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RADIO - U.S.A.

**A Draft Speech Prepared According to the Instructions of
The Honorable Robert Dole**

The attached has been prepared for the personal use of the Member requesting it in conformance with his directions and is not intended to represent the opinion of the author or the Legislative Reference Service.

By

Erin M. Woodall
Economics Division
May 3, 1961

RADIO-U.S.A.

Radio has become such an indispensable part of our lives that it would be hard to visualize living without it. None of us are far from a radio dial. Radios can be found almost everywhere. The average American home has two or more sets and there are at least 40 million cars equipped with radios on our highways and streets. Radios can also be found in 30 percent of the trucks, 70 percent of the boats, and 80 percent of the business firms in the nation. The versatility and convenience of the new transistor portables that are small enough to fit into a pocket make radio even more accessible to our increasingly mobile population.

Radio listening is a national habit that exceeds the bounds of sex, age, and regional location. People are spending more and more time listening to their favorite radio stations. Radio is tuned in 42 minutes every morning, 41 minutes every afternoon, and 33 minutes during the evening in the average American home, according to surveys.

These developments have taken place in a relatively short space of time. In the sixty-six years since the first signals were sent by Marconi, radio has revolutionized our way of life. Radio first proved its effectiveness in marine communications. Ship to ship and ship to shore contact proved to be a very effective aid in marine disasters and later as a navigational aid.

It was during this period that the term "radio" was born. At first, communication with these electronic signals was known

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as "wireless," but about 1912 the U. S. Navy adopted the term "radiotelegraphy." The word, "radio", was coined from this term which has been the universally accepted term in American, although the British still call it "wireless."

Attempts at audio transmission were made in the early 1900's. For example, Caruso was put on the air in 1910 and transatlantic voice tests were conducted by the navy in 1915. Regular broadcasting began after World War I. Experiments with network operations using telephone lines were started in 1922. Other historic events in radio history include the broadcast of President Coolidge's message to Congress by six stations late in 1923 and the opening of the first regular net work of 24 stations by the National Broadcasting Company the following year. Radio spanned the continent for the first time in 1927 and round the world connections were completed in 1930.

Today, with the help of telephone lines, coaxial cable, microwave, and other relay facilities, the same program can be transmitted simultaneously by many stations. Thus listeners in many sections of the country and the world are now able to share historic events and exciting entertainment originating from a single source.

Radio was beset with growing pains in its formative period. Undisciplined use of the air waves threatened to make the new medium a hodgepodge of sound. It became obvious that radio could not become a great medium of communication unless adequate channels

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or frequency separations were made. The enactment of the Radio Act of 1927 brought order out of impending chaos and established the American system of broadcasting as it is known today. The Communications Act of 1934, which established the Federal Communications Commission, extended Federal regulation of the industry in order to insure the preservation of the public interest and laid the groundwork for relations between the Government and this private industry.

Since that time, the broadcasting industry has made tremendous strides. There are now more than 4,300 radio stations across the country which employ tens of thousands of men and women as managers, announcers, writers, salesmen, and technicians. The number of stations in American increased by 2,000 in the last decade alone. Nor has the peak been reached, for radio shows signs of continued growth in the years to come. Revenues from AM broadcasting rose 9.8 percent between 1958 and 1959 and are expected to make equal gains this year. FM broadcasting, which now includes some 700 stations in the United States, is the fastest growing sector of the radio broadcasting industry. Its unique programming has proved particularly suitable for a select but important audience which is made up primarily of adults in the managerial and professional occupational groups. FM is responsible for providing us with the good music we hear in many restaurants, stores, and office buildings.

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Radio broadcasting in this country is now in its forty-first year. Its contributions to American life have been almost as varied as they have been notable. Its supremacy as a carrier of news is still unchallenged. Radio microphones can go everywhere man can go to get the news and to some places where man has not yet been able to go. When an important event occurs, radio can beam the story immediately to millions of Americans wherever they are, often from radio beeper phones or mobile units on the scene. Moreover, radio stays of the job to keep us posted.

This power of radio to transmit news instantly to an entire nation and the rest of the world as well has wrought deep-rooted changes in our way of life. People no longer need to stay ignorant of national and international conditions. We can hear the sound of news as it is made. Consider, for example, the vast difference in the impact made by the U. S. declaration of war in 1917 with the similar announcement in December, 1941. News of America's entrance into World War I did not reach some in rural sections of the country for several weeks, but, in 1941, radio made it possible for farmers in the most remote regions of the west to hear the announcement of war as soon as the Congressmen in the back of the chamber.

Radio's role in the political life of this nation is an equally vital one. Keeping our citizens informed so that they

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can make intelligent decisions is basic to our democratic form of government. Regularly scheduled newscasts and the many other public affairs programs on radio have contributed a great deal to this goal. The hurried pace of modern life makes it difficult to attend public discussions of the issues in person; nor can all of us find the time to read extensively. Radio brings not only a summary of what is said on vital issues of the day, but often lets us hear the discussions, speeches, and interviews themselves right in our own homes.

Another important service performed by radio is its support of worthwhile causes. Radio stations have been most generous in their contributions of time and talents. In 1960, radio stations across the nation answered the call to service in many national appeals including the Red Cross Fund Drive, the Crusade for Freedom, Help Launch Hope, Aid to Higher Education, and Religion in American Life. It has been estimated that the average radio station made from 8,000 to 16,000 announcements on behalf of local and national causes last year. The time donated was worth as much as \$500,000. Such activities have made local broadcasters key figures in public service activities in their communities.

Above all, the radio is an invaluable aid in times of emergency by broadcasting advance warnings, informative bulletins, and pleas for help. Station operators have performed heroically in the face of grave danger when they were the last link with the outside. The unique service radio can provide in such times was



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recognized when plans for our national defense included Conelrad. Conelrad is the "plan for Control of Electromagnetic Radiation" by which radio can bring immediate information to the civilian population in the event of an enemy bombing attack. Much of the credit for this special system is due to the laudatory voluntary cooperation of the broadcasting industry and its generous contributions of time, manpower, and electronic equipment.

Radio's future looks bright as we enter the space age. Radio has already penetrated space ahead of men. Signals have been received from man-made satellites thousands of miles above the earth. We are learning more about distant stars with radio astronomy. There is no doubt that radio communications will have a very important role in our exploration of space.

Radio has served us well over the years and has become one of the greatest mediums of communication in modern times. I, therefore, take great pleasure in saluting the radio broadcasting stations of America during National Radio Month.