

WHY NO "POSTWAR" RADIOS?

No Super-Radios Will Be Available For a Long Time

AN INCREASING number of letters from readers continue to reach us, expressing puzzlement as to why the super-ultra radio sets, glibly promised by many radio set manufacturers during the war, are not available now. Many of the writers, who are holding back orders for new radio sets, cannot seem to understand why such sets are not forthcoming. Here is a sample of what readers have in mind:

"Editor, RADIO-CRAFT:

"Where are all those fancy radio models which were promised us by the advertisements of radio set manufacturers, two years back, in the midst of the war? This is written during the early part of June, 1946, one year after V-E Day. The new models we see are radio sets that were current in 1942, the same old types, with one exception—they are now much more expensive.

"Where are all those promised improvements? Where are the compact combination radio-television FM sets? Where are all the great mysterious war inventions that were to be incorporated into post-war radio receivers? The fancy ads hinted that new radar techniques and other 'secret war inventions' were to be incorporated into new radio sets 'just as soon as the war was over.' Where are they? (And by the way, where are the postwar pocket and vest-pocket radios?) I have purposely refrained from buying two new sets, which I need badly, thinking that I would get something better than just a 1942 model. Perhaps you can tell us what's what.

*"C. G. LITTLE,
"San Francisco, Calif."*

The answer to this and many other similar questions is extremely simple. It can be expressed in one single word: **ECONOMICS.**

Having talked with a number of radio set manufacturers, the answer to why most of the sets now coming out show really little improvement on 1942 sets is:

When the radio set manufacturers received the governmental order to stop manufacturing radio receivers in 1942 they all complied with this directive. They went into war work and carried on the heavy load of turning out the tools of war with which victory later was won. Make no mistake about it, the radio industry deserves great credit for doing what it did, because without radar and all the other radio war inventions in which America excelled, the war might still be on!

When the stop order came in 1942 all radio manufacturers had large inventories of parts and components

on hand, which for the most part could be used only in civilian radio sets. These inventories were stored away. The materials were not scrapped or otherwise used. When reconversion day came these inventories proved a godsend, giving the radio-hungry public at least some receivers otherwise unobtainable.

These inventories were not very large (with perhaps a few exceptions) and the first sets that arrived on the market were really 1942 models with a few new parts thrown in. But the radio set manufacturers were still tooled up for 1942 radios. Not having 1946 tools, as these could not be produced at short notice—even if the necessary labor had been available, which it was not—most radio set manufacturers proceeded for purely economic reasons to turn out pre-war receivers.

Many laymen, not acquainted with manufacturing procedure, do not understand that even in normal times it takes over a year to produce a new radio set.

New tools must be made; new molds and dies for cabinets must be created; new orders must be placed with parts manufacturers for individual components which the set manufacturer may not make. All this refers to normal times when help and materials are readily available.

In the country's present chaotic condition, where due to strikes and other reasons conversion has proceeded at a snail's pace, it is unthinkable for the average set manufacturer to project an entirely new receiver from the ground up. Many manufacturers who normally would have had entirely new models on the market now were forced to give up the projects because of shortages of materials and labor. This situation may well prevail for another year and more.

The harassed radio manufacturers today think that the public should be grateful that it gets radios at all, even if they are of the 1942 vintage. The same situation prevails in many other lines, as for instance, automobiles. Here—for the same reasons—1942 models are now coming on the market, and while there may be an improvement here and there, basically the cars are still 1942 models. The revolutionary new cars promised during the war so far have not materialized and it will take some time before they become available.

In radio set manufacture too it is doubtful whether radically new receivers will be manufactured for some little time to come.

Just to give one example of what happens when a new manufacturer attempts to come out with something revolutionary, we cite a case with which we are acquainted.

(Continued on page 781)