

No sooner had the U.S. entered the war than many younger men who worked at radio stations volunteered for service or were drafted, and so shortages of trained personnel became an increasing problem. Stations began looking for women willing to study to be able to pass FCC license exams.

In December 1941 President Roosevelt appointed Byron Price of the Associated Press as Director of Censorship, but in making the announcement the president called upon the press and radio to abstain voluntarily from disseminating information harmful to the war effort. Actually, Price had little to do because of voluntary compliance. At the end of the war, President Truman said that it was “the patriotism of broadcasters and the newspapermen that the nation’s press and radio had done nothing that would embarrass the Government in its fight for victory.”

In January 1942 the National Association of Broadcasters published a detailed “War-Time Code for Broadcasters.” It had been developed together with Price’s Office of Censorship. It went into great detail about how to prevent stations from doing anything that might help our enemies. It noted that some

information from news service wires might not be appropriate for radio. It urged every broadcaster to think, “Would this material be of value to me if I were the enemy?” It listed many examples of inappropriate reporting, such as troop movements, activities at Army or Navy bases, movement of trains or ships, and production at factories producing war materiel.

“Open-mic” programs were discouraged lest someone in the audience might say “Heil Hitler!”

Shortages of critical materials meant that the FCC in 1942 contacted stations to announce that no further construction permits would be granted unless the applicant had all necessary materials on hand. Westinghouse was in the process of establishing new FM stations at most of its AM station sites, but fortunately was able to get five of them up and running with materials on hand and innovative cobbling-up of equipment. Throughout the war, station chief engineers had to be clever to keep transmitters on the air, given the difficulty in getting replacement parts.

The government wanted to use international shortwave station WBOS for government broadcasting, and so it allowed Westinghouse to procure and install a new rhombic antenna. In January 1941 WBOS began broadcasting to Latin America to compete with Hitler’s propaganda broadcasts aimed at that area. In November 1942 the U.S. Government assumed control of all U.S. shortwave stations with no-profit lease arrangements. The Office of War Information and the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs provided programming.

During the war a system of east coast “Key Stations” was established under the direction of the U.S. Army First Fighter Command. This was the same approach used by the CONELRAD system during the Cold War era. Key stations would notify other stations to leave the air in case of an attack so that enemy bombers could not use direction finding on radio station signals to



WBOS QSL card for shortwave listeners





Urging people to buy war bonds was a high priority. KDKA loaded its radio stars into its "bondwagon" and brought them to bond events held throughout western Pennsylvania.



Here H. M. McClintick, Vice Chairman of the Pennsylvania War Finance Committee (right) receives a \$100,000 check from KDKA station manager Joe Baudino (left) and L. H. Lund, Westinghouse's Treasurer. Westinghouse station personnel purchased more than \$4 million in bonds during the war.

home in on their targets. Four Westinghouse stations were Key Stations.

Perhaps the most important role of radio stations was to prop up the morale of the American public. This meant reminding people of the importance of democratic principles and contrasting them with those of the Axis powers. Of course, this was prior to the civil rights movement and so it was easy to find examples of where our nation fell short of the noble principles it espoused.

Encouraging the purchasing of war bonds and conserving materials was very important. Delivering up to date news and government information needed to be done well. Listeners needed to understand the need for rationing. The frequency of public service announcements increased. Westinghouse stations carried almost 5,000 such announcements during the first year after Pearl Harbor, with titles such as "Play Square with Meat," "Tin Can Salvage," "Careless Talk," and "Conserve Cars."

Scripts of network programs on all three networks dealt with these issues, and writers did their part. For example, in one NBC show, Fibber McGee starts by complaining about rationing. As the plot unfolds, his wife Molly and his friends all show him how selfish and stupid his attitude is, and by the end of the show, he is fully convinced that rationing is essential if the nation is to win the war. In another show, Fibber reads in the newspaper about the need for tack welders in war production factories, and jokes follow about how it must be difficult to weld on something as small as a tack. At the end of the program any listener who is a tack welder is urged to contact the local employment office. In still another show, Fibber helps to sell war bonds. Selling bonds was something that most popular radio personalities took to heart. Singer Kate Smith was especially noted for success in bond drives. Station KDKA alone sponsored bond drives that raised more than a million dollars, and in cooperation with other organizations' events, the total was over \$6.6 million.

During the war, station KYW went from 26 newscasts per week to 71. KYW also created a radio workshop for teachers and principals about educational radio and published manuals on topics such as script writing and production. Students wrote scripts on topics such as social responsibility and patriotism, some of which were deemed good enough that they were actually produced and aired. Philadelphia's Superintendent of Schools wrote: "We are so deeply indebted to you all that we can never hope to amortize what we owe, other than through trying to put into practice radio instruction and ideals of service which you have given to us."



Fort Wayne had a newspaper strike during the war and so station WOWO erected bulletin boards in downtown locations to keep people informed of war news, and even dropped bulletin sheets from airplanes!

If broadcasters had not been so willing to cooperate with the government, the War Department might have felt a need to take over control of radio stations, but that did not happen. The industry created The Broadcasters Victory Council to be a liaison with the War Department and resolve issues.

At the beginning of the war, demands for airtime from various government agencies began to proliferate and stations found it difficult to keep up with the requests. In October 1942 the Office of War Information (OWI) stepped in and issued a government-wide requirement that all requests for air time related to the war effort had to be approved by the OWI. That helped considerably. OWI published its "Network Allocation Plan" whereby top priority announcement subjects were assigned to various programs and networks via a weekly schedule. That was to avoid a situation where a network program that urged listeners to save fat or scrap metal was duplicated by a local announcement spot also about saving fat or scrap metal.

During the 1930s major broadcasters such as RCA, Crosley, and Westinghouse had established powerful shortwave stations. The Nazis used high-power shortwave transmitters to spread its propaganda around the world. When the Voice of America was first established not long after WWII began, it did not have transmitters of its own, and so the VOA had to lease shortwave stations to get its message out. Westinghouse's international station WBOS in Boston was one such station. The Office of War Information began leasing it in November 1942. Westinghouse personnel operated the station but OWI provided programs in several different languages. Directional rhombic antennas allowed the station to beam its signals to



As noted, during much of the war, "Man on the Street" interviews were prohibited. But near the end of the war restrictions were relaxed. Here a WOWO announcer interviews people to kick off the 7th War Loan Drive.

Latin America, Eastern South America, Central Europe, or Northern Europe.

Like other broadcasters, Westinghouse dropped regular programming in favor of continuous coverage of special events like President Roosevelt's death, D-Day, and VE- and VJ-Days.

During the war Westinghouse stations' talent performed at military bases and hospitals.

By the end of the war, Westinghouse had received numerous awards and citations for its efforts to support the war, from the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, USO, American Red Cross, American Legion, and many others. If one were to check other major radio broadcasters, similar praise would undoubtedly be found. There is no question that our country's radio broadcasters rose to the occasion. ■



When London was being bombed, some British children were evacuated to the United States for safety. Westinghouse made its radio links to Europe available during downtime to allow them to talk to their parents.