey Gorer, Review of Adorno's Paper, January 2, 1940. RF, Box 271, Folder 3243.

⁵¹⁷ *ibid*

actually change practice. Marshall concluded that Adorno's work would benefit from "a period of rest and consolidation".⁵¹⁸ Adorno was "being paid by the PRP to produce results which are presumably of value within themselves", Marshall wrote, and believed that Adorno's work was a poor fit. In June 1941 Marshall "tried to explain as tactfully as possible to Adorno the administrative reasons which prevented a consideration" of further grant money. Another member of the PRP, Charles Siepmann, was similarly taken by Adorno's thought but could not figure out how to apply his conclusions. "He is, I fear, essentially an intellectual and not like Lazarsfeld either capable of or concerned to communicate at a popular level of interpretation."⁵¹⁹

In contrast to Adorno, Siepmann had conducted a series of extremely well-received analyses of educational stations in 1937, chronicled in chapter 2. And he had also worked well with the research staff, co-writing several seminal ledgers passed among RF insiders such as "Research in Mass Communication" with Gorer, Lasswell, Lazarsfeld, Lynd, Marshall, Waples, Bryson, and Slesinger. In contrast to Adorno's strong concerns about the reproductive values of empirical research, Siepmann's contribution to the "Mass Communication" document included strategies for utilizing PRP research for civic purposes. Government procedure rested upon knowledge of how to best secure consent, the document stated. Policies were assigned in interpretation of public predisposition and of public need, and effective models of communicating information about phenomena scientifically would be necessary. Wishing to "give what follows a frame of reference not vaguely theoretical", the document argued that public policy had left as much private control over channels of communication as possible, and

⁵¹⁸ John Marshall, internal memo/diary, January 5, 1940. RF, Box 222, Folder 2661.

⁵¹⁹ Siepmann to Marshall, December 12, 1940. Box 222, Folder 2661.

communications research at its inception began as a model to seek “flexible balance” between spheres of private and public enterprise.⁵²⁰ That the project had begun as a way to “secure public policy” had influenced the researchers to discover ways of securing consent for future public policies with the looming crisis in Europe. Many of the methods from which the PRP began had been developed for “private” purposes, such as market research, and then transferred to support “public” policies. The techniques had proved to be reliable, and had matured to the point where the complexity of method could be gauged to the length of observation through time. The study of mass communication was not only of interest to educational broadcasters, but governmental agencies and industrial and civic groups.⁵²¹

Besides the above report Siepmann had also written a persuasive set of recommendations to Marshall regarding the future of educational broadcasting administration and lobbying.. Siepmann had been convinced by PRP findings, and encouraged Marshall to further explore “the pathology of influence” and disclose methods by which needs were side tracked or had failed to have been met. Indeed academic research and the development of a scientific scheme preliminary to the production of information. As a long-time “practitioner”, Siepmann believed that adjustment to content was decisively empirical. Changes to broadcasting content, and for that matter to public policy, were fundamentally practical. The influence upon opinion could be tied directly to characteristics of practice, and adjustments to practice with tangible outcomes would act as a crucial first step toward affecting public opinion. As Pickard has shown, Siepmann was later retained by RF and briefly taught at Harvard,

⁵²⁰ “Research in Mass Communication”, *ibid*

⁵²¹ *ibid*

worked with the government during WWII, and was commissioned to write the Blue Book, later to build NYU's communication program. His practical approach to working with academic researchers to improve the appeal of public service programming, and his recommendations for utilizing empirical justification to change what he viewed to be practical empirical problems, became the chosen method of political advocacy on behalf of educational broadcasting. Indeed the Blue Book's analysis of the failings of commercial broadcasting was profoundly influential upon the FCC's decision to (finally) assign special frequencies to educators in 1952.

A final 1941 PRP report on educational broadcasting suggested that if educators were to consolidate their case for approval by the FCC, they would have to organize efficiently and in measurable ways 1) to be able to identify when a problem had occurred at some point in broadcasting conceptualization, production, or reception, and 2) prove with verifiable data that educational broadcasting was in fact educational. The report was well-received, but not utilized in practice by educational broadcasters until the 1950s. To do this, a rigorous infrastructure of research method and training needed to be instituted. Those connected with educational broadcasters could be divided into three groups: producers, distributors, and ultimate consumers such as civic groups and administrators. The production of information would be necessarily tied to how these groups used research in practice.

For such research to be successful, it would have to be based in an "effects" research model directed at the preferences of listeners and potential listeners, and consequent effects or influences on such listeners. Educators should focus, the report argued, on quantitative information applied to "relative" content and production. By

“relative” they referred to situational and contextual application of the research paradigm. Within the context of production and situation researchers would need to account for the “analytical” attributes of audiences in reception of the information as related to influence, preference, and the changing of opinions, attitudes, and “thinking”.⁵²²

But first, Lazarsfeld felt that educators needed to want to develop program content that audiences wanted to hear. Since programs were freely chosen by audiences and did not consist of compulsory schooling like public schools, methods of programs needed to be aligned with audience “analytical preferences”, which meant quality aesthetics, language, style, and form.⁵²³ The influence of programs and preferences could only initiate, stimulate, or change opinions or attitudes if audiences were willing to internalize the information received. This would require not only additional aesthetic dimensions, but cooperation of teachers who needed to be trained to teach with radio, aforementioned civic groups, and administrative groups.

Conclusion

The report concealed what was perhaps one of the most intriguing developments of the early scaffolding of public broadcasting history—that public advocacy for noncommercial utilization of media was almost built around what Lazarsfeld had envisioned as a “parallel analysis” between critique and quantitative research. After Adorno left, the PRP and RF-funded research generally moved decisively away from advocacy approaches centered upon theoretical critique towards evaluative empirical models of policy analysis and infrastructure. This fundamental approach to evaluating communication, effects research complemented by empirical critical analysis, still

⁵²² HM Beville and Cuthbert Daniel, under Lazarsfeld, “Classification of Educational Radio Research”, February 27, 1941. RF, Box 222, Folder 2660.

⁵²³ *ibid*

remains the genealogical foundation for communication studies, educational technology, and public broadcasting research. Yet revisiting the original dynamic between Adorno and Lazarsfeld reveals that its founders had worried that empirical research would lose sight of its original socio-ethical thrust, illustrated for example in one of Lazarsfeld's letters in which he argued that researchers should ask purposive questions about the "effects upon what?" when quantifying data. Though Adorno was a poor fit in the RF cohort, his warnings and Lazarsfeld's concerns carried a legacy restated many times over in American educational broadcasting's advocacy history: that the study of cultural effects required a vision of public good.

Chapter 5 illustrates how initiatives discussed in previous chapters were examined and then combined into the NAEB's single institutional voice at the Allerton House Seminars of 1949 and 1950. The progress made between 1934 and 1949 in strategic advocacy, administrative practice, content development, and research method became the core of communication department research in the early 1950s. The Sixth Report and Order of 1952 reflected a political culmination of past initiatives, applied to new television frequencies. Ironically, once educational stations were prepared to apply for and receive standard FCC assignments, they were finally granted protected channels by legislation.

Chapter 5: Consolidating Experiments into an Emergent Public Infrastructure. The NAEB Allerton House Seminars and the FCC Finally Sets Aside Television Frequencies, 1946-1952.

This chapter looks at how the NAEB was transitioned from a fledgling association to the central organization for educational broadcasters, for the first time resembling the organizational structure of public broadcasting. It first looks to how his shift was inspired in part by Charles Siepmann's political economy influence upon the "second generation" of NAEB members, and a new opportunity provided by the FCC—the release of experimental FM frequencies in 1945. NAEB members were forced to protect these frequencies from attacks by commercial broadcasters. This precedent would prove to be significant—it would act as the crucial legislation from which an education-friendly FCC would refer for set-aside television frequencies for noncommercial broadcasters. Second, this chapter examines the strategies discussed by Allerton House Seminar participants and the consequent "watershed" document used by universities to build communication departments. Communication study utilized the techniques for measurement innovated by Ohio State and the Princeton Radio Research Project. This chapter then moves to an examination of the internal discussions of the FCC about secure channels for the educational broadcasters in the new field of television. It draws from Edwin Johnson and Frieda Hennock's regulatory deliberations about FM radio and its implication for educational television. Finally the chapter looks at how the Sixth Report and Order represented a culmination of Judge E.O. Sykes' 1935 recommendations in *Pursuant 307* for educators, but as applied to new media frequency allocations, in this case television.

Between the set-aside FM frequencies in 1945 and 1952 two culminating events transformed the media advocacy that began in 1934. By the end of WWII, the

Rockefeller Foundation, the Office of Education, and the Princeton Radio Project members had moved on to other projects. These institutions had invested deeply in educational broadcasting improvement, but due to the lack of a unified broadcasting institution, and available frequencies in which to experiment, their interest had waned. In general, educational broadcasting did not dramatically improve as a whole between 1934 and 1949. Yet the contributions of the initiatives discussed in previous chapters had significantly improved separate areas—administrative practice, policy advocacy, communications research, and content standards. The National Association for Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) continued to struggle between 1942 and 1945, but its members streamlined the core initiatives that had begun after 1934—program experimentation, record distribution, and by 1946, incorporation of broadcast training and research into practice. Charles Siepmann’s Princeton Radio Research Project recommendations—civic rhetoric and “proof” of improvement through empirical evidence—had a major influence on the association’s approach.

The NAEB, under the supervision of president Richard Hull of Iowa State, achieved the difficult task of conceptually combining the commercial broadcasters’ mastery of day to day operations of radio stations, quantitative research methods of content measurement, training of radio practitioners, and the creation of a centralized organization to oversee educational broadcast practices and safeguard and distribute quality programming. Wilbur Schramm’s Allerton House Seminars of 1949 and 1950 was attended by new and past advocates, and participants finally decided to create a decentralized “network” of universities and school districts with the NAEB as an official umbrella organization. The organization’s success at protecting their frequencies in 1945

had reinvigorated a sense of urgency that if they could prepare for impending television assignments before it was too late, they could finally become the national organizational center the movement had previously lacked. To do this the NAEB planned at the Allerton House Seminars to take on all of the functions of its predecessors. It would set up a lobby division pioneered by the NCER, with Siepmannian methods, provide a clearinghouse like the FREC/OOE, find ways to fund educational broadcasting like the Rockefeller Foundation, and conduct responsible measurement of educational content like the PRP. In the aftermath of the conference, NAEB members decided to found departments dedicated to the study of “communication”. These departments would fund educational broadcasting experimentation and provide an official academic home for new communications research. Instead of a centralized profit-based model, the NAEB planned to become a decentralized nonprofit consortium dedicated to civic concepts and free public education.

Meanwhile the FCC had developed a pattern of pro-educational broadcasting legislation. As mentioned above, in 1945 they assigned 10% of new FM frequencies to educators, which the NAEB almost immediately had to defend from commercial broadcasters, described below. When the television license “freeze” was instituted in 1948, the NAEB attempted to gain the favor of the FCC by further lobbying the Committee for Interstate and Foreign Commerce (CIFC), the congressional body that oversaw the FCC. Edwin Johnson, Senator from Colorado and chairman of the CIFC, responded favorably but also had to contend with the commercial lobby. Wayne Coy, chairman of the FCC, was pro-education yet was not convinced educators were ready to effectively run facilities. But Frieda Hennock’s influence swayed the FCC to set aside

frequencies. By combining *Pursuants* (303) and (307a, b, and c) the FCC was able to deliberate on behalf of educators, leading to the Sixth Report and Order of 1952, which set aside 10% of new television frequencies for educational broadcasters.

Though some discussions had taken place about television previous to 1948, educators had not taken steps to transition into television production. Advocacy through 1950 largely focused on the *principle* of expanding public education through technology in any form, of which radio had been the dominant medium. But the 6th Report and Order, which concludes this dissertation, changed educational practice in two ways. First, from 1953 on educators focused primarily on the effective production of educational television. Second, while for the past 18 years educators had sought a way to compete for frequencies along the same line as commercial broadcasters, the ironic culmination of this attempt was that they had been granted the experimental frequencies they once sought.

Thanks to help from the Ford Foundation from 1953 on, the practices of educational broadcasting would continue to streamline on a yearly basis, and by the early 1960s several regions—the NAEB Midwest, New York and Boston, and San Francisco—would begin to produce strong educational genre programming that would act as the core of PBS. Radio would continue in a weakened form, and only be included in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 due to its inexpensive production costs and established production culture.

This part of the history concludes with the introduction of a new mass medium, which shifted the playing field for everyone involved. The promise of television

galvanized a new generation of practitioners, underwriters, and researchers, just as the pioneers from the 1930s had been galvanized by legislation.

5. 1 Richard Hull and the “Siepmannian” Advocacy Turn at the NAEB, 1946-1949; The NAEB Consider how to Reinvigorate Educational Broadcasting

While Siepmann’s critiques of educational broadcasting practices had led to the defunding of NAEB institutions by Rockefeller Foundation, his recommendations had greatly influenced the young Richard Hull of Iowa State. When brought to the U.S. to examine the administrative practices of university broadcasters in 1937, Siepmann, who had spent time as Director of Regional stations for the BBC, did not believe that universities were similar to the stations he had overseen; by 1939 he argued that American universities would best serve to complement educational broadcasting production, perhaps at commercial stations, via academic research.⁵²⁴ Educators, according to his evaluations, had not the wherewithal to “make effective in their own field and for their own ends a medium of revolutionary potentialities”.⁵²⁵ Wisconsin had done the best job integrating services at the university, in its extension services, and to the community, but in Siepmann’s assessment professors did not understand the logistical requirements of running a radio station.

Broadcasting remained a secondary priority to the university, and Siepmann wrote that programs as a whole lacked “constructive purpose”.⁵²⁶ Staff worked without clear curricular objectives, and stations were unable to offer even modest consistency of service. This had occurred in spite of broad support by faculty, farmers, service clubs, and departments of home economics. Educators had approached building radio stations

⁵²⁴ Charles Siepmann, “Radio At Universities: A General Critique” 1939, RF, Box 53, Folder 701

⁵²⁵ *ibid*

⁵²⁶ *ibid*

with “piecemeal and uncorrelated” approaches, and Siepmann compared the general impression of lists of weekly programs to an “anomalous assortment of matter”.

Though Siepmann doubted that educators could become organized well enough to provide a legitimate alternative, he did offer some advice for next courses of action that educational broadcasters might take, mentioned at the closing of Chapter 2. His memo was distributed among participants with the recommendation that facilities be built as an “adjunct to university activities”, as a site of research for psychology and sociology departments.⁵²⁷ If broadcasting could become an extramural activity overseen by faculty committee, set on increasing administrative investment and oversight, radio could become a central university activity and attract more funds. Through 1940, educational broadcasters neither resembled a fully functioning radio station nor an extension service safeguarded by the university. The key to stabilizing the movement, he believed, would be to find a way to make educational broadcasters affiliated with *both* a professional station and extension services—an agenda that became an active goal at the NAEB under Richard Hull at Iowa State.

Indeed Siepmann had remained an active advocate for educators. In his 1946 work *Radio's Second Chance* he argued for educators to pursue FM assignments to set a precedent for future assignments.⁵²⁸ And 1946 was a significant year for Siepmann's legacy: he also composed the widely influential Blue Book with a young government worker named Dallas Smythe, who would soon place at the University of Illinois as the NAEB's communications policy coordinator, and work with Hull via the NAEB on the development of “political economy” as an official approach of the organization. Smythe

⁵²⁷ *ibid*, section on “Recommendations”

⁵²⁸ Siepmann, Charles. *Radio's Second Chance*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1946.

is deservedly credited with the popularization of political economy research as a civic application of critical policy analysis to regulatory and institutional practices, but Hull was also an early adherent to Siepmann's approach of adjusting radio station "best practices" to meet civic criteria, in response to empirical data. Over the next six years the NAEB would take a system-building approach influenced by Siepmann and the FREC.

Though educational broadcasting continued during the war, besides the Rocky Mountain Radio Council, educational broadcasting stations had not acted as extensions for the federal government. Several future NAEB members—Seymour Siegel of WNYC, Wilbur Schramm of Illinois, and Harry Skornia of Indiana—had served directly in the war in communications divisions. But educational broadcasting had not gained recognition as a movement. However, due to prompting by FCC Chairman Clifford Durr, who viewed radio as a way to promote civic initiatives, as well as an investigation by Congress into the networks' lackadaisical support of the war effort in 1945, educators were provided with reservations of new FM frequencies, discussed below. This event inspired the NAEB to make another political push to improve their service.

In a December 1946 letter Hull wrote to Harold Engel at Wisconsin "if I were to be harsh, I should say the attitude of most of our stations is still one of complacency whereas we actually have very little to be complacent about even in several rather favorable situations. We face a situation where we will, like the old soldier, not die, but simply fade away".⁵²⁹ Hull believed that if members were able to better connect through the NAEB, an apparent "unified front" would reciprocally strengthen the independence of stations individually that the NAEB might advise boards of regents at universities when it was time for them to build educational facilities.

⁵²⁹ Richard Hull to Harold Engel, December 9, 1946. NAEB Files, Box 4, Folder 3

Over the previous two years Hull had corresponded with Harold Engel at Wisconsin and Frank Schooley at Illinois about how to address deficiencies in NAEB member practices, but first they needed to stabilize membership. Hull hoped to ultimately increase membership to the range of 500-1000 stations, or the majority of colleges and universities in the U.S.⁵³⁰ His plan, as stated in 1947, was for the NAEB to act as a primary “information exchange” in which the “pioneer experience” of Midwest institutions would act as a publicity model for new members, and from which monthly publications, monographs, and personnel would be released.⁵³¹ To meet this goal Hull began to solicit universities that might build new educational stations. His “pitch” package was usually comprised of sending several bulletins regarding “station policy” procedures, with a warning to avoid sharing facilities with commercial stations. Such accounts would exclude educational stations from FM reservations the new FCC rules.⁵³² But not to worry, Hull would follow, the NAEB could help new stations develop methods and techniques to measure their effect upon community. The NAEB, Hull argued, would be able to promote classroom education service more effectively than commercial stations by utilizing commercial methods directed at sound classroom extension practices. Should a station decide to join the NAEB, members were provided access to “descriptive sheets on coursework” and the promise that a program transcription service could fill needed hours.⁵³³

Trained under Griffith at Iowa State, Richard Hull had witnessed how educators’ unwillingness to work with or learn from commercial broadcasters had led to stunted

⁵³⁰ Series of letters between Hull and Engel on Executive Committee, Boxes 4 and 5

⁵³¹ *ibid*

⁵³² Richard Hull to H.P. Constane, August 22, 1946. Box 4, Folder 2.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

development by university stations. Siepmann's report, discussed in chapter 2, had dealt a severe blow to the media reform movement's momentum, but its recommendations as well as the example of the FREC had led educational broadcasting's "second generation" to learn from the networks and refine how they appealed to legislators concerned with communications. In January 1948 Richard Hull wrote to E.W. Ziebarth at CBS' Minnesota affiliate WCCO that, unlike past advocates, he had long been "anxious" to construct better relationships with well-run commercial affiliates, and that while financing between educational and network affiliates was distinctly different, the NAEB was no longer categorically opposed to dispense its programming to interested commercial station. "I will never forget the remarks that Siepmann made to the effect that educators may have everything to teach commercial broadcasters about good taste, but they have nothing to teach them about technique."⁵³⁴ Noting that the distinction between public and private was no longer as true as it had seemed in the 1930s, the NAEB was eager to see how the Association might measure up to, and if necessary work with, many regional commercial stations. Ziebarth had been a member of Minnesota's early educational station, and like many regional commercial broadcasters, he had been trained in educational radio. These interpersonal legacies were opportunities to further organize, as far as Hull was concerned, but the NAEB soon found that it had to protect new reserved frequencies from these same commercial interests.

5.2 1945 FM Frequencies

The NAEB retained allies in the Office of Education, which still viewed radio as a potential classroom extension service and continued to run the FREC as a clearinghouse for school districts. In a letter to Schooley in March of 1946, Franklin Dunham, Chief of

⁵³⁴ Richard Hull to E.W. Ziebarth, January 7, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 5

Radio at the Office of Education, notified the NAEB that a March 7th document had been released by the FCC that asked “all noncommercial educational FM broadcast licensees, ‘permittees’, applications, and others to submit comments and suggestions in writing to the office of the secretary with 60 days”.⁵³⁵ Liberal FCC Commissioner Clifford Durr had arranged that if applications were in hand, educators could make a claim to new frequencies. In March 1945 Durr and his staff issued a report titled the “Promulgation of the Rules and Regulations for Non-Commercial Education FM Broadcast Service”, that permitted new applications by educators.⁵³⁶ The networks had been under investigation for inappropriate application of public service responsibilities, and the question of noncommercial broadcasting reappeared as a significant tool for the promotion of community building to regulators. As McChesney has written, educators had been grouped together with labor, religious, and other independent stations as “propaganda stations” by the FRC in 1928 for holding a specific perspective instead of offering unfettered free market access. A redefinition of educational broadcasting as community based was crucial for opening the window to new allocations.

In the Durr-conceived document, educators were required to prove that their services were employed in schools as “illustrative of effective teaching procedures or instructional devices”.⁵³⁷ Proof of effectiveness had to be demonstrable through evidence of testing, administrative reports, and reliable program content. If a station acquired a new frequency, it was further responsible to provide to home listeners samples of student achievement by radio and to offer extra-curricular activities to students, which exhibited

⁵³⁵ Franklin Dunham to Frank Schooley, March 28, 1946. NAEB Files, Box 4, Folder 1

⁵³⁶ T.J. Slowie Report before FCC, “Promulgation of Rules and Regulations for the Non-Commercial Educational FM Broadcast Service”, May 28, 1946 Correspondence, NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 2.

⁵³⁷ *ibid*

sound administration, coordination, and evaluation of projects by committees at universities or community organizations in an assumed service area. Further, educational stations were required to have functional “PR” departments to explain the work and purpose of schools to the public and provide instruction to accredited institutions. Adult education needed to be served to provide listeners with useful information of social questions, including news, updates, weather etc.

In a second version of the release, titled “Definition II”, the FCC stipulated that educational FM stations had to hold licenses as nonprofit, accredited, legal entities. Stations applying for noncommercial frequencies had to have obtained “official recognition or certification” as a “program of public education” that broadcast nonpolitical, nonsectarian education that fulfilled minimum requirements of public educational standards by state and federal governments.⁵³⁸ This importantly precluded any network claims that they met educational standards better than an educator—which was still essentially the case for aesthetic and administrative execution.

On June 27, 1945 twenty protected FM channels for noncommercial educational FM broadcasting were released primarily to NAEB members in the FM range of 88.1 to 91.9 (basically still the same range that universities operate within today).⁵³⁹ FM frequencies continued to expand over the next three years, but were probationary, contingent on quality of operation and service, maintenance of channel, power and service area, and contingent upon meeting guidelines for “standards of good engineering practice”.⁵⁴⁰ Should stations not meet any of these criteria, including having station facilities running within a given frame of time, the experimental frequencies would be

⁵³⁸ *ibid*

⁵³⁹ FCC Order 7424, June 27, 1945. NAEB Files, Box 4, Folder 1

⁵⁴⁰ *ibid*, “Rules Relating to Equipment”

subject to “forfeiture of construction permits”.⁵⁴¹ The report further stipulated rigid expectations regarding frequency controls, transmitter maintenance, technical operation, station inspection, modulation, operator logs, program logs, voltage, station identification, and other categories.

To manage these licenses, Allen Miller from the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago was retained to help with administrative communication, and spent a short period at the Rocky Mountain Radio Council in 1946 (which had been modeled on the UBC) after Robert Hudson left to work in the educational broadcasting division at CBS.⁵⁴² To manage educational frequencies Hull broke NAEB membership into regional divisions to meet rules and regulations. By 1947, the NAEB consolidated its services into three major categories to maintain such oversight: 1) “Getting on the Air”, or helping new stations with comparative data on all types of broadcast equipment (spearheaded originally by Menzer at Iowa) and spelling out necessary steps for administration including the utilization of transcription services, 2) “Staying on the Air”, or maintaining daily programming that met the criteria for effective broadcasts, and 3) “Fight for a Continuing Place for Education on the Air”, which included the slow progress toward setting up a Washington office.⁵⁴³ This division of labor became the basic faculty distribution of new communication departments in the 1950s.

In 1947 the FCC was split into three divisions: 1) broadcast, 2) common carrier, and 3) safety and special services. The National Association of Broadcasters (the NAB,

⁵⁴¹ *ibid*, “Broadcasting Administrative Procedure”

⁵⁴² Allerton House Conference Schedule, Participant Descriptions, August 1, 1949. RF, Box 265, Folder 4.

⁵⁴³ Ralph Steetle to Richard Hull regarding internal NAEB policy, September 8, 1947. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 2.

not to be confused with the NAEB) lobbied to keep Durr out of the Broadcast Division.⁵⁴⁴ He was not reelected, but in an interesting turn, Frieda Hennock, whose contributions are discussed below, replaced him in 1948. Before Durr's tenure concluded, as a strong supporter of educational frequencies, the NAEB made the unprecedented decision to send representatives to Washington to lobby for his reappointment. The commercial broadcasters had similarly sent representatives to every single communications hearing going back to the 1920s. Networks were no fan of Durr, and a March 12, 1947 issue of *Variety* reported that Durr was viewed by commercial interests as corroding the foundations of "truly free and unmonopolized radio", since he had "struck out sharply against" sale practices for commercial facilities that had been built on public property.⁵⁴⁵ Among adjustments made by educators to function more like the commercial broadcasters, political representation at communication turned out to be a major decision.

5.3 Rhetorical Progress by the NAEB while Protecting FM Frequencies, and the "TV Freeze"

Durr's FM allocations were a major turning point for educators, but his decisions also exposed the NAEB to new attacks from commercial broadcasters as they attempted to reclaim set-aside frequencies under past policies. While Durr had been a supporter of educational broadcasting in principle, educators as a whole had still had not developed an official polity approach. As Durr was replaced, commercial lobbyists attempted to paint the FM reservations as violating a multitude of laws, from public interest mandates of the Communications Act, to free speech, to rules about editorialization and radio. In a letter to Maurice Novik, labor rights activist and NYC director of educational broadcasting,

⁵⁴⁴ *Variety Magazine*, March 12, 1947.

⁵⁴⁵ *ibid*

Hull worried in February 1948 that the FCC's flash of educational sympathy had been quickly overturned, with the "FCC giving every evidence of not knowing what the score is at all. Words like incompetent, confused, etc." were used in a recent conversation with another Washington based affiliate.⁵⁴⁶ A new set of hearings were called in late February 1948 regarding "editorialization by Broadcast licenses" A public notice had been posted on February 6, 1948 that all "special temporary authorizations", or STA's, might be abolished because they were having a detrimental effect on "regular nighttime broadcast service in many areas".⁵⁴⁷ It was a clever way of saying that public interest mandates had been violated by educators by holding an overt political position. Since educators implicitly took "editorial positions" they might not qualify for special frequency assignments. This was a reinvorgation of the "propaganda station" category of the 1928 General Order 40.

The NAEB was not able to come to an immediate consensus for how to approach this question politically. Since they had previously not developed a formal political position they recused themselves from participation in the FCC's conference on editorialization in broadcasting, for fear of an offhand statement being used against educational broadcasting at a later time. But the NAEB supplied the following seminal statement to T.J. Slowie, FCC Secretary:

"Speaking for the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, and for those everywhere whose concern is for free men in a free world, for free exchange of information, and for dissemination of truth and understanding, we do wish to underscore and reiterate our concern that while in theory—

⁵⁴⁶ Richard Hull to Maurice Novik, February 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 3.

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid*

and perhaps in fact—the broadcaster should have equal rights with the press to free speech that with his power goes responsibility. That the structure of radio is such that a very few thousands of men necessarily exercise great power on the minds and the emotions of millions of citizens. Radio, using its major tool the human voice, nearly always conveys to its listeners a sense of authenticity which may or may not be justified in fact. That radio stations are licensed in the public interest, convenience, and necessity, and by the laws of the United States, the facilities they use are the properties of the citizens of the country. Each licensee holds a temporary franchise on a portion of the public domain—that portion of the radio spectrum which he uses. That true freedom of speech is a vital American heritage which must above all be preserved in these days of fear and suspicion, and prejudice. It is more important in these days that men be free everywhere to speak their minds and hearts and that reason and fact—and not emotion and prejudice—hold sway. Freedom of Speech, however, is not freedom to lie or distort. Editorialization means more and not less responsibility. Free speech requires not only that men be free to speak their minds but that they in this 20th century of mass audience, have access to technical facilities to speak their minds.”⁵⁴⁸

This statement represented the first attempt by the NAEB to position the organization as *carriers of public interest* that the networks had not appropriately protected. Rules and regulations were supposed to be applied to common welfare, which was the major

⁵⁴⁸ Richard Hull to T.J. Slowie, Februar 28, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 5.

purpose of the NAEB, not commercial networks. The commercial lobby, the letter stated, had previously argued on their own behalf that broadcasters had the right to editorialize with some context, but they had now contended that the FCC was violating their constitutional rights by permitting other interests the right for editorialization. Much to the pleasant surprise of the NAEB, the document was persuasive, and the hearings were concluded.

In March 1948, the NAEB concluded that if the FCC were forced to suspend experimental assignments, a new tactic would be necessary—lobbying senators commissioned with oversight of the FCC. In March 1948 Richard Hull contacted ranking Senators Charles Tobey and Edwin Johnson of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee regarding the question of educational broadcasting. In his letter to Tobey, Hull described the NAEB in 1948 as having grown to 70 members over 25 states operating 22 AM and 30 FM stations, of which only four total operated in unlimited time. Stations were equipped to serve specialized local and regional audiences with farm and market reports, music, classroom lectures, and matters of public interest. And the NAEB performed, they argued, a unique and fundamental educational task that commercial stations could and would not perform.⁵⁴⁹ NAEB stations were under attack by an attempt by networks to retain nearly monopoly level frequencies at the FCC. Just as educators had been accused of over-editorialization that year, commercial stations had brought back an old regulatory proposal—the creation of “clear channels” that could cover the entirety of the U.S. to meet public interest mandates by completing access to all rural

⁵⁴⁹ Hull/NAEB to Charles Tobey. March 13, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 5.

communities. If educators were eliminated by expansion of clear channels, a monopoly of commercialization would emerge that violated public service principles.⁵⁵⁰

Further, if educational stations lost frequencies, listeners would lose access to content “located in their immediate vicinity for news, markets, weather, and other items of information. A clear channel station located hundreds of miles away cannot serve this function”. Much to their surprise, again, Chair Edwin Johnson agreed. Not only did he agree, he introduced a Bill (S-2231) to limit clear channel proposals and increase educational localism.⁵⁵¹ It turned out that Johnson had been governor of Colorado and had been aware of the Rocky Mountain Radio Council’s successful experiments, as well as its problems. But he had been persuaded by Crane’s project that a register of educational stations was a potentially constructive addition to regional life, and sought a way to revisit set-aside channels. Johnson was further one of the earliest Senators to run on a platform that spoke to mass communications policy; he had promised to bring Denver its first television station as part of his Senatorial run.

His response heartened educational advocates, who held a conference on March 15, 1948 regarding the next tasks that educators might pursue toward the possibility of permanent set-aside frequencies. At the conference members affirmed their dedication to six initiatives that had been progressing for some time: 1) definition of educational radio goals and objectives, 2) better planning and organization toward these ends, 3) working systems for mutual aid, now also to include legal aid, 4) “recognition among ourselves of our very real strength”, 5) ways and means to let administrators, the radio industry, and the public know what educational broadcasting offers, and 6) better understanding by

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵⁵¹ Richard Hull to NAEB, March 13, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 5.

station operators for how to appeal to radio audiences. Broad action by educational broadcasters would include the establishment of production centers, research agencies, and continued political and system building, avoiding the urge to merely be “critics” of regulation.⁵⁵² It was time, they determined, to leave the conference with a “clear understanding that the tide has turned”, and that educational radio was no longer the “step child of American broadcasting.”⁵⁵³ Colleges, universities, and allied institutions had, through new interconnectivity, begun to “compare favorably with many corporations”, Hull believed, and more importantly, educational stations had become new “fountainheads” of radio research.⁵⁵⁴

Siepmann had been right, conference minutes reported: radio’s “second chance” appeared only with the allocation of experimental frequencies, and it was crucial to protect and build upon this political precedent. The consequent document from the conference, titled “The State of Non-Commercial Broadcasting in the U.S.”, noted that, after years of development and research, there were still only 36 US stations licensed specifically for educational purposes, with only 10 operating on an equal facility and administrative footing as commercial stations.⁵⁵⁵ Educational stations suffered from lack of financial support and public interest. Members neither had the money to stand up to commercial interests in court over facility disputes, nor did more than a few states argue on behalf of noncommercial extension services. But the FCC had made a concession to educators with the reservations in the FM band.

⁵⁵² Richard Hull to NAEB, March 15, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 5

⁵⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵⁵ “The State of Non-Commercial Broadcasting in the U.S., undated 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 5

While FM provided a wide range of new channels, with more to be allocated in the future, commercial stations wanted to safeguard channels that they might not even use. The result was that the NAEB put together an early *political economy* document that examined past precedents to plot future strategies. The present system, the report stated, was based upon the 1927 Radio Act and continued to “knit (sic) any plan for changing”, implicitly disregarding any progress made since 1927 in technological or organizational progress by noncommercial stations.⁵⁵⁶ Further, technologies themselves had changed and permitted splitting of frequencies so that different parts of the same city might receive different signals. A university could presumably broadcast directly to its intended students, neighborhoods, and schools without interrupting other signals.

“Since metropolitan areas form the basis for allocations on a national scale...the FCC decreed that 40 kc was sufficient, and last year successful tests were conducted between a station in Silver Spring temporarily operating on 1420 kc and WDC Washington on 1450 kc providing that a 30kc split between regional and local station in the same area was feasible. Nothing is said about a complete revision of the allocation structure from one end of the band to the other, allowing a 40kc separation between high powered operations and a 30 kc split between regional and local outlets.”⁵⁵⁷

Several advocacy approaches, the document posited, might position the NAEB to take advantage of new developments in technology. For example, it was possible that two stations could occupy the same frequency to broadcast to different audiences in different

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid*

areas of the same region. The upper end of the AM band had finally been expanded from 1510kHz to 1600kHz in 1940 (the band area originally offered to the ACUBS before the Communications Act). Since this expansion had taken place, it seemed expedient to inquire about a further wave of expansions from 1610 to 1800 kc. “In effect it could be considered as asking for three times as much as one would expect to get, realizing at the same time thru effective public relations planning that the best defense is offence.”⁵⁵⁸

And it was possible that Edwin Johnson would seriously consider such a plan. A proposal argued for “Class III” channels to be shared with commercial interests, and “Class IV” channels for educational use only. By requesting frequency set-asides on the already congested AM band, such channels could be assigned to additional educational interests in school districts, while more coveted FM channels might be assigned due to a regulatory precedent set by such AM allocations. Federal protection against commercial utilization of those channels would increase nighttime broadcasting opportunities. This tactic could be supported (according to a hand-written memo by Richard Hull on May 1, 1948) as progress as stipulated by *Pursuant 307* from 1934.⁵⁵⁹ A subcommittee needed to be formed to present information about progress of schools and “exchange ideas” with regulatory agents. The subcommittee took an NCER-like function and keep informed and disseminate information and opportunities to a larger radio community.

5.4 The Freeze and its Benefit for Educators

These strategies were ultimately effective, largely thanks to additional time provided in October 1948, when the FCC decided that television frequency assignments were much too complex to determine in line with previous regulation, and halted the

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁵⁹ Richard Hull, Internal Memo, May 1, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4.

process of granting new television licenses. Originally planned to last only 6 months, “the freeze” continued until 1952 as the FCC deliberated upon a variety of factors ranging from color television, to VHF and UHF assignments and military utilization of frequencies.⁵⁶⁰ The networks’ lobbying for clear channel stations waned, and FCC Commissioner Wayne Coy sent special representative Benjamin Cottone, General Council for the FCC, to the NAEB’s October 1948 annual conference to discuss how the organization might proceed while the FCC considered possible steps.

Cottone pointed out to educators that it was not just the networks that had contested set-aside frequencies but taxicabs, power companies, newspapers, police departments, railroads, and utilities; “even grave diggers” had expressed interest in utilizing FM. Since the FCC could not fully satisfy the demand of all groups, they had literally been left at a loss for how to proceed, and had in fact favored educators over others, considering the breadth of lobby.⁵⁶¹ Most of the other interests were “articulate, resourceful, and well organized” and had made compelling appeals on their behalf. The FCC still agreed with earlier statements by Sykes, that “radio’s channels were too valuable to be left in idleness...if educators fail to utilize them, they will have lost their second and perhaps last chance to own and operate radio stations”.⁵⁶² But the FCC valued educational broadcasting above other considerations should educators actually be able to utilize frequencies effectively.

One offer the FCC was prepared to make immediately was that educational stations could take ultra-low power frequencies of 10 watts or less. It would be just

⁵⁶⁰ Report of the Committee on Radio, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, October 1949: “Television Hearings are Education’s Last Chance”. NAEB Papers, box 5, Folder 5.

⁵⁶¹ Benjamin Cottone, Talk at NAEB Annual Meeting, October 12, 1948. NAEB Papers, Box 4, Folder 6.

⁵⁶² *ibid*

enough to cover territory near campuses but would not interfere with commercial networks. This proposal apparently had gained the support of the networks because universities could consequently also be used to develop training centers for commercial broadcasting personnel, and there were possibilities for underwriting of transmitter care, and facilities on behalf of this proposal.⁵⁶³

Cottone contended that FM would remain a difficult domain for assignments due to frequency scarcity, but that educators should pay close attention to impending television regulation and mount a campaign for set-aside frequencies in that new medium. In a rare moment of solidarity between the NAEB and FCC, Cottone closed his talk by offering that the FCC, since WWII, had become a pro-educational Council, but had to answer to congressional committees and a range of expediencies related to technological development that had little to do with cultural appropriation. “You have been encouraged to seek a place of your own in the recesses of upstairs television. There are, I’ll grant you, some further sections we might take that, I venture to say, might not be entirely displeasing to some of you.”⁵⁶⁴ Cottone encouraged Hull and the NAEB to further increase “congressional avenues” to pursue protected frequencies. The NAEB filed for 10 Experimental Television Allocations, reported on August 22, 1949.

5.5 The Allerton House Seminars of 1949 and 1950, and the Institutionalization of the “Bicycle Network”

Hull’s planned expansion, the NAEB’s successful protection of their FM frequencies, and the serendipity of the “TV freeze” motivated members to make a new advocacy push. Hull’s recruitment strategies worked for expansion of radio affiliates, and

⁵⁶³ *ibid*

⁵⁶⁴ *ibid*

the NAEB neared 100 members by 1949. However, the expectations required for FM frequency holders—well funded facilities, a full day of filled airtime, and public service contributions to schools and the larger community—were difficult to supervise across the board. Many of the same problems from before 1934 continued. The most pressing problem was the lack of university funding for educational stations. Because stations were underfunded, the NAEB was unable to collect substantial dues. The organization had not received philanthropic funding since before the war and sought a way to reconnect with John Marshall at the Rockefeller Foundation. He had not been in touch with practitioners for over 5 years.

Hull's first pitch was to see if Marshall would be willing to fund the first university experiment in training students as commercial broadcasting practitioners. In anticipation of the forthcoming television regulations, Hull wanted to find a way to show cooperation with commercial broadcasting as well as prove that educational broadcasting had far-reaching utility for broadcasting in general. Barclay Leathem, one of Hull's colleagues at Iowa State, applied to the RF for \$77,500 per year for three years to build a "communications department" training division for television production. Marshall gave the application serious consideration, detailing in his diaries past RF funded initiatives that he thought had worked. Perhaps this was the kind of initiative that could stabilize the relationship between the networks and educational broadcasting? But Marshall concluded that such an institute "would appear to be practical only if industry is prepared to contribute substantially to its capital and current costs", since many of the students would go on to work in commercial broadcasting.⁵⁶⁵ Leathem spoke with the networks and made progress in securing their agreement for future funding, but only if the program

⁵⁶⁵ John Marshall in personal diaries, Barclay Leathem's Letter, June 21, 1949. RF, Box 5, Folder 51.

could prove to be effective. To be effective it needed upfront money to create a curriculum for radio training. Marshall wrote that he knew of only “very few instances” in which experimentation outside the industry had influenced production practices internally; the most noteworthy examples were the Chicago Roundtable and the Rocky Mountain Radio Council.⁵⁶⁶ But the project was too centered in one institution and Marshall denied their request.

Other NAEB members began to contact Marshall as well. A letter from the President of the University of Illinois, George Stoddard, highlighted the NAEB’s new institutional support for educational broadcasting. “The situation is once again as fluid as it was when educational stations first came into the field in the early 1920s. This is therefore a second chance for educational stations to take the leadership they have let slip from them.”⁵⁶⁷ Wilbur Schramm at the University of Illinois began to regularly mail Marshall with clear statements of NAEB initiatives. Marshall was hesitant, writing to Schramm in one letter that during the 1930s the foundation had granted a series of fellowships to key personnel at NAEB stations, only to be disappointed with their results. “The most favorable comments on the experience which we get from them are on the informal seminar which we held fortnightly while a group of them were in NY.”⁵⁶⁸ But Schramm was in the process of building the University of Illinois into an unprecedented center for communications research.

Between 1946 and 1950 the University hired specialists in every subfield of development from the past 15 years—Dallas Smythe for communications policy research, Robert Hudson of the RMRC and CBS, and of course Wilbur Schramm, who

⁵⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁶⁷ March 30, 1949: Stoddard to Marshall

⁵⁶⁸ March 11, 1949, Marshall to Schramm

studied and worked with Harold Lasswell on mass communications research during WWII. Schramm in particular was a prominent quantitative researcher and like Lazarsfeld shared deep convictions about the capacity for civic uses of technology to promote democratic participation. Schramm was in charge of building the research side Illinois' department and "hoped to assemble a good team for research of mass communications" centered around the study of the "flow of communication in the Midwest".⁵⁶⁹ Marshall was inclined to listen to Schramm due to Marshall's relationship with Lasswell, as well as his working relationship with Robert Hudson from the Rocky Mountain Radio Council. Schramm was finally able to convince Marshall to revisit the NAEB with a proposal for a conference on how to obtain television frequencies. Schramm solicited John Marshall for funds to bring together major researchers and advocates.

As detailed in a personal letter by Wilbur Schramm to the Rockefeller Foundation, while the NAEB had previously "stood pretty still while the industry has walked around them, because of swift changes they are now at a put-up-or-shut-up place".⁵⁷⁰ Schramm wrote that stations "now realize that their programs are, by professional standards, not attractive and that their audiences are, by professional standards, puny",⁵⁷¹ and it was time to make use of research and administrative lessons toward creating an alternate system. A conference was needed to discuss the "the nature of public service radio" including the "procedure...centered around problems and

⁵⁶⁹ OCTOBER 8, 1948 (Box 1,2,3),

⁵⁷⁰ Schramm to Marshall, March 16, 1949

⁵⁷¹ Letter from Wilbur Schramm to John Marshall, March 16, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

consultants”.⁵⁷² Marshall observed that new NAEB members were calling upon many of the RF project findings in the early 1930s, and hoped to reinvigorate educational broadcasting with training courses in quantitative measurement, production values, and a more active role in political advocacy.

On April 11, 1949 Marshall authorized a new grant for a three-week summer conference at which the University of Illinois agreed to host fifteen consultants and twenty educational broadcast institutions.⁵⁷³ Schramm intended for the conference to “...do some fundamental thinking about the nature of educational and public service radio.” According to Schramm, educational broadcasters “need a philosophy before a practicum. Furthermore, it is about time they begin to make use of research as a tool in planning.”⁵⁷⁴ Among invited participants were Richard Hull of Ohio State, Dallas Smythe, Ralph Steetle of Louisiana State, who would go on to be the spokesman for the Joint Committee for Educational Television (JCET) advocacy group, as well as Paul Lazarsfeld and Charles Siepmann, who acted as consultants.

Lazarsfeld, who had soured on educators in the early 1940s, spoke at the conference about the “inhibitions that prevail in noncommercial broadcasting including many programs never tried”.⁵⁷⁵ Why had educators previously resisted making programming entertaining? Charles Siepmann, now a widely influential figure for the NAEB Executive Committee, spoke about the “important function in supplying elements in the broadcasting diet that the commercials did not supply”.⁵⁷⁶ Educators would have to

⁵⁷² *ibid*

⁵⁷³ Grant in Aid to the University of Illinois, April 11, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁷⁴ Letter from Wilbur Schramm to John Marshall, March 16, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁷⁵ Seminar Remarks by Paul Lazarsfeld, July 2, 1949. NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 3

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid*, Remarks by Charles Siepmann; John Marshall June 28-29 notes, RF

run their stations like the networks, but be sure to provide content that commercial broadcasters could and would not offer. To achieve this, Siepmann outlined three ways that education had to function as a commercial broadcaster in practice and an educator in concept. Educators had a need for skills and services offered by commercial broadcasters, a responsibility to serve community stations, and, most centrally according to Siepmann, educational broadcasters had to attend to “conditional factors with practical implications”, such as regional tradition and community need.⁵⁷⁷ Many of these tenets came directly from Siepmann’s experience with the BBC, and in the march toward validity, the BBC model loomed as a profoundly influential ideal for NAEB members, embodied by the presence of Siepmann during NAEB deliberations.

Practitioner speeches overlapped on the basic point of pursuing political advocacy by way of running a professional radio station. Panels were broken up into “questions” that addressed a range of problems from conceptual, such as “is mass education a valid idea?” or “can education expect to contribute to deep understanding or merely to arouse interest which will lead to further activity?”, “what do we mean when we talk about radio’s public service obligation?”, and “what are the relations and differences between commercial and non-commercial radio?” But the most influential research questions addressed the problems of best practices such as “what are the needs for professional training in radio?” and “what is the outlook for FM, TV, and facsimile, and costs for educational operations?” If educational broadcasters were to widen audiences in the future, argued Richard Hull, proponents would first need “knowledge of capacities and resources and obligations, working knowledge of the radio audience for the radio educator, and a picture of what radio education can do and should be in the 20th

⁵⁷⁷ *ibid*

century”.⁵⁷⁸ The conference convinced Hull that what was needed by the NAEB was institutional dedication to better knowledge of capacities and resources and obligations for their 100 stations, a picture of what radio education could do and should be in the 20th century, and a working knowledge of radio audience. Hull and Schramm were especially heartened by Lazarsfeld’s contention that mass communication research could paint a “practical picture” of educational broadcasting’s audience, and could serve as a reflexive method for educational broadcasting research.

Other major educational broadcasters followed the conference with letters of support. Irving Merrill at KUSD, South Dakota, BB Brackett’s old station, wrote: “I left the conference feeling that I had participated in a meeting of historic significance...in a sense it proves educational broadcasting does have an obvious objective which readily distinguishes it from other types of broadcasting”.⁵⁷⁹ George Probst of the University of Chicago Roundtable wrote to Schramm immediately after the conference, saying that he had been treated to “a week for philosophizing on the problem to begin with, and then a second week for some more philosophizing to spill over into, with about three or four days at the end devoted to analysis of proposals for action”.⁵⁸⁰

The conclusion of the conference led to a series of letters between Marshall and Schramm that discussed a need for “intelligence” regarding policy and practice in the field, with six points of value:

1. “Our own research, and that of the few other units who are doing anything closely pertinent to educational radio.

⁵⁷⁸ Richard Hull to Wilbur Schramm, July 14, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁷⁹ Irving Merrill to Wilbur Schramm, July 23, 1949. NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 1.

⁵⁸⁰ Probst (roundtable) to Schramm, July 15, 1949. NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 1.

2. An extensive correspondence with persons who have ears to the ground.
3. Questionnaire-type reports on such topics as the policies of educational stations in handling politics and religion; the technical equipment of stations; the kinds of tape-recorders available at stations for handling exchanged programs; the programs of educational stations; the financing of educational radio.
4. Evaluation and translation of printed research from journals and survey reports.
5. Evaluation of trade press news, FCC actions, etc.
6. Exchange of semi-confidential information among educational stations—information which could not go into the NAEB bulletin.”⁵⁸¹

John Marshall's interest was again piqued, and for the first time since 1942 he reappraised NAEB stations in September, 1949.⁵⁸² He concluded that the Rocky Mountain Radio Council had still been the great example of noncommercial radio due to its combination of administrative and content production. But Marshall anticipated that television would take over the job of mass entertainment. A limited program for the Foundation might focus on how a BBC type system could be developed with the assistance of Charles Siepmann, who incidentally was now a close personal friend of Marshall. He considered “modest assistance” to strengthen the position of the non-commercial broadcasters across the country, and seemed persuaded by Hull's proposal to “consolidate their broadcasting on FM networks and by an exchange of recordings, turn

⁵⁸¹ Wilbur Schramm to John Marshall, November 4, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁸² John Marshall, Internal Notes, October 24, 1949. RF, Box 5, Folder 51.

them from local educational effort to more general public service”.⁵⁸³ He further noted that the “likeliest opportunity for new television training research was at Iowa State due to their application”, showing that their failed application had indeed impressed upon the Rockefeller Foundation that the NAEB was moving in the right direction.⁵⁸⁴ Marshall wrote in his diaries that the conference had provided a pathway for four improvements to educational broadcasting practice: 1) practitioners would have a unified front of standards to seek assistance to pioneer work in television including funds sufficient for construction and equipment, 2) this would in turn lead to the possibility for future fellowships for educational broadcasters, 3) the conference consolidated the interest to establish a national educational transcription service for the educational stations, and 4) the NAEB would institute much-needed administrative offices.⁵⁸⁵

In an October 26, 1949 letter, Marshall wrote to the Lily Endowment fund that for some time he had been skeptical about what educational broadcasters could accomplish as an alternative to network programming. To best of his knowledge, the NAEB had done “little more than hold an annual meeting, publish a newsletter, and etc...but the seminar had provided him with (p)retty tangible evidence that these people were beginning to take themselves (sic) serious”.⁵⁸⁶ To that point, Marshall noted, the work of non-commercial broadcasters had been too narrowly educational and had missed opportunities to experiment with “programs of a serious character”.⁵⁸⁷ At that time only making up 3% of total frequency allocations, Marshall reported that seminar attendees had finally admitted that most programs on air were “not suitable for repetition, too locally based, and worthy

⁵⁸³ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁵ John Marshall, Internal Diaries, August 24, 1949, RF, Box 5, Folder 51.

⁵⁸⁶ John Marshall to Lily Endowment, October 26, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 5, Folder 51.

⁵⁸⁷ *ibid*

of a wider hearing”, but that with a “traffic center to route programs, a national office, and a basis of useful function for program production, that momentum would be immanently plausible”. In one of the last of Marshall’s grants to educators before losing his charge of the Rockefeller Fund, he underwrote a study called “Radio Programming in Colleges and Universities”, which took statistical analysis of available educational nodes to connect through production, script exchange, and research.

The document pointed out that between 1922 and 1941, at least one hundred and twenty four universities had received federal broadcasting licenses (reports from the 1930s conflict with this, geared toward a higher number), though by 1948 only thirty-four held licenses in both experimental and conventional FM frequencies. Yet in 1948 interest in educational broadcasting had been considerably reinvigorated. Eighty-seven new stations produced one or more shows per week for air on regional network facilities, with fifty-three using the Office of Education’s transcription service. The report strongly stated the need for administrative infrastructure. “Within the administrative framework of an educational institution there must be made an effective administrative pattern designed to give adequate support and educational purpose to the radio programming activities to which the institution is committed.”⁵⁸⁸ In assessment of data, the report further recommended a laundry list for each educational institution: institutions needed to adhere to a commonly agreed upon definition of the purpose of educational broadcasting, and the NAEB needed to create a radio program advisory board. Individually, stations would have to hire directors who were individual specialists in radio with attention to showmanship, discover means for adequate budget allotments, create degree programs, in

⁵⁸⁸ Radio Programming in Colleges and Universities, 1950. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 24.

crease attention to audience measurement, and provide a way to receive and exchange scripts among institutions.⁵⁸⁹

In a following letter, Schramm wrote that the Allerton seminar “proved” that a clear course of action had been broached to answer the question “what is the job of educational broadcasters?”⁵⁹⁰ In a detailed prognostication, Schramm proposed a follow-up conference. Schramm argued that educators would first and foremost have to learn to make and present programs, “how to translate educational resources into imaginative and effect broadcasting, for the audiences which can make use of them”.⁵⁹¹ To do this, they would need to learn to effectively “share program resources so that the strength of all educational broadcasting will be reflected in each educational broadcasting operation”.⁵⁹² Schramm proposed that some form of educational network would be necessary and inevitable if educational broadcasters are really to face up to their job. Part of this problem, he wrote, was administrative, financial, and technical. But another large part of it concerned the concept of program-making itself. “If we are to share programs, what kinds of programs? What quality of programs? How can the intellectual resources of American universities, considered as a unit, best be utilized for broadcasting?”⁵⁹³ Schramm argued that the next “logical step” would be to build a strong educational broadcasting service with local production distributed among a wider group. A follow-up conference, Schramm posited, would be carefully planned to address how to translate educational resources, especially in the humanities, into effective radio. The best way to

⁵⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁹⁰ Wilbur Schramm to John Marshal, February 3, 1950. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁹¹ “Proposal for a Second Allerton Seminar for Non-Commercial Broadcasters”, March 18, 1950.

Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁹² *ibid*

⁵⁹³ *ibid*

do so was to “challenge the imagination and ingenuities of young men who have opportunities to broadcast substantive materials, directed at ‘small’ audiences, and subject qualitative standards in measurement”. Schramm planned for second conference that would be smaller and focused upon “central intelligence service into the realm of operation”.⁵⁹⁴ The NAEB also signaled its intent to receive further financing from the Rockefeller Foundation for further development.

But Marshall was not convinced that the NAEB was a good home institution for a new and potentially expensive investment. In a January 1950 document titled “Possible Program in Radio” Marshall reviewed an internal report by Robert Hudson on the state of public service programming on the commercial networks.⁵⁹⁵ Hudson concluded that networks were producing less educational content than they had before the war. Yet the educators had, after the first conference, only envisioned what next steps might be taken toward establishing a sustainable broadcasting infrastructure. Marshall encouraged Schramm and Hudson to arrange program workshops for staff, encourage standardization of programs, and set up the official record exchange broached by Hull. “In other words, a second service would thus become a kind of network service through these non-commercial stations.”⁵⁹⁶ But the scale of investment requested by the NAEB was impossible until a better infrastructure existed. “Negatively I would not favor at present recommending further fellowships like those awarded ten years ago, on the ground that there is nowhere for such fellows to go for really profitable study. I would not favor at present any general support for NAEB: except for special projects it should finance

⁵⁹⁴ Wilbur Schramm to John Marshall, November 4, 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

⁵⁹⁵ John Marshall, “Possible Program in Radio”, January 9, 1950. RF, Box 5, Folder 51.

⁵⁹⁶ *ibid*

itself.”⁵⁹⁷ The NAEB had shown inspiration for new innovation but had not yet produced in Marshall’s eyes. But he agreed to fund a second conference on methods of educational broadcasting practice.

Meanwhile in October 1949 Richard Hull attempted to procure funds from the Lincoln Foundation using the language of the Allerton House Seminars. He wrote that the NAEB was affiliated with 100 school systems, colleges, and universities and one TV station and was looking for one-year period of emergency financing. Educational broadcasting was distinct from commercial broadcasting because it had the obligation to include “elements other than trivia, shallow entertainment, and sale of goods. It has implicit responsibilities morally, socially, and culturally to the public by which it is supported and whose sufferance it exists, and which it purports to service”.⁵⁹⁸ The NAEB hoped to provide daily access to broadcasts, produced with the best techniques available to inform audiences of “facts and ideas in the arts and sciences”, as well as daily events. The present structure of educational broadcasting had limited educators from pursuing these standards, and there was little likelihood for any marked change in this condition without stable support. Yet educational radio was undergoing a “renaissance not only in the establishment of new facilities but in training and acquiring personnel and in development of workable philosophies and techniques”.⁵⁹⁹ While NAEB members only accounted for 3% of all stations, the organization provided the best opportunity for “demonstrating and providing the benefits and practicability of a nation wide cultural and educational radio service”.⁶⁰⁰ Funding would be used to consolidate and coordinate the

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁹⁸ Richard Hull to Lincoln Foundation, October 10, 1949. NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 5

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰⁰ *ibid*

activities of noncommercial stations, which to that point had been “isolated and for the most part working independently”. The NAEB planned to provide rich and varied program sources, build a central administrative office to coordinate engineering data, program advice, and comprehensive information for new stations, and found a central production and distribution center (later to be the ETRC). That center would produce and provide program transcriptions of original programs to an educational network. Without funds, the NAEB would find it difficult to survive, and “might well spell the death knell for any nationwide, consolidated, or coordinated activity for educational radio and restrict it to token activity only, confined largely to a state or regional basis”.⁶⁰¹ These initiatives were already underway, the letter stated, with Dallas Smythe at Illinois conducting a program study, and Harry Skornia developing budget and facility studies at Indiana.

The Lincoln Foundation did not fund the new initiative, but Hull’s language received immediate and positive support. For example, broadcast pioneer Lee De Forest reviewed the plan, and wrote to Hull that it seemed “most thoughtfully worked out, and forcefully presented”.⁶⁰²

Dallas Smythe reported to the NAEB Executive Committee in a confidential letter that by November 1949 an Allerton report had already been printed and received by over 1000 educational institutions, and was under review by “the top men” in university administrations.⁶⁰³ Smythe’s “Future Basis for Research” detailed next steps that NAEB administrators planned to take, including:

1. “Detailed study of training and qualifications necessary to be a program director

⁶⁰¹ Allerton House, “Public Affairs in Radio”, July 15, 1950. NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

⁶⁰² Lee De Forest, November 4, 1949, NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 5

⁶⁰³ Dallas Smythe to NAEB, November 4, 1949, Box 5, Folder 5

2. Survey and comparison of program policies
3. Survey of audience measurement policies
4. Survey of radio programs and public relations medium for colleges
5. Survey of relationship of student's educational radio program experience to obtaining a position in the field
6. Survey of teaching techniques used successfully in the broadcast of classroom instruction for college credit
7. Study of the subject matter
8. Survey and analysis of manuals, study guides, and aids.”⁶⁰⁴

Schramm and Marshall continued to correspond in the buildup to the second conference. In one letter Schramm argued that the Allerton Seminars had inspired educators to plan educational initiatives in a “cooperative, group, sharing situation”.⁶⁰⁵ The first conference had asked “what is the job of educational broadcasters?” A second proposed conference would cover how to do the job. Schramm was especially concerned that without a second conference the NAEB would remain unsure what steps to take for how to make and present programs and share program resources “so that the strength of all educational broadcasting will be reflected in each educational broadcasting operation”.⁶⁰⁶ Schramm was convinced that some kind of educational network would be inevitable, built around administrative, financial, and technical precedents set by previous Rockefeller Foundation initiatives. But member had not the means to meet for a long duration without further support to discuss methods of distribution and standards for

⁶⁰⁴ NAEB, Radio Programming in Colleges and Universities: “Future Basis for Research”, undated, 1949, Box 5, Folder 5

⁶⁰⁵ February 3, 1950: Schramm to Marshall, NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 3.

⁶⁰⁶ *ibid*

quality and genre of programs. “The next logical step in building a strong noncommercial and educational broadcasting service would be a seminar on the planning and production of programs. All production would be local, and then strategies to gather resources and distribute was necessary.”⁶⁰⁷

Marshall wrote to Schramm in a February 6th, 1950 letter that the first Seminar was “admirably conceived” but wondered if it would be wise to pursue the title “educational broadcasting”, in favor of Lazarsfeld’s proposed moniker of “serious broadcasting”.⁶⁰⁸ Educational broadcasting had taken on a negative connotation of amateurism, and a strong PR campaign would need to distinguish noncommercial from commercial forms. A modest \$7200 was requested for a second conference, and approved.

In that brief time between the two conferences, Schramm and Robert Hudson began to streamline the curriculum of Illinois’ first major school of communications to include divisions such as a school of journalism, broadcasting, library, university press, an institute of communications research, continuation center, visual communications, and “all the other units on campus chiefly concerned with the use of mass communications”.⁶⁰⁹ Part of this administrative growth included the construction of a TV station that would produce content under the supervision of communications research. The invitation to join the seminar invited participants to ask not just “what” is educational broadcasting, but “how to do it”, as well as an attempt to politically formulate “what our

⁶⁰⁷ Schramm, “A Second Allerton Seminar for Non-Commercial Broadcasters”, March 17, 1950. Box 5, Folder 3.

⁶⁰⁸ John Marshall to Wilbur Schramm, February 5, 1950. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23. Also see Balas, Glenda. “Eavesdropping at Allerton: The Recovery of Paul Lazarsfeld’s Progressive Critique of Educational Broadcasting.” *Democratic Communique* 24, 2011.

⁶⁰⁹ Wilbur Schramm to John Marshall, March 17, 1950. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

society needs from broadcasting” for advocacy purposes.⁶¹⁰ NAEB members were invited, but also experts in learning theory, music, and Edward R. Murrow to speak about journalism programs. The conference centered on logistical underpinnings of local broadcasting efforts and how to create a wider national network. It included critical analysis of programs, how program exchange may be set up as a practical operation, and how programming standards may be upgraded.

After the conference participants circulated a co-written final document internally titled “Educational Broadcasting: Its Aims and Responsibilities”, which argued that while educational broadcasters had to admit that they had not achieved full potential, for the first time they possessed a resolute a sense of how to move forward. Though radio stations were required by federal regulation to operate in the public interest, convenience, and necessity, the document argued, this policy lacked a well-defined notion of public “necessity,” as a civic obligation only an educator could fulfill. This angle, they believed, would be their opening for successful advocacy as policies were amended and additional media frequencies were discovered. In counterpoint to the networks, educators would devise an approach to programming that informed, stimulated the individual to organize and give meaning to information, contributed to understanding that makes for better human relations and adjustment, broadened participation in the culture of society, and acted as an outlet for varied expressions of a community in which a station services, and provide a variety of experience that permits and encourages the development of tastes and interests. “Since communities and community needs vary widely, as do the purposes and resources of stations, successful broadcasting will differ widely in form and

⁶¹⁰ Robert Hudson to Chester I. Barnard, President of the Rockefeller Foundation. Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

direction.” In contrast to the network approach to one broadcast for a national audience, demographic research had shown that educational broadcasting, first and foremost, should be dedicated to providing universal education to a “number of publics”, depending on context of community need.

The document represented the first unified analysis of how conceptual goals would be translated into infrastructural development. Ceding that under the American system both profit and non-profit institutions were viewed as a means to “support the American way of life”,⁶¹¹ members contended that society required different services from available institutions. The success of educational broadcasters should be measured not by number of spectators or economic results, but by achievement in reaching educational objectives. Noncommercial broadcasters, no less than commercial broadcasters, were dependent upon proper financing, skills, techniques, knowledge of their audience, and limitations of the medium, and such similarities of operation were dictated by requirements of the medium rather than by purposes and goals.⁶¹² While some institutions maintained their own facilities and others used time on commercial stations, the document argued, educational institutions would from then on be required to meet professional standards of production similarly to the networks, but with the additional responsibility of translating educational philosophies into institutional practices.

“Whereas the commercial station in its daily program design must emphasize the common denominators of public taste, and reflect in many of its programs the widespread popular desire for relaxation and escape, the educational station operator can aim his programs at the wide variety

⁶¹¹ Hudson, Robert. “Allerton House 1949, 1950.” *Hollywood Quarterly*, Volume V, Number 3.

⁶¹² Co-written by 23 NAEB members. “Educational Broadcasting: Its Aims and Responsibilities.” Rockefeller Archive Center, Box 4, Folder 23.

of special needs and interests in his audience. He can program for unserved segments of the universal audience, for special areas or special needs. He can offer a service flexible enough to meet individual differences, and can reflect the total resources of education in terms that will appeal, at different times, to all segments of the audience.”⁶¹³

Standards of efficient production for the purposes stated, they argued, were already available with the application of audience and technical research to program development, especially research in psychological and sociological effects of broadcasting on listeners.⁶¹⁴ For this reason, the report recommended the creation of communication departments in research and educational methods. As such, the future of educational broadcasting included the creation of academic programs for training for future production and measurement including programming, audience building, radio research, and radio in the curriculum. Such research would be conducted toward program production with “a continuity span” toward “purpose and design”. This announcement signified the birth of the field of communication; departments grew exponentially in the 1950s. In particular on this point, in retrospect members marveled just how serendipitously previous initiatives synthesized into a coherent institutional logic. Robert Hudson articulated this perspective in a widely-read piece titled *Allerton House 1949, 1950* that followed the conference:

“The Allerton seminar asserted that education in a democracy has the responsibility of lifting the level of understanding and appreciation of the people, of giving the individual a knowledge of himself and his society

⁶¹³ ibid

⁶¹⁴ ibid

and of the sources of tensions and perplexities in each; that in a free society it is essential that the individual have a continuing sense of belonging and participating, of keeping up with a complex and fast-moving world; that it is the responsibility of education to foster and further that feeling of belonging and counting. The seminar pointed out that educational broadcasting has been most clearly distinguished by its high concern for integrity in the selection and handling of materials, and by its consistent dedication to social purpose. This purposeful activity has taken several forms, among which are: (1) informing, (2) stimulating the individual to organize and give meaning to information, (3) contributing to the understandings that make for better human relations and adjustment, (4) broadening participation in the culture of our society, (5) acting as an outlet for the varied expressions of the community which the station serves, and acting as a force within the community to help it solve its problems, and (6) leading the way, by experiment, toward new forms and activities of broadcasting.”⁶¹⁵

Production and distribution would also need to be streamlined to serve national and regional value. Members settled on national distribution via a program transcription service, which participants believed could run with the smallest staff and budget. And stations were encouraged to dialogue with community needs and resources for the purpose of building audiences, and to focus the development of applicable programs and techniques. Because educational broadcasting had “freedom from commercial schedule

⁶¹⁵ Hudson, *ibid*

commitments, and ability to vary control factors”, the NAEB endeavored to create a system by which educational stations based at universities would train students for technical and program development, to be tested by a studies component of the department to see if it met educational criteria, so that produces might make necessary changes.⁶¹⁶ Programs could then be aired on intended stations and be sent as needed through to other stations with similar demographic and community need for airing.

“The educational station’s unequalled opportunity for pilot plant study because of the research talent readily available. Particularly needed is research which will give qualitative evaluation of program efforts, the effects of programs upon audiences, the flow of listening at different hours and within specific audiences, the adequacy of program techniques and presentations, and the comparative effectiveness of new media in special situations. An additional body of fact is needed in the areas of audience reactions, receptivity to ideas communicated, and response to types of programs.”⁶¹⁷

Hence the academic training of producers and researchers was another offshoot of the Allerton House Seminars. The corresponding document suggested that universities provide career development for personnel in audience building, research and teaching, as well as publicity. Resulting from these discussions, a twelve-point prescription was broached for future activities by educational broadcasters:

“1) assess community needs and resources, 2) develop new program techniques, 3) build audiences, 4) develop appropriate areas of research and pilot plant experiments, 5) further the preparation of competent

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⁶¹⁷ “Educational Broadcasting: Its Aims and Responsibilities”, *ibid*

personnel, 6) make the possibilities of educational broadcasting known, 7) establish a central service for sharing programs by tape or transcription, 8) establish one or more regional FM educational networks, 9) establish a national educational transcription service for planning, producing, and distributing programs to educational stations on a particular schedule, 10) establish a central and permanent administrative office to serve as a repository for educational station data, a central for program and engineering advice, and editorial headquarters for an expanded and regular publication on educational broadcasting, 11) cooperate with the rest of the industry (as equals instead of antagonists), and finally, 12) consider whether the situation does not call for bold steps.”⁶¹⁸

Hudson wrote to other members that the second seminar had set in motion research on how to create subject areas for an educational network, critical analysis of recorded programs including mechanical aspects, and the need for program exchange.⁶¹⁹ The NAEB began to solicit advice for how to organize such an initiative, contacting, for example, longtime educational supporter Judith Waller of NBC-Chicago. Hull explained in a letter to her that the new function of the NAEB after Allerton was to foster and encourage universities, as “in a sense the trade organization for educational broadcasting”.⁶²⁰ Hull requested information about how Waller had attended to questions of copyright, program availabilities, station operation, and finance. All of these efforts would be centered around the NAEB’s primary initiative to “network” an otherwise decentralized consortium: distribution of programming. In a letter from Hull to another

⁶¹⁸ *ibid*

⁶¹⁹ Hudson august 1, 1950

⁶²⁰ August 26, Hull to Judith Waller

affiliate, he described the new initiative as the “basic advantages to be gained from working to get these various organizations together into somewhat more unified group.”⁶²¹ Seymour Siegel of WNYC was charged with organizing early logistics of the network in January 1949. In July 1950 the FREC was defunded by the Office of Education after commercial broadcasters rescinded their promise of grants, so such a new initiative would also replace the storage and distribution responsibilities previously provided at a federal level.⁶²²

Originally called the “round robin” network, members began to call the NAEB Tape Network the “bicycle network” as a way to describe how recordings (now including television recordings) might be pressed and then distributed, or sometimes aired for a period of time and then distributed to another regional station.⁶²³ In 1950 the bicycle network included 30 stations, and Illinois had secured funds from University President Stoddard for duplicating equipment, temporarily making Illinois the official headquarters for the NAEB. Richard Rider, who was in charge of the actual distribution and worked under Robert Hudson, wrote of the service: “in essence, what we are trying to do is provide educational stations, on a mutual basis, programs which they would be unable to acquire individually”.⁶²⁴ In another internal memo Rider described the Tape Network as the major service of the organization into the future. “The NAEB is a national organization of stations, and broadcasters interesting interested primarily in the educational and social aspects of broadcasting...in effect the network acquires outstanding programs, duplicates them, and circulates them among the member

⁶²¹ July 21, 1950, to Richard Hull from John Crabbe responding to NAEB plan

⁶²² July 27, 1950 letter from hull Seymour Siegel (WNYC).

⁶²³ Richard Hull, July 28, 1950 to NAEB offices and directors: “NAEB network and Allerton House Meeting”. NAEB Files, Box 6.

⁶²⁴ Richard Rider to UNESCO, February 15, 1951. NAEB Files, Box 6.

stations”.⁶²⁵ But Allen Miller, early pioneer of the University Broadcasting Council of Chicago, was not a supporter of a decentralized approach. “The bicycle experiment, which I believe in most instances has worked out well, is merely a temporary expedient.”⁶²⁶ Miller had, after all, invested a great amount of effort to organize an educational equivalent to the commercial networks. His position led to a debate among the executive committee, highlighted by internal memos in 1950. Among topics discussed, the committee was concerned that distributing records and tapes required an alternative economy of scale much larger than they had anticipated, including a need for prorated costs, membership fees for minimum services, standards for distribution time and program length, and a stable and permanently funded library of broadcasting. But no opportunity to create a UBC or RMRC was available since Lincoln and RF had denied requests for funding. So the NAEB stuck with the tape network for the next 17 years, and even slightly past the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The NAEB grew to be a major political force as an umbrella organization for administration, policy analysis, and content standards and distribution by consolidating the previous 15 years of initiatives into a unified institutional focus as a decentralized “4th network”.

And many of the first generation of educational broadcasters had risen to prominent posts that were able to support educators after 1950. In December 1950 a subcommittee was proposed by Siegel at WNYC specialized in obtaining funds. The new board included luminaries such as Gilbert Seldes, Charles Siepmann (now at NYU), University of Chicago alumni Robert Hutchins (soon to be of the Ford Foundation) and William Benton (now a Senator from Connecticut and later head of UNESCO). At least

⁶²⁵ Internal memo to Arthur Wildhagen, by rider, February 28, 1951: “officially known as NAEB Tape Network. NAEB Files, Box 6.

⁶²⁶ Letter from Allen Miller, August 28, 1950, now at KWSC, Pullman Washington. NAEB Files, Box 6.

initially, a steady stream of funds came from a popular journal on children's programming, endorsed by parent teacher organizations and women's clubs. Siegel was voted president of the NAEB in 1951.

Perhaps more importantly, the FCC took note of the NAEB's fast gains in organization during the freeze thanks to persuasive defense of their FM frequencies and a letter writing campaign by Hull and Dallas Smythe. Paul Walker of the FCC wrote to Smythe in 1952 that his dedication to standards-based research had endeared the organization to legislators (discussed below). "Intensive research in a local area provides a good basis on which to make an objective evaluation on program service. A study of this kind enables us to see what stations are actually doing and gives us an overall picture of program service."⁶²⁷ And in consultation with Richard Hull, a student at UCLA wrote a sociological dissertation on "successful" tactics the NAEB had recently pursued.

Boyd Lindop's "The University and Radio Education" contended that educational radio was driven by an aspiration to marry democracy and radio due to radio's power for social education as well as its danger for propaganda. Radio, Lindop wrote, was viewed by advocates as providing "instruments to reach adults who do not use other community educational resources".⁶²⁸ And what demarcated educators from commercial interests was their fidelity to "responsibilities in radio education" that included genres such as news and current events, roundtables, biographical drama, adaptations of great literature, programs for agricultural groups, and musical programs. Meeting these responsibilities led educators to conduct audience research and program evaluation, and had opened a new field for an "engineering degree" in radio. The future of communication study,

⁶²⁷ Paul Walker to Dallas Smythe, Feb. 19, 1952, NAEB Papers, Box 6

⁶²⁸ "The University and Radio Education", Described in a Letter to Richard Hull August 22, 1949. NAEB Papers, Box 5, Folder 4

according to Lindop, included not only the study of radio's effects, but also technical issues, writing, journalistic, advertising, control room operation, radio announcing, acting, and production methods in radio course training at that moment in development.⁶²⁹

The Allerton House Seminars culminated the period of historical development that followed the Communications Act, and commenced a second major period, focused on television, that resulted in the formation of public broadcasting. Ultimately the decisions made at the Seminar were successful in combining four major intertwined rubrics of American cultural history—the media reform movement, public broadcasting, educational technology, and communications policy and research—into one institutional formation. The conference reflected the moment at which the media reform movement crystallized strategies that would later result in public broadcasting through decisive institutionalization of approaches to programming and advocacy. The NAEB took its place at the center of a decentralized consortium of university and community stations without a profit motive. Through the bicycle network, the NAEB began to replicate the content output of the commercial networks, with new stations able to mine NAEB clearinghouse resources for programming to meet public interest requirements.

5.6 Educators Receive Reserved Television Frequencies: FCC Deliberations about Channel Reservations, the NAEB Builds Regulatory Support

Educators had a complicated relationship with the FCC between 1934 and 1952. Though the FRC had set multiple precedents that favored commercial allocations before 1934, as quickly as 1935 the FCC had announced provisions in consultation with the Office of Education so that educators could acquire frequencies if they met mandates for

⁶²⁹ *ibid*

public interest. Fifteen years later, though the NAEB had a strong plan after the Allerton Seminars in 1949, there was still little evidence that affiliated stations were capable of meeting criteria for television frequencies, should the FCC deliberate based upon 1934 standards. This provided a conundrum for legislators—Edwin Johnson, Chair of the overseeing Senatorial Committee for the FCC, Wayne Coy, and Frieda Hennock. If educators were held to the same competitive standard for television frequency applications as the commercial networks, which had hundreds of millions of dollars at their disposal for facilities construction and maintenance, history would surely repeat itself. The NAEB, and the FCC itself (in Cottone’s speech, above), had made a push for television based upon the new precedent of reserved FM frequencies.

By October 1949 the NAEB dedicated its full energy to obtaining TV channels during the “freeze”. Initially the FCC, working from Communications Act requirements, issued a notice proposing standards for future allocations of television channels for UHF, but these standards ensured that there would be no opportunities for educational stations. The NAEB sent repeated letters to FCC staff after October 1948 about the difference in application time between commercial and educational applicants, and these letters were noticed by Commission member Frieda Hennock, a New York attorney and Democratic liberal, was immediately pegged as a supporter by educational broadcasters. New Chairman Wayne Coy also supported educational channels, and promised to consider the matter at the opening of September 1948 hearings after NAEB members had appealed to him to protect FM channels.⁶³⁰ Represented by their Washington lawyer Marcus Cohn, the NAEB filed notice, with the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities (now headed by NAEB member Griffith at Iowa State) for a specific provision for the

⁶³⁰ Richard Hull to Alvin Gaines, September 7, 1948, Regarding Coy’s remarks to Hull. Box 4, Folder 8.

reservation of channels for noncommercial educational television broadcast stations.⁶³¹ The Office of Education further spoke on the NAEB's behalf. "A common point of view will be expressed by all the individuals and groups representing education. It is the insistence upon reservations for the future of educational TV channels. The particular means for accomplishing this goal vary somewhat from group to group, but a specific plan is, after all, the final responsibility of the commission."⁶³² The NAEB invited Coy to the Allerton House Seminars, but he declined.

More effective was NAEB advocacy with Edwin Johnson, who as mentioned above had a vested interest in communications technology due to Denver's lack of a television station. Charles Siepmann's "Blue Book" report and commercial broadcasters' failed attacks upon the 10% set-aside FM frequencies further strengthened Johnson's support for educators in 1946. In Johnson's eyes the networks had made a tactical blunder. Commercial broadcasters had claimed that reserved frequencies for governmental and educational content infringed upon free speech, but Johnson viewed this as a highly disingenuous position as a post-war comparison to totalitarian media. In a 1947 hearing Johnson replied with indignity to commercial broadcasters, cited in a speech by Dallas Smythe in 1950:

"We have heard a great deal about freedom of speech. But the freedom of speech that you are talking about is your right to sell in the market place such speech; and that is exactly what you do when you sell advertising. It is not freedom of speech. There is no freedom about it. It is money on the

⁶³¹ Report of the Committee on Radio, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, October 1949. Box 5, Folder 5.

⁶³² Testimony of Office of Education, July 8, 1949. National Archives, CIFIC Papers, Box 32

barrelhead. You sell it, just like you do onions down in the grocery store.

You sell it to the advertiser and you collect for it.”⁶³³

(One might note the similarity between Smythe’s later argument that the networks sell audiences, not products.)

Meanwhile Johnson continued to correspond with several educational broadcasters—Hull, Smythe, and Keith Tyler at Ohio State. Johnson had no intention to undermine the dominant commercial structure of broadcasting, but he remained open to discussing educational broadcasting interests. A September 1949 letter from Hull to Johnson reported a phone conversation in which they spoke about NAEB as “the only minority radio voice, and the only radio voice devoted exclusively to educational purposes left in the United States”.⁶³⁴ Another exchange with Keith Tyler at Ohio State in April 1950 discussed an NAEB invitation for Johnson to keynote the second Allerton conference. Johnson replied: “I know of the fine work that is done by your institute and I particularly congratulate you on the general subject of this year’s conference. It is my opinion that such a question should be frequently reexamined and reappraised in order that the policies being followed in American radio are kept abreast of today’s and tomorrow’s needs”.⁶³⁵ Far from a cordial political reply, Johnson was invited because he had proposed an amendment to Section (305) that the Communications Act state that radio stations belonging to and operated by the US would not be subject to the same regulatory expectations as advertising media.⁶³⁶ If educational stations were shifted to state governmental extensions in the eyes of regulation, set-aside frequencies would be

⁶³³ Dallas Smythe to Edwin Johnson: “A National Policy on Television?”, May 5, 1950, NARA1, CIFIC Papers, Box 36

⁶³⁴ Richard Hull to Edwin Johnson, September 23, 1949, NARA1, CIFIC Papers, Box 32

⁶³⁵ Edwin Johnson, Letter to Keith Tyler, early April, 1950, Box 34b

⁶³⁶ *ibid*

easier to write into new television legislation. However, this proposal did not go far enough because it did not include private universities. A broader statement inclusive of all educational institutions would be necessary.

Between 1949 and 1951 the NAEB continued to develop its policy position on television. Interestingly, several of its cues came from Johnson and the FCC, who were actively attempting to find an algorithm for regulating new technology in line with requirements of the 1934 Act. In one letter to Edwin Johnson, Dallas Smythe practiced perhaps the most fully realized early application of political economy of media research. Through a thorough examination of how past policies had set institutional and regulatory precedents detrimental to public service practices, Smythe appealed to Johnson with both conceptual and empirical evidence that educational broadcasting was not only a benefit to U.S. broadcasting culture, but in line with Johnson's own regulatory decision making. Broadcasting, Smythe argued, was a uniquely American problem because it balanced the interests of the public with standards upheld by private interests. If deliberations at the conclusion of the freeze mirrored the 1934 Act, a "parallel development of uneven availability of service for anything but commercials" would make noncommercial broadcasting impossible. The FCC, Smythe argued, had understood the limits of past legislation and attempted to reserve frequency assignments for broadcasters concerned with community amelioration. But university and educational stations still lacked the central focus of commercial broadcasters to build and maintain frequencies for profit purposes. Universities had to go through several stages of administrative approval before an application would even be possible. Due to almost immediate demand for new

frequencies, once released, a next wave of regulation was almost certainly going to resemble past regulation.

Citing an article by Benjamin Row in the journal *Social Studies* from March 1950, Smythe wrote that in 1949 “it became clear that video was a baby industry, determined to fulfill its destiny as a colossus. It is worth noting that the ingenuity devoted to television may well reap promising rewards for the educator”.⁶³⁷ Educators were now in a position where if given a little more time their usage of television would show immediate benefits to classroom instruction as a visual aid. “Public interest” mandates had long been interpreted in terms of popularity of public consumption, but Smythe appealed to Johnson that a lack of noncommercial options would preclude the development of public interest in education. “At this point let me anticipate a question which inevitably arises: if the public gets the radio programs that market researches determine to be the public favorites, who are you to tell the public what it should have? Is this a democracy or isn’t it?”⁶³⁸ The early and basic precedent for public interest meant that open frequencies were used correctly. Ironically, “public interest”, Smythe argued, was originally introduced as an anti monopoly stipulation. But due to commercial broadcasting’s head start in infrastructural development, public interest came to mean public utilities run by a monopoly of private interests.

Smythe appealed to Johnson that *Pursuant (307)* had also recommended that satisfactory educational programs be introduced. The Blue Book of 1946 (of which Smythe was a co-writer) had pointed to the virtual disappearance of such programs, and the NAEB was the one institution able to develop a stable and dedicated approach to

⁶³⁷ Dallas Smythe to Edwin Johnson: “A National Policy on Television?”, May 5, 1950,, NARA1, CIFC Papers, Box 36

⁶³⁸ *ibid*

community, public service, and educational content.⁶³⁹ Johnson agreed, though he also stood by E.O. Syke's original recommendations in the *Pursuant* that educators actually be able to use assignments constructively, with proof of the educational effectiveness of broadcasts. Several considerations shaped around *Pursuant 307* went into final deliberations: 1) should nonprofit educational stations be subject to the same regulatory procedures as commercial stations?, 2) were educators going to make sufficient use of frequency assignments if special reservations were offered?, and 3) did "equal access" to broadcasting indicate civic imperatives that commercial broadcasting could and would not provide? These things could be remedied by organizing television legislation so that it was friendly to noncommercial broadcasters.

5.7 The Final 1951 "Freeze" Deliberations

The NAEB had consolidated previous initiatives into a focused plan for a decentralized educational network and notified the FCC and the Committee for Interstate and Foreign Commerce of their progress. Most interested parties agreed that education still could not compete with the networks when it came to speed, efficiency, and economic support for facility applications and development. But had education translated its civic imperatives into a strong enough case to convince legislators to protect their progress? Internal debates at the FCC wavered back and forth between the typical (and accurate) assessment of educational broadcasting—there were few professional quality stations, it was not clear that educational broadcasting was effective, and professional quality facilities were rare. Why should they take the chance of writing legislation that might favor practitioners who would be unable to appropriately utilize television in light of new potential medium scarcity? However, in 1951 discussions about how to interpret

⁶³⁹ *ibid*

the Communications Act shifted from the longstanding problems of educational broadcasting to the question of the purpose of broadcasting legislation. Frieda Hennock, who was a strong proponent of educational broadcasting, dominated these discussions. Her position swayed FCC Chairman Wayne Coy and Senator Johnson, already sympathetic to education, to set aside frequencies.

By early 1951 the “freeze” was coming to a close, and momentum for education picked up significantly after the Allerton Seminars. Their associated document, described above, had been distributed to federal institutions with an active letter writing campaign, and they had regained the moral support of the previous researchers and large philanthropic voices, though not their funds. Hennock was such a strong proponent that she took to publically arguing for the original 1934 educator request for 25% reserved frequencies for television. “Television is the teacher’s medium, but to fully harness TV’s power educators must have their own independent television stations. Education is too intricate and delicate a process to be handled by any but the most qualified experts in the field—the educators themselves”.⁶⁴⁰ Hennock’s position was shared by many other federal institutions that had hoped to use technology for public service purposes. Though the “freeze” was primarily focused upon television allocations, Hennock’s argument for educators indicated just how much their standing had strengthened *institutionally*, and helped carry momentum from the advocacy into regulatory discussions. In March 1951, the FCC conducted a survey called “Other Governmental Sources of Radio Information” to see just how many other federal institutions would be interested in reserved frequencies. It found predictable support in the Office of Education. But to their surprise, the Federal Security Agency had decided that school stations could be used for Cold War

⁶⁴⁰ Hennock, Feb 28, 1951 in Variety, NARA1, CIFIC Papers, Box 43.

purposes, and had issued reports on equipment, courses, script catalogs, and radio recordings between 1947 and 1951. The Department of Labor had issued reports on employment security, women in radio, education and unemployment. The Department of Agriculture issued a series of mimeographed reports on the use of radio and films for its work. And a poll found that the Department of State was in favor of reserved frequencies for broadcasts of international educational broadcasting initiatives for UNESCO.⁶⁴¹

Meanwhile educators further consolidated their political strategies into an advocacy group called the Joint Committee for Educational Television (JCET) in March, 1951, which would subsequently be funded by the Ford Foundation. The relationship between the Ford Foundation and the JCET would be instrumental in providing continuous philanthropic support for educational television in the 1960s. In one of their first releases, the JCET offered testimony in support for reserved channels based on the argument that noncommercial television offered the potential for amelioration of educational institution services for adult populations—one of the oldest arguments of the advocacy. Much in line with the FCC’s internal discussions, the JCET further expressed concern that educational reservations “proceed much more slowly in applying for broadcast stations...If there is no reservation the available channels will all be assigned to commercial interests long before educational stations are ready to apply for them”.⁶⁴² A congressional hearing was scheduled for March 21, 1951 in which FCC Commissioners would state their position about the question of educational reservations. Thanks to educational broadcasting’s move toward institutional stability, recent regulation, and an

⁶⁴¹ Internal FCC Records on Bill 1378, March 1, 1951. NARA1, CIFC, Box 35b

⁶⁴² FCC Proposed Rule Making Hearing, March 21, 1951, NARA1, CIFC, Box 38

education-friendly FCC, momentum clearly had begun to shift to continuation of the 10% FM reservations, as applied to television frequencies.

At the hearings Wayne Coy expressed concern over the lack of data that showed that educational institutions beyond its broadcasting interests were willing to take on the hefty costs and labor needed to use television as an educational tool. Further, Coy was concerned that if final reservations were made as an amendment to the Communications Act that the commercial stations would abdicate any public service responsibilities they had held to that point. “I am of the opinion that if the proposed reservation is made final it is important for the commission to emphasize that the reservation of channels for educational stations in no way relieves the licenses of commercial television stations of any responsibility to render a well rounded program service, including a reasonable proportion of time devoted to programs that meet the educational needs of the community.”⁶⁴³ As was true with radio, commercial stations were capable of producing high quality educational broadcasts at a faster pace and at a higher level than universities, and Coy believed that reservations would reduce commercial investment in educational television. Coy spoke on behalf of the majority opinion of the FCC, and likely on behalf of the Senate as well. Deep investment been put into television technology and future infrastructure by NBC, CBS, and ABC, and television frequencies were still considered scarce commodities.

However Frieda Hennock made an impassioned and persuasive plea on behalf of the *concept* of educational broadcasting. The proposal under debate had not yet

⁶⁴³ Wayne Coy, “Views on Educational Broadcasting” by FCC Members at Hearing, 1951. NARA1, CIFC, Box 38.

guaranteed reserved frequencies, and a failure to provide a “sufficient share” would adversely affect the course of future education.

“Television the most dynamic and effective means of mass communication that modern science has devised, enables the educator to reach into millions of American schools and homes. By now everyone has come to recognize the revolutionary changes that visual instruction has brought about in teaching methods. Television is uniquely qualified to utilize and spread the benefits of this modern and efficient method of education at a minimum cost. As the educators’ tool television can bring about as great an expansion and revitalization of education as the development of printing in the early days of the renaissance. The commission has a special responsibility to insure that these children, as well as adult listeners, have full access to the best in education and culture, in addition to the general fare offered by commercial broadcasters. In the hands of the educator, television can become an unparalleled instrument for developing and spreading knowledge and enlightenment—the foundations of a strong and free America.”⁶⁴⁴

Hennock argued that the FCC had recognized the “principle” of reserving channels for educational television while conducting internal discussions, and that reapplying terms of licenses from the Communications Act to television assignments would provide for inadequate treatment of educators. “We ought not, while conceding the

⁶⁴⁴ Frieda Hennock, “Views on Educational Broadcasting” by FCC Members at Hearing, 1951. NARA1, CIFIC, Box 38.

principle of educational television, kill it in practice.”⁶⁴⁵ Just as the FCC has asked educators to better apply philosophies of education to curricular technology, Hennock contended that recognition of the principle of public service with technology would not produce practical results without incentive. Adequate means had to be supplied to properly effectuate adoption of these principles. Hennock recommended extending the reservation of channels for educational purposes so that the mandate of “public interest” also applied to noncommercial access. If there was to be a nationwide noncommercial system—a minimum requirement for “adequate use” of television by educators—a provision to safeguard growth needed to be in place.

Further, since television frequencies were still so scarce, without such a provision commercial broadcasters would accumulate what amounted to a monopoly in television, with no opportunities for alternate uses for television besides advertising and entertainment. A well rounded and well thought through amendment needed to be considered so educators would not similarly be left with just a few television stations in the Midwest who could already meet application requirements. “Education must not be given the giblets of the television turkey”.⁶⁴⁶ To close, Hennock broached that without set-aside frequencies in 1934, even the FREC was largely unable to achieve its stated objectives for aiding experimentation. The FREC had been reliant upon a small but crucial amount of grant money from RF and the networks. Both had stopped funding the Council, and the result was that no federal institution was left to oversee or support educational technology. The NAEB was the last institution interested in such

⁶⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁴⁶ *ibid*

work, and that its members were often also state employees through universities strengthened the view that they could better meet public interest mandates for community public service.

The very next day, March 22, 1951, the FCC released a public notice regarding FCC testimony in front of congress. The FCC planned to issue “some 209 assignments...in many places for noncommercial education use, exclusively”, or roughly 10% of new television channels under consideration. So as not to interfere with basic public interest requirements for well-run all-day access, a community with fewer than three impending assignments would receive no educational reservations unless there was a “primary educational center” such as a university. In forty-six such cases as university towns the only allocations made were to the universities based upon the testimony of the JCET. In an even greater victory for NAEB rhetoric, the FCC offered official recognition that educational institutions needed more time than commercial interests to “enter TV”, and that on occasion the number of educational institutions in a city were greater than available frequencies. The FCC recommended cooperative arrangements in those cases, to be hashed out among educational institutions. The FCC recommended that educational broadcasters had to provide at least one television service to all parts of the U.S. including one service to each community. Final deliberations for unassigned frequencies would be made dependent on size of population, geography, and number of TV services available.⁶⁴⁷ The *New York Times* reported the end of the freeze on March 23, 1951 with

⁶⁴⁷ FCC Public Notice, March 22, 1951: “FCC Proposes Partial Lifting of TV Freeze”, NARA1, CIFC, Box 38

2000 new stations to 1400 communities.⁶⁴⁸ Educational stations would be framed as extensions of “federal” stations could potentially be subject to different taxes, laws, and considerations than private commercial stations.⁶⁴⁹

To explain the logic of decisions regarding new frequency assignments, William Benton joined Edwin Johnson in an interview with *Variety*. The proposal would actually be beneficial to commercial broadcasters, they argued, because a split between public service and public interest stations would promote the “enduring principles of democracy and free enterprise”. A set-aside spectrum for governmental and noncommercial stations would limit encroachment of the government upon private activities, and encourage expansion and prosperity of private interests. “Instead of forcing public service broadcasts upon commercial enterprises, which would force them to receive oversight from the government, the commission had revised program structure of licenses in order to determine whether licensee has rendered a rounded service in the public interest.”⁶⁵⁰ Part of this offer was that television could introduce its own “code” to avoid governmental regulation, a previously separate debate about government oversight that had now overlapped on the educational question.

William Benton introduced the first version of a Bill for what later became the Sixth Report and Order, on May 21, 1951. Benton’s resolution (S RES 127) was signed by Ernest McFarland of Arizona and Johnson. But part of his proposal included a provision for a “subscription method” of educational broadcasting, which would (conveniently) be run by Encyclopedia Britannica, a company in which he was the

⁶⁴⁸ Freeze to end, New York Times March 23, 1951: 2000 new stations to 1400 communities. NARA1, CIFC, Box 38

⁶⁴⁹ Letter from Smythe To Johnson, 1950. NARA1, CIFC, Box 35b

⁶⁵⁰ Johnson and Benton to “Variety” in 1951: Self Regulation vs Government Interference. NARA1, CIFC, Box 36

Publisher. To maintain federal oversight of educational progress Benton also proposed that a “Blue Book” be published yearly.⁶⁵¹ His somewhat self-serving plan was rejected.

Edwin Johnson also faced some unexpected pressure from his home state of Colorado over educational frequencies. Denver was only allocated one channel, and if it were to become educational his city would not receive network programming. For a brief few months, he shifted his position that perhaps Denver only required a commercial station, even though the University of Denver had put in a competitive application. For this he received unanticipated and intense flack from Colorado educators, who were well familiar with the RMRC, which had disbanded in 1950. To this Johnson replied with his strongest statement of intent about educational broadcasting: “I am not opposed to the use of television frequencies for educational purposes per se merely because I proposed the designation of channels 6 as a commercial station. The past few years have strongly demonstrated the superiority of television as a form of communications and its effectiveness in conveying the most elusive of all commodities – thought.”⁶⁵² As governor of Colorado he had familiarity with the fiscal problems confronting educational broadcasters, he argued, and had seen the difficulty the Rocky Mountain network had meeting routine responsibilities. “Television is far too valuable as a national resource and much too intricate and delicate a process to be allowed to waste away through idleness, lack of funds, and experience.”⁶⁵³ And for a moment, he seemed to conclude that perhaps Denver—and for that matter the country—would be better off with shared frequencies and the provisions of cooperation stated in *Pursuant 307*.⁶⁵⁴ But another internal FCC

⁶⁵¹ William Benton, Resolution (S RES 127), May 21, 1951. NARA1, CIFC, Box 35b

⁶⁵² Johnson on Educational Broadcasting, Internal Memo, NARA1, CIFC, Box 35b

⁶⁵³ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁴ Edwin Johnson, filed Jun 21, 1951, NARA1, CIFC, Box 37

report conducted by the *Institute for Better Living* in conjunction with the FCC in June 1951, “Educational Television Survey Report”, found that of the 258 colleges, 123 superintendents, and 46 states surveyed 74% were in support of noncommercial licensing.⁶⁵⁵

By July, 1951, deliberations could have gone several ways. The Committee for Interstate and Foreign Commerce could have impelled the FCC to deliberate similarly to the Communications Act, which would have by default favored commercial networks; due to frequency scarcity the FCC could have ruled in favor of frequency sharing; or they could extend the precedent set by the 1945 FM allocation. But momentum for education had been built by Hennock and the NAEB, and close examination of policy *Pursuants* and amendments resulted in a creatively rendered decision on behalf of educators. As reported by FCC Secretary Slowie on July 13, 1951, Section 303 of the Communications Act permitted the FCC to classify radio stations based on prescriptions of the nature of services rendered. It was possible to separate classes of stations and assign bands of frequencies with a variable range of operating times and geographical reach. If the FCC were to organize a classified “assignment table” for possible noncommercial educational stations and then apply the table with uniformity, this would amount to a “direct implementation of the substantive and procedural provisions of Section 303”.⁶⁵⁶ Further they determined that Section 307(b) commanded equitable distribution of radio service among every state and community if applications for licenses were made. So if a classification was made for a noncommercial frequency band and enough stations applied

⁶⁵⁵ “Educational Television Survey Report”, June 11, 1951, NARA1, CIFC, Box 43

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid*

within that classification, the FCC was impelled to grant equitable access to that classification of service for each community.⁶⁵⁷

When Section 307 was combined with Section 303, Slowie reported, a standard for an educational frequency band could be “applied in all cases, or as a discretionary grant of authority to act by rule if the public interest so requires”.⁶⁵⁸ The two sections could be read together as one standard to be applied in all cases, whether or not the commission chose to exercise the rule. Further, an amendment to the Act was possible because section (c) of the Act provided a congressional mandate in the absence of a “statutory direction to allocate in a manner prescribed by the statute itself”. In other words, if Johnson could pass an amendment to the Act that a classification of stations were mandated to hold equal access for their designated purpose, as long as such classified stations were represented in each state, then set-aside frequencies would be available to meet that spectrum of “public interest” requirements.

But this did not let commercial broadcasters off of the hook for public service requirements, in contrast to the conciliatory tone of Benton and Johnson’s interview. On July 23, 1951, the FCC reported that it would “require that commercial broadcast stations devote a specified percentage of broadcast time to educational programs”.⁶⁵⁹ Commercial stations would not be recused from “well rounded” service simply because new classifications would be defined. Section 303 indicated that the commission had authority to prescribe the nature of the service to be rendered by a class of stations, and the stations within that class, by directing that those stations devote a fixed percentage of their broadcasting time to a particular type of service. Commercial stations had claimed to

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁹ FCC Release, July 23, 1951, NARA1, CIFC, Box 38.

offer services that educators had never attempted to offer, including educational services. An amendment to the Act would hence include a mandate that new classifications would be set-aside for specific purposes, such aeronautical, industrial, or educational FM, with prescriptions of percentages of time dedicated to meeting allocated classifications. Commercial broadcasters had historically promised more services than educators and would be required to meet those requirements even if protected frequencies were offered to universities. However, in a concession to commercial broadcasters, Johnson offered that the FCC would not actively enforce this provision if networks agreed to follow regulation.

“With respect to non-specialized broadcast services in which stations are licensed to render a rounded service in the public interest to the general public, the commission has consistently interpreted the Communications Act as requiring, as a matter of basic congressional policy, that licensees retain responsibility to make the initial determination as to the specific character of service which would fulfill the statutory mandate. While it has been the commission’s position that a well rounded program structure should include among those programs designed to meet the needs and interests of the people to be served a reasonable amount of educational programs, the commission, in recognition of the basic principle of licensee responsibility and the prohibition against censorship contained in section 326 of the act has taken the entirely consistent position that it will not

prescribe any fixed quantitative program standards for non specialized broadcast stations.”⁶⁶⁰

The important outcome was that educational stations would be designated under a wider classification of “nonprofit radio programs” with clear institutional licensing as an educational, nonprofit, or community station to qualify for the new classification.

The Sixth Report and Order of 1952 ultimately defined newly reserved channels for “certain communities for use by noncommercial educational television stations”.⁶⁶¹ In line with the FM reservations of 1945, the amendment required clearly detailed description of the purpose of the television applicant’s institutional purpose. The new noncommercial classification could be applied to public and private educational, state, county, municipality, or other political subdivisions such as boards of educations. The Order permitted educational institutions to apply, as long as applications supplied accompanying details concerning the educational background of an applicant’s practices.⁶⁶²

In another round of serendipity reflective of the explosion of initiatives after 1934, during this process the JCET was granted \$90,000 by educational broadcasting’s newest underwriters, the Ford Foundation.⁶⁶³ J. Webb Young of Ford had been convinced that the building and maintenance of educational stations was an appropriate application of the foundation’s intent to impact “the emotional maturity and unconscious behavior patterns” of the country. This offer buttressed the passing of the 6th Report, supported strongly by Edwin Johnson.

⁶⁶⁰ Max Goldman as General Acting Counsel: July 23, 1951: NARA1, CIFIC, Box 37

⁶⁶¹ Sixth Report and Order, NARA1, CIFIC, Box 37

⁶⁶² TJ Slowie, June 26, 1952, NARA1, CIFIC, Box 37

⁶⁶³ July 16, 1951 report in “Broadcasting”. NARA1, CIFIC Papers, Box 45

“I go along with Mr. Young completely in his very sound and realistic approach in coordinating the aspiration of American educators with the commercial operation of television stations by operators who are fit, willing, and able. The rendering of the combination of these services will help the cause of education. I am not suggesting nor should any of my comments be interpreted as precluding any educational group from applying for a channel as long as they satisfactorily demonstrate they are financially qualified and otherwise able to operate a station”.⁶⁶⁴

Educational broadcasting had survived despite its failings and regulatory hurdles, and the Ford Foundation, under the supervision of Robert Hutchins (one of the directors of the University of Chicago Roundtable and University Broadcasting Council) and C. Scott Fletcher would invest hundreds of millions of dollars into the standardization of a production culture of educational broadcasting development after 1952. The next phase of this history begin with the streamlining of aesthetic practices of media under the Ford Foundation’s support.

5.8 Conclusion

The final version of the Report was filed on April 13, 1952, and upheld the tentative FM assignments from 1945, and even increased them from 209 to 242 split between VHF and UHF. The resolute will to devise methods for the measurement of the relationship between aesthetics, technical practice, curriculum, and methods of distribution had made for an economy of exchange that ultimately convinced legislators that public service capacities of technology were deserving of some protection from the

⁶⁶⁴ Edwin Johnson, 1952, NARA1, CIFIC Papers, Box 45

caprice of commercialization. Educational broadcasting offers a case example of how media institutions have been constituted for civic intent, in which the construction of an entire apparatus anticipated the reconciliation of social contradictions. By the end of the freeze, educators would have a stable range of television and radio frequencies from which to conduct further educational broadcasting development.

Conclusion: From Concept to Practice. Problems and Practices Regarding the Transition from Aspiration to Official Knowledge

6.1 Contributions and Limitations

This dissertation conducts an institutional history of the genealogical origin of public broadcasting, and was largely composed by assessing internal correspondence memos and letters associated with the development of the institution of public broadcasting. I make three arguments over the course of five chapters. The first is that to understand public broadcasting in the United States, it must be viewed as holding origins in a historical advocacy aimed at translating aspirations towards democratic parity into an official institutional structure concerned with social inclusion through the transmission of information. The second is that this dissertation hence examines what can safely be called the rise of a kind of official knowledge. I consider this example of official knowledge, which can generally be defined as solution-based, to be a counterpoint to current arguments in the cultural history of media that only center on one dominant system, and its related logic for production, development, and reception of information.

This is a story essentially about the *second* largest paradigm in U.S. mass media history, though it is the dominant one in other national traditions. As stated in the introduction, part of the inspiration for the project comes from a personal curiosity about how even the second-largest paradigm has been obscured so thoroughly by the ideology of commercialization. When it has been discussed by scholarship, public broadcasting has regularly been dismissed as emulating *components* of ideological characteristics major industries exhibit in *whole*. The third argument is that the intellectual, regulatory, commercial, and cultural history of broadcasting in the United States in general has been

centrally occupied with the issues that arise in attempting to create a sustainable model for educational/public broadcasting in light of obstacles such as the frequency scarcity, inadequacy in the production culture of educational broadcasting, and most pressingly, the complete lack of a funding source for an approach to technology that required rigorous, slow, and dedicated experimentation to develop.

Researching this history led to a few unanticipated findings that might be received as counterintuitive to established paradigms in the field. First, the assumption that public and private production cultures in the U.S. have always been separate and alienated is untrue. Public and private media industries developed in dialectical relationship with each other due to requirements set in place by regulatory and federal bodies. Public broadcasters ultimately built their entire model for a “4th network” through the emulation of aesthetic, technological, and administrative practices learned from commercial broadcasters, and then built academic programs around them that sent students to work for commercial stations. Second, and similarly, scholarship has mistaken how public and private media industries are *different*. To put it in Douglas Gomery’s terms again, the difference is a question of how each institution’s “economy of scale” historically evolved based upon different priorities for the use of technology. Public broadcasters, simply put, devised an economy of scale that was nonprofit, decentralized, and educational, intended to serve small audiences and community needs. Based upon this discovery I have written this dissertation as an institutional history that addresses how the economy of scale of public broadcasting originated. Its omissions are deliberate, because the topics I did not address each deserve their own expansive investigations, which I intend to conduct as this project matures. Among topics that have never been addressed in the cultural history of

public media: its development of completely original and distinct radio and television genres based upon educational goals; whether or not educational stations had their intended effect upon their targeted communities, a huge topic worthy of many case studies; the ways that race, class, and gender were written into the fabric of noncommercial media practice; and perhaps the most difficult outcome to gauge, the historical legacy of educational broadcasters upon their intended outcome—the promotion of democratic equality through access to public education.

My interest in this topic can be described as a concern with the intellectual history of concepts of the public, as they have been developed in practice. But in this dissertation I have focused primarily on the raw data from advocates themselves, as their letters, memos, reports, and internal notes have been stored in the archives. While I accumulated thousands of news articles, trade reports, and regulatory reports from congressional deliberations, and the FCC itself, my primary interest was to understand just how the educators understood their own project. By and large the educators who are the central characters of the larger arc of this story—those who came to actually build public broadcasting—ended up as secondary characters in this dissertation. During the 1930s and 1940s they were at best a “scrappy” group who could barely hold their radio stations together, but who held such strong convictions that their tenacity shifted from an aspiration to a success story. And indeed one of the most difficult problems in writing this dissertation has been where to identify their early successes without a retrospective view.

The big winner of this advocacy history between 1934 in 1952 is the *concept* of noncommercial media. The concept, which can be defined as the translation of public

education initiatives into technological practice, was quite prevalent for at least 30 or 40 years previous to educational broadcasters, as noted in Daniel Czitrom's work on the progressive era.⁶⁶⁵ And many of the great projects that would come out of public broadcasting originated with the utopian vision of the progressive-era above what technology might prove capable of achieving.

Another unanticipated finding of this dissertation has been the discovery of a case in which believers in technology as an apparatus to cure social ills actually (began) to show evidence of their claim. Every twenty or thirty years or so a media scholar gains prominence by arguing that technology can play a part in mending social contradictions. It is certainly a hope held by nearly every researcher in the field. But this case provides an analysis of just how difficult of an emprise it is to utilize technology for social amelioration. Using technology for civic purposes, just as prerequisites for the possibility of change, requires: regulatory, administrative, productive, aesthetic, development, receptive, and researched components, *which all must work together to form a coherent institutional whole*, to ensure that technology serves this purpose. Other arguments about the *inherent* influence of technology, such as found by McLuhan, are piecemeal at best. "Technology", as a working concept to early educational broadcasters, referred to increasing confluence between different public relationships. Any claim made by a media "utopian" might as well be discarded if it does not include a sweeping pragmatic understanding of how sustainable cultural change logistically works.

Since there are quite a few conceptual systems that proclaim dialectical change to occur naturally, without detailed attention or ethical incentive, I argue that an

⁶⁶⁵ Czitrom, Daniel J. *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

examination of the historical construction of technology as an ethical object requires a close analysis of bureaucracy. This project began as the first step of a longer study of *leftist* media tactics that have actually succeeded. But there is no doubt that this history is really one of *liberal* system building. By “liberal”, here I mean those who begin with and believe in the system as it is, but view room for improvement. I’m inclined to respond with awe at just how large of an advocacy this movement inspired, and just how intellectually rigorous its adherents were, such as can be found at Wisconsin, Ohio State, and among the Princeton Radio Research Project members. But I also want to very carefully note that there are dramatic limitations to a conceptual apparatus that attempts to “better the system” by working within the system.

Before I discuss the limitations of the project I’d like to again point out just how important it is to view this as an advocacy history in which a *media industry* was the result, and not view the history as a media advocacy *by* a media industry. If “public broadcasting” is understood merely as the development of a specific media industry with specific characteristics, the reasons why disparate groups were dedicated to the same goal, and how their separate initiatives culminated into a technocratic infrastructure, becomes obscured. The advocacy examined here did not aim to build and *legitimate a new media industry*. It began as a question of the *legitimation of democracy* as the nation-building purpose of national media networks. When viewed this way it becomes clearer why so many influential groups’ interests were piqued by the project. Among those inspired by this prospect, and accounted for in this dissertation: the federal government, philanthropic interests, commercial broadcasters, states, public schools, labor practitioners, administrators, researchers, psychologists, the BBC, senators and

congressmen, and, of course, listeners. The question of how to structure a reflexive society that would inevitably use technology as a social tool, was at the heart of the origin of noncommercial media history. And ultimately that meant that proponents such as the NCER had to turn their attention from their activism of pre-1934 to advocacy to a systematic approach to changing what the dominant system would recognize as a media institution. To put this in the conceptual terms of the Birmingham School, the building, growth, and interconnectivity of disparate advocacy groups with the same fundamental goal can be characterized as the development of a network of relations dedicated to maintaining the circulation of their concept. And most of the decisions that were made interpersonally, institutionally, and politically, as well as the arguments, were based around the exploration of how to successfully achieve the legitimation of the use of technology as a democracy-promoting tool. This explains the contours of why Adorno fought with the PRP research participants, why the National Association of Educational Broadcasters were rejected by the very philanthropic interests who had similarly dedicated themselves to improving educational broadcasting, and it explains why in spite of the difficulties of creating an institutional mechanism, these same (separated and sometimes antagonistic) groups still gathered together in 1949 in 1950 at the Allerton House Seminars to discuss this fundamental vision.

So to further broaden the conceptual parameters of the discussion of the media advocacy a bit—I attempt to define the concept of media advocacy as the identification of a vision that must make logistical inroads, concessions, and adjustments, before it might stably form as an institution recognized within an infrastructure. To be recognized by a political system, concepts must be viewed as coherent by the system itself. And after

incorporating new concepts, a system will necessarily inflect a concept differently than intended by the advocates, so that a concept increases coherency in circulation and representation. From what I can tell there is no way to avoid the *concessions* of system integration without a Bolshevik-like rupture. Put differently, in Raymond Williams' terms, social change takes the form of a long revolution that can be empirically traced as emergent shifts in determinants, structures of feeling, and within the logic of a discourse itself.⁶⁶⁶ No epochal or dramatic change is possible in late capitalism, because as Michael Apple has said, there is no moment of "post-dialectics". Interventions are made, changes occur, and those interventions then become reference points for future emergent strategies. One hopes that those reference points limit the emergence of new inequalities. But there is no guarantee that these interventions will do so.

Yet one of the inspiring things about this advocacy history is that little external benefit to the advocates themselves can be located in their records. Besides the PRP affiliates, all of whom were already immensely successful intellectuals, there were no lasting awards, no commendations, and no pats on the back from major politicians or commercial executives. Here we find a group that founded a discursive institution dedicated to thinking and learning about a social phenomenon, with specific ethical ends in mind, and little search for glory.

Ultimately, although this history is of a media advocacy, its story does not serve as a model corrective to social inequalities. Among limitations that must be taken seriously is the question of access. This is a history of the institutionalization of one approach to official knowledge that devised techniques to disseminate information, in ways that were

⁶⁶⁶ Williams, R. *Marxism and literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

intentionally reproductive of the specific aspirations of that group. One of the problems of official knowledge is that one must be in a position of advantage and stability in order to distribute one's perspective in a way so that it might take the status of officiality. Much of this history covers the aspirations of those already *within* the system, who attempted to carve out a position for those who were not yet in the system. And of course one of the problems of this is that it takes a specifically paternalistic, homogeneous, hetero-normative turn. This problem was not covered in this specific work for several historiographical reasons. The first is that there is almost no record within the early genealogical papers of public broadcasting about perceived characteristics of "target groups" (there are after 1953), nor are there records about how subjugated groups were or were not permitted to participate in this history. Of course the lack of evidence of participation (over 150,000 pages of evaluation) makes it safe to report that many possible collaborators who would have held a serious investment in public education were left out of this advocacy. More work simply put needs to be done excavating how educational broadcasting actually responded to, or contributed to, agrarian, urban, minority, and immigrant audiences.

Further, a related second problem is that the major players discussed in this dissertation are a demographically uniform group, in terms of race, class, orientation, and gender. To become a professor in this era meant to go through an extremely rigorous series of tests to one's disposition, perspective, and social performance of a knowledge base. It also meant that the subject of these tests were almost uniformly of one social experience. Those at the heart of the story were a privileged group who already carried a considerable degree of cultural capital. Their outreach came from a closed position. The

first comment to make here, which is an entirely insufficient explanation of cause, is that this is history “of” the time in which these initiatives were devised, for better or worse. But that hardly excuses how a progressive project could omit so many specific cultural experiences when attempting to devise an inclusive system. Again, this does change, but not until the 1960s. This also reveals something quite central above the 1930s project itself. In good faith I have tried to describe remaining documents as accurately as possible. But there are absences in the historical record that indicate the following: the vision of equality at stake for this specific group of advocates, which in some ways was a humble group of educators, can be framed as the obtainment of bureaucratic recognition (of the condition for the possibility) for their vision of public education.

The consequence is that, as Ouellette has pointed out, some degree of cultural assumption was inscribed upon the institutional formation itself. I hesitate to call educational broadcasters *merely* representative of a dominantly “elite” habitus, since many of them came from small humble origins and working class rural experiences. But it is clear that while the concept of public education was liberal for its time, especially having taken place up to 20 years before *Brown versus the Board of Education*, early educational broadcasting was never intended to dramatically transform larger social relations. Thus in light of these limitations as stated, as an advocacy, this project does effectively focus a specific purview of this history: a way to understand the logic of how shifts are made within mass culture.

6.2 Conceptual Applications and Statement of Future Work

Somehow, pervasively within the past 15 years in media studies, “popular culture” has come to be thought above as “commercial culture” alone. In fact the “popular

culture” that was experienced by communities until the 1950s was primarily local and regional, with a few hours per night dedicated to the national. *Localism is the historical core of popular culture*. This is why in part the Rockefeller Foundation was so invested in furthering and capturing the folklore of local cultures as the original goal of its regional radio underwriting, and why educational broadcasting began as an attempt to expand “localism”. Put differently, the development of the analysis of popular culture has historically referred to popular communication as a strategic maintenance of localism. The kind of popular culture exemplified by commercial networks was an attempt to nationalize localism into a unified “imagined community”, as discussed by Benedict Anderson and Michele Hilmes. But “public” culture is in many ways at the core of popular culture, because public broadcasting was built to discursively respond to the day-to-day “popular” life of communities. The limits of a localized popular culture can be found in the way that local culture consists of expressions designed to extend fundamental inequalities written into the communities themselves. Thus public broadcasting, as a gatekeeper of “community”, carries inherent contradictions that are found within local culture as often as elite culture.

With the historical limits and virtues of “public communication” in mind, my hope is that this dissertation will contribute to an understanding of what advocacy strategies have actually worked at changing regulatory discussions, as well as popular culture perspectives. If leftist media studies intends to contribute a serious intervention in mass culture itself, and not merely respond and things *after* dominant interest have already acted, the key, for better or worse, comes not from posthumous acts of resistance, but by identifying and appropriating the subtle ways that determinants are strategically placed.

Advocates must relearn the logistics of information production, so that advocacies might become sustainable methods of the circulation of perspective. The Right understands this, liberal capitalists understand this, and in truth most individuals understand how to position themselves within purview of their personal lives. The small contribution of this project is the way that it identifies how concepts are consolidated into specific institutional practices. What does it take to *become* a media advocacy institution? In terms of media advocacy it takes a few steps:

One, a media advocacy begins with a concept of how to reconcile a social contradiction, including an emergent intuition about what strategies might be applied to designated contradictions. Two, it requires that a strategic alliance form as a consensus about what strategies might be taken. Three, an advocacy requires internal debate about the contours of a social contradiction as well as the course of identified strategies, so that consensus might evolve a stable discourse that carries an internal logic. Once a “logic” has been identified, adherents must speak on behalf of that logic, and lay rhetorical determinants among different circulating nodes that effectively distribute information. Four, it requires the evolution of a discourse into something sustainable beyond the temporal status from which it emerged. The temporality of a discourse begins with a specific set of questions and beliefs, and then must reflexively shift to external phenomena while maintaining its internal coherence. This requires strategies for maintenance of the concepts into posterity. This is why the examination of *institutions* represents a crucial step in identifying when concepts, problems, and practices of discursive formations become official knowledge.

For this I propose two new tools in the analysis of discursive formations. The first is that every step of the temporal growth of solution-based concepts must be understood as evolving into a sustainable institution. A sustainable institution will be inscribed by the original advocacy solution envisioned regarding how to reconcile social contradictions. Put differently, there is always an *anticipatory* dimension that guides the evolution of a discourse into a message circulating within popular culture. This kernel of stability—the maintenance of an originary-engendering concept—is why discourses are capable of reflexive adjustment to other proposed solutions. Second, and this is quite crucial and well understood by media industry studies: there are basic logistical necessities required to succeed at circulating a discursive position so that it becomes part of a larger public and popular discourse. Just because an advocacy group has perceived a solution model, it does not mean that they will effect change simply by innovating new concepts or practices. For better or worse, it requires all of the practices that comprise the utilization and maintenance of technology, including production practices, PR, distribution, and adherence to regulation.

The perseverance of a stable *concept* is central to the maintenance of the internal consistency of a discourse. But after a sizable group, as discussed throughout this dissertation, accepts the logic of a concept as a discourse, a concept must go through a series of adjustments to become a sustainable institution. This includes, for better or worse, a laundry list of logistical activities including the development of financial sources, knowledge of how to use the technology most effectively, guidelines for administrative practices that can be talked to new employees when there's turnover, effective aesthetic practice to make information palatable, knowledge of the

technological apparatus itself and models of distribution, knowledge of the audience gained through community outreach and through demographic research, and perhaps most importantly, fidelity to a cause in such a way that a proposed solution will appear to be a workable solution to others. Concessions are required at multiple stops in this process, and this clearly waters-down the perceived “purity” of a concept itself, much to the chagrin of ideological purists. The history of public broadcasting is a history of the materialization of a concept into bureaucratic practices. This history is rife with contradictions as well as innovations. In the constitution of public broadcasting, several stages of organization had to be achieved in rhetorical, political, pedagogical, and practitioner spheres before it was viable as a sustainable institutional construct.

My biggest concern is that the most important social movements tend to disappear too rapidly. And if the logic of the basis for the formation of the social movements into an institution can be assessed, including its problems and with its contributions, then I hope that genuine constructive dissent will continue and increase in effectiveness.

A final problem with an attempt to devise a logic of institutional growth is that such information is, in itself, not inherently directed toward a dialectical outcome. Such information can be utilized for any purpose and by any discursive construction, be it regressive or progressive. I was careful not to inflect this particular description of historical data with my perspective. However, my clear goal over the past five years has been to ruminate about the conceptual and practical dimensions of social change. Future work on this topic, now that some hindsight is possible, will focus on structural patterns of discursive circulation within the public sector.

The problem of assessing how public broadcasting formed has further directed my attention to related historical gaps in media studies, which will be the subject of consequent work. This project began as a way to identify the influence of turn-of-the-century educational philosophies upon educational broadcasting. Available materials are so vast, so unprocessed, and so dispersed, that this part of the project was shelved temporarily to address the comeback of educational broadcasting after 1934. However for a book project Chapter 1 should be concerned with the way that educators deliberately applied educational philosophy to distance learning initiatives in the 1910s. These educational distance-learning initiatives acted as the foundation of all educational experimentation in the 1920s. Hugh Sloten has written about this to some extent, but what still needs to be discussed is how educational concepts permeated educational experiments. The history of public broadcasting, it can be argued, began with educational philosophy from the Progressive Era. The chain that passes from concept to institutional practice is empirically verifiable.

Another part of dissertation work not discussed in this draft includes the collection of nearly 8000 pages of history from the World War II period, when educational broadcasting luminaries honed their craft. An entire chapter needs to be written on the way that educational broadcasting ingratiated itself to the military, which further helped to gain regulatory support after the war. Practitioners were able to apply experimental media effects research to the production of educational reels, and use their research to make and content adjustments for military training. Further the propaganda research innovated in the 1930s by the PRP was utilized by the Office of War Information. Every single PRP member participated in some way or another in propaganda development,

either through overseas broadcasts, domestic broadcasts, research and development, or training at home. Several works have addressed propaganda history. But it specifically needs to be noted that the persuasiveness of media practices discovered during the War was honed and applied to practices in public broadcasting development. Public broadcasting at no point saw itself as an extension of nationalistic propaganda. However a book-study on the history public broadcasting would be remiss to ignore how propaganda and war research permeated into mass communications research and content development practices after 1948.

And finally, as mentioned above, perhaps the biggest contribution not yet made in film and media studies will come from the investigation of the unique aesthetic form of noncommercial media in the U.S. It was not until public broadcasting was aesthetically mature that it became educationally effective. The second planned work in this series, 1953-1967, will almost entirely focus on this evolution, which can be framed succinctly as the symbiotic relationship between educational content and network aesthetics. At the core of the evolution of public broadcasting, and the advocacy foundations addressed in this dissertation, are how standard institutional practices were devised, and then how those practices moved closer and closer to a unique and original institutional voice defined by the early programming of NPR and PBS. This project will provide an opportunity to speak directly to the representational traces of official knowledge.

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