

# BOARD OF WAR COMMUNICATIONS

By E. K. Jett

*Chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the Board of War Communications  
and Chief Engineer, Federal Communications Commission*

THE activities of the Board of War Communications (previously called the Defense Communications Board) have been greatly intensified in all fields of communication since the outbreak of hostilities between this country and the Axis powers. During 1942, the Board and its Committee IV—Domestic Broadcasting—have given consideration to a number of special studies in the interest of broadcasting. Perhaps the most important of these have been plans looking toward the conservation of critical materials. These are listed for the record, as follows:

(1) Adoption of a policy which would deny future authorizations involving the use of any materials to construct or to change the transmitting facilities of any standard, television, facsimile, relay or high frequency broadcast station. This policy was incorporated in a Memorandum Opinion of the FCC dated April 27 and was the result of recommendations made by the Board on April 16. On September 22, upon its own motion, the Commission slightly relaxed its interpretation of this Memorandum Opinion to permit the granting of applications involving shifts in frequency in which no materials would be utilized other than quartz crystals, provided such applications involved no inconsistencies with Order No. M-146 of the War Production Board; involved no engineering conflict with any other application pending since February 22; involved no inconsistencies with the Commission's Rules and Regulations; tended toward a fair, efficient and equitable distribution of radio service; and was otherwise in the public interest.

(2) Adoption of Order 107 which effects a reduction of one decibel in the output power of all standard broadcast stations.

(3) Adoption of Order 94-A which suspended Section 3.71 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations with respect to minimum operating schedules for standard broadcast stations and established in lieu thereof a minimum operating schedule of one-third the total hours a station is authorized to operate between 6 a.m. and midnight local time.

(4) The requirement incorporated in Serial No. 58, "Notice to All Licensees of Standard Broadcast Stations," dated November 6, that each station in the standard broadcast service follow the principles set forth in the "Manual on the Adjustment of Standard Broadcast Transmitters" dated November 5, 1942.

(5) The preparation and carrying into force by the FCC of a plan to collect and disseminate to all standard broadcast station licensees information regarding surplus material available within the industry.

The War Production Board co-operated with the BWC and the FCC during the preparation of these conservation measures. During the early course of the studies, a vacuum tube questionnaire was circulated to all broadcast stations and the summary of responses was considered in an effort to determine the needs of stations for the ensuing year.

## Manpower Problem

In an effort to relieve difficulties that a number of broadcast stations have experienced in obtaining adequately trained technical operating personnel, the Board recommended to the FCC that existing operator rules be relaxed for the duration of the war. This recommendation was adopted by the Commission and issued as Order 91. As an additional measure to assist standard broadcast licensees in their effort to solve their manpower problems, the Board through its committees prepared and forwarded to Selective Service and the War Manpower Commission lists of essential occupations within the industry.

To assist broadcast stations in the solution of technical problems created by wartime conditions, the Board prepared and distributed a manual entitled "Protection and Operation of Domestic Broadcasting Stations in Wartime."

One of the Board's continuing studies has related to the possibility of developing a system of safe broadcast operation to prevent homing by enemy aircraft. In this connection, a number of experiments have been conducted by special committees of the Board in collaboration with the Army Air Forces, and plans are now ready for use when needed by the Fighter Commands.

In November 1942, the FCC orders all stations to reduce power by 21% (1 dB), to reduce demand for replacement tubes needed in the war effort, to be effective December 1. Quartz crystals for precision oscillators are also in short supply.

The FCC's freeze order on new station construction was partially lifted on August 11, 1943, allowing new stations to be granted provided that they could be constructed using only the hundred or so low-power transmitters which had been assembled before war rationing began, and which were deemed unsuitable for war use by the government. Applications for higher powers are still limited by the unavailability of power-amplifier tubes

On October 1, 1945, the FCC lifts the 1942 power-reduction order, allowing all station to return to their licensed transmitter power. The FCC begins processing of frozen applications from its “pending file” on October 7.