

Radio Legislation Urgently Needed, Says Secretary Hoover

Growth of Radio in Past Year, Beyond Expectation. 5999
Amateurs Added in Seventeen Months

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Extension of the regulatory powers of the Department of Commerce over radio seems imperative. This is the belief of Herbert R. Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, who has become a sort of foster-father to radio, and he emphasizes that belief pretty thoroughly in his annual report. The development of the radio art will be greatly retarded, he explains, if his department does not take a hand. The sudden increase of radiotelephone broadcasting during the past seven months of the fiscal year, from 5 to 382 transmitting stations, and the increase from about 200,000 to 1,500,000 receiving stations, resulted in so much "interference" between sending stations, the Secretary of Commerce reports, that the destruction of the usefulness of this very important invention was threatened. A conference of experts, manufacturers, and government, public and amateur representatives, which was called by Mr. Hoover in February, unanimously recommended the immediate extension of the regulatory powers of the Government and drafted a set of technical provisions for submission to Congress.

What Ails the White and Kellogg Bills?

Identical radio bills were introduced in the two houses of Congress, last session, by Senator Kellogg and Representative White, but apparently they are pigeon-holed, awaiting, perhaps, the demand of the radio public itself before any action will be taken. Department of Commerce officials handling radio matters have cherished the hope that early action would be forthcoming for some time and continued to license all broadcasters every three months, while awaiting a definite law. New legislation would aid the Secretary of Commerce in enforcing the laws and bring about a more satisfactory condition for both operators and "fans," they point out. Authority for the appointment of the advisory committee of six governmental and six outside civilian members, would assist Secretary Hoover in reassigning definite wave-lengths and in the allotment of more bands for commercial and private uses. Congressman White's

By Carl H. Butman

bill, it is expected, will be pushed, but action is not assured this session of Congress.

Hope for Discretionary Assignment of Waves

Recommendations of the radio conference were for one exclusive governmental broadcasting wave-band, two bands for private and toll broadcasting, and four for use by both governmental and private broadcasters, which would give such transmitting stations broader scope and prevent interference to a great degree. To-day, only two public broadcasting waves are available—360 and 400 meters—while the government wave is 485 meters, confining a very large amount of matter broadcast by many stations to only three wave-lengths and necessitating time schedules and silent periods. The assignment of waves under these recommendations, as well as other technical problems, would devolve upon the advisory committee. It is very likely that Secretary Hoover would secure the aid of the present Interdepartmental Radio Committee, or at least six of these technical experts as the governmental representatives on his new committee.

Another feature planned if new legislation is secured is to make the wave band between 600 and 1,600 meters, now assigned for governmental use, available to commercial and public stations. Details such as these, however, it is expected, will be left to the discretion of Secretary Hoover. The art of radio is developing so rapidly as to demand constant changes and the permanent or specific designation of every wave or band of waves by law would be a hindrance.

Situation Worse To-day Than on June 30

Interference is actually far worse to-day than it was five months ago, when Mr. Hoover's report closed at the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 1922. Instead of there being 382 broadcasting stations on 360 and 400 meters, there were actually 565 such stations in operation on December 1, or 179 more than existed on June 30. During the fiscal year, seven commercial transatlantic stations

were placed in operation, providing for better communication with Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, and Germany. Another commercial station opened for business with Central America, and plans for circuits to South America and China were also under way. In the fiscal year, commercial land stations, excluding broadcasters, increased from 161 to 345.

Value of the Amateur to the Country

Amateur-station licenses increased from 10,809 to 15,504 between June 30, 1921 and June 30, 1922. In the past five months, however, 1,304 more stations have been licensed, bringing the total amateur sending-stations to 16,888 on December 1. The increase in amateur interest by 5,999 is gratifying to the officials of the government; for, they say, these young men constitute a reserve of trained operators some of whom have already contributed to radio art. During the World War, many amateurs were found to be superior to the average commercial operator in resourcefulness and technical knowledge.

The necessity of an international conference on radio communication for the adjustment of international radio wave-lengths, especially those used between ship and shore stations, is pointed out by Secretary Hoover in his report, attention being called to the fact that the last conference was held in 1912 when the United States had but one transoceanic station in operation. This matter, however, has the attention of the State Department, which is now organizing the personnel of a representative governmental committee to draw up agenda for the next international convention on electrical communication, to be held at Paris next spring.

In summing up Mr. Hoover says: "To close an efficient administration of the radio service is imperative if we are to maintain its efficiency as a life-saving agency on shipboard, a means of commercial communication, and of instruction and entertainment for our people. To perform this work we must have an experienced and expert personnel. To secure and retain such men the service must be provided with adequate funds.