What Broadcasting Needs

By H. GERNSBACK

HAVE you taken note lately that the quality of broadcasting has diminished somewhat? It is almost impossible these days to get a first-class artist to broadcast. If you have wondered why this is so, you may stop wondering right now, and take yourself severely to task. *The fault is all your own* for a very simple reason: Recently, Eddie Cantor, an actor of no mean standing, broadcast a very fine selection from a well known station in New York. The next morning he received an avalanche of mail—yes, he did not! As a matter of fact, he did not receive a single, solitary postal card. Imagine how pleased he was. And he is no exception. The public is becoming so used to radio that it takes it for granted, never thinking that the artist, very likely, is not paid for his work. Broadcast listeners should be aware of the fact that artists are not going to continue broadcasting to an unappreciative public. At best, broadcasting is a thankless job. You render a selection into a lifeless microphone transmitter, and at the end of the performance the artist does not even get applause. He might just as well perform in the Sahara Desert for all the personal satisfaction he gets. Then the next morning, if he does not receive even a single letter thanking him for his work he is not likely to broadcast soon again.

It is absolutely essential that broadcast listeners make an effort to show their appreciation of the artist's work in some way. If you are near the station, telephone, and if you find that the line is busy, send a letter or a postal card to the artist and thank him. This is the very least you can do, owing to the fact that **the service costs you nothing in the first place.** Your letter of applause to the broadcasting station will not only please the performer, but it will also inform the broadcasting station that it is doing a worth while service.

During July of this year there were 581 broadcasting stations. At this writing, there are approximately 567; in other words, a net decrease of 14 stations. If broadcasting interests you and if you have the radio industry at heart, telephone or mail your applause as often as you can. A number of concerns are now getting out applause cards, which is a very good idea. It costs only a cent to mail these out and we hope to see them universally adopted in the very near future.

Almost every day we are in receipt of letters from broadcast listeners who complain of commercial ship and shore radio stations which handle traffic on 450 meters. The complaint seems justified because such traffic, it would seem, could be handled just as well on 600 meters. Furthermore, there also seems to be an excessive amount of testing going on at the lower wave-lengths. This, of course, interferes greatly with the reception of radio broadcast programs and many of our readers are wondering if the Department of Commerce could not assist in improving these conditions by ruling that ship and shore stations, particularly those using spark transmitters, should work on the 600-meter wave-length during broadcast hours, and on 450 meters, only when necessary.

One of the greatest nuisances today in radio broadcast reception is the pause when a broadcasting station is on the air, but does not transmit. For instance: You try to get a certain station which you know is on the air. An artist has just finished a selection and the announcer has given the name of the artist and the selection just rendered and concludes his statement with: "Artist so and so will render a new selection in a few minutes." Meanwhile, someone a thousand miles off is trying to get this particular station. He frantically moves his dials too and fro; although he may get the carrier wave he is not sure that this is the station sought, because there is no way of telling whether the station has been finally and definitely located. It seems that such a condition could be overcome without great expense by our broadcasting sta-

tions. We know of one station that used to have a metronome which the announcer started the second the station stopped sending. You could hear the ticks plainly and the listener-in knew that this station was still operating. We suggest that broadcast stations in general adopt some sort of mechanical appliance to keep their listeners informed during intermissions. One suggestion is a single stroke bell placed near the microphone, which bell might be sounded once or twice a second. This system would be very simple, because the different stations could use different sounds. There are any number of variations and differences in musical sounds that any clever electrician could rig up in a few hours' time; thus each station could have its own earmarks.

We would also suggest that stations use an automatic transmitter to send their call letters slowly in code. This can easily be accomplished by using an instrument somewhat similar to an omnigraph which would enable distant listeners to read the letters in code. The whole apparatus operating a buzzer might be placed in front of the microphone, or better yet, operate the oscillator tubes on the transmitter as this would increase the range.

While we are about it, why do some broadcasting station announcers fail to designate their station's call letters at the end of each selection? The other night, the writer, with infinite trouble, finally located what proved to be a DX station, but he had to wait through the rendition of at least four selections before the announcer finally thought to state the station's name. This happened to be a Philadelphia station, and such practices are, of course, inexcusable. The advertising that such a particular station gets from long distance listeners is destroyed at once because not every listener-in has the time to wait, and often if he does have the time, atmospheric conditions may make it impossible to understand the infrequent announcements of the station.

Also, some of the announcers are very careless in announcing. Numerous broadcast listeners in Cuba complain that they are unable to determine what broadcasting station they are receiving, since most of the stations they receive from are weak, and it is often very difficult to understand voice transmission. If the suggestion given above, namely, to designate the station between selections with different sounding gongs, is adopted, this will help a great deal, for even if the DX listener does not understand correctly the call letters of the station, he can check himself up by listening for the next intermission.

Certain stations are in the habit of reading off a quantity of telegrams and messages received by them, all of which are practically the same in their wording and most of them are of no interest to the listeners. Broadcasting stations should discontinue such practice and merely thank the senders as a body for their kindness. In nearly all instances, the listeners grow tired of hearing these telegrams read and tune in to another station.

Many broadcast listeners would like to receive long distance stations, but due to local interference they never have a good opportunity. It is suggested that the United States be divided into its time sections: Eastern Standard Time (E.S.T.), Central Standard Time (C.S.T.), Mountain Standard Time (M.S.T.) and Western Standard Time (W.S.T.). Then let all broadcasting stations in one zone (E.S.T. for instance) cease transmitting for one night at 10:30. Then the listeners in this zone could listen for the DX stations. The next night all stations in the next zone (C.S.T.) would shut down at 9:30. The following night stations in zone (M.S.T.) should cease broadcasting from 8:30 to 9:30 and in (W.S.T.) from 7:30 to 8:30. This would give the whole country a chance to listen in for DX stations, which is not possible today with simple receiving sets.