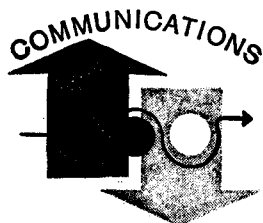


COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Editor: RICHARD L. TOBIN



The Day of the Transistor

ABOUT a quarter of a century ago, which doesn't seem so very long a time, we began a ten-year stint broadcasting news and comment for the New York *Herald Tribune* over what Al Smith used to call the raddio, and though we did go on into TV newscasting it was never quite the same. There was something unique about being known as a radio news commentator, and something special about early radio, too. The utter simplicity and person-to-person quality of voice-alone broadcasting quickly gave it pre-eminent status in communications, a status it soon shared with the telephone as fundamental to a modern world. For all a broadcaster needed then (or will ever need) was a solitary mike, a resonant voice, and simple, one-dimensional facilities. You cannot get simpler or more direct mass communication than by radio, particularly in the day of the ubiquitous transistor.

The simplicity of communication by radio was never more dramatically brought home than in last month's incredible power blackout of 30,000,000 Americans in the Northeast. Since television's heart and soul rest in Manhattan and since a great many TV programs, especially news, originate in New York, network TV with its highly complicated broadcasting machinery was badly hurt the night the lights went out. Not only were there no programs on New York-area channels but there was no way of receiving them, since the vast majority of TV sets plug into the electric-light socket. Not so radio, which had its greatest hour since D-Day. Many radio stations in the populous Northeast were able to function on low-quality emergency output, much of it from auxiliary generators caked with dust. New Jersey wasn't affected by the blackout, so radio stations along the west bank of the Hudson could be clearly heard on transistor radios throughout the blackened metropolitan area. And heard they were! The Radio Advertising Bureau points with pardonable pride to an apparently provable statistic: 80 per cent of the 30,000,000 blacked out in the Northeast were kept informed during the night of November 9 chiefly through the miracle of the portable transistor and car radio.

The essential problem for blacked-out radio stations was finding some way of connecting studio with transmitter. Yet in New York City all the major stations were back on the air in less than half an hour, there to stay until the following dawn, in what has to be the marathon public-service broadcast of our time. The day most radio men had dreamt about—when TV disappeared and there was only radio again—ended in general acclaim for the sound medium, so often overshadowed of late by its more colorful pictorial offspring. If the information some announcers broadcast was spotty and inaccurate, since no news tickers were operating and facts had to be gathered by phone or in person in candlelight, radio's contribution nonetheless indelibly etched itself on the metropolitan mind. It is little wonder that more transistor radios were sold on November 10 than on any single day in the history of the Northeast. One radio department salesman in Boston reported that in an average day he would have sold thirty battery-powered radios but by noon of the day after the blackout

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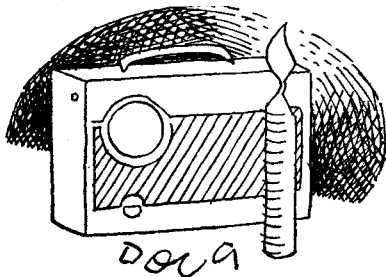
he had sold more than seventy-five and run out of most models.

The value of the portable, battery-powered radio is perhaps told best by Arthur Greenspan, staff writer of the *New York Journal American*, who was trapped for five and a half hours in a Seventh Avenue IRT Local underneath Brooklyn: "Were it not for radio, we'd never have known that Northeast America had blown a fuse. We found a woman with a transistor radio, and rushed her to our end of the trapped subway train, where reception was more effective. Bless those scientists who invented the tiny transistor. They'll never know how useful they were to us that night. The radio told us what was happening."

Naturally, the people in radio, in particular the companies making transistors, have since gone all out to put a battery-powered radio set in every home in America. Miles David, president of the RAB, reports that some 65 per cent of all U.S. families already own transistor sets and 85 per cent of all American automobiles have radios. The transistor is a natural for any crisis situation anywhere in the civilized world—in tornadoes, blizzards, power blackouts; it was used with special effectiveness during hurricane Betsy's recent invasion of the New Orleans area. Mr. David is perfectly right when he says that the one-third of U.S. families without transistors are "running a real risk by depriving themselves of their only link to the facts in an emergency."

This is the day of the jet plane that will by the end of this decade be moving the traveler from San Francisco to New York in an hour and twenty minutes, of flights through vast electrical seas to the moon and the planets, of gaudy color spectacles on instantaneous screens, of life in an electronic-jet-atomic world the nineteenth century could not possibly have believed. Yet the great blackout taught us that things have a way of going back to fundamentals now and again and the very vulnerability of complex modern life suggests we ought to be ready with simple emergency measures. The kerosene lamp and the candle, the flashlight and the auxiliary generator, the fireplace and the gas stove, all show to best advantage on desperate nights like November 9. And so does the transistor radio. You'd better get one. Tomorrow.

—R.L.T.



Letters to the Communications Editor



Note on Tuesday

I NOTE Wilson Sullivan's article on *Tuesday*, the new "Negro" magazine [SR, Nov. 13], in which he says that *Tuesday* is published in predominantly "white" newspapers and is addressed to the world. If this suggests that white subscribers to these newspapers are receiving this supplement, this is not true. And if editor and publisher Leonard Evans says this, he is lying. I am a subscriber to both the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, but I do not get *Tuesday*. My white neighbors do not get *Tuesday*. The white suburbanites do not get *Tuesday*. Despite our protests, this supplement is distributed *only* in the areas of the city where the people are overwhelmingly or at least predominantly Negro. If Mr. Evans is interested in "dialogue with the white community," I suggest his message is not going through to the people he says he is trying to communicate with.

MRS. A. B. BEVERSTOCK.

Milwaukee, Wis.

WILSON SULLIVAN's article was the first I had read about the supplement called *Tuesday*. Being a subscriber of the *Chicago Sun-Times* and never having received a copy of *Tuesday* I called the newspaper and was told by Mr. Fred Miller in the advertising department: "We are distributing on an island basis to the Negro areas."

Apparently you were misinformed about the distribution of this supplement. In fact, I have questioned six Negroes in the Chicago area, living in different neighborhoods, and only one had ever heard of this magazine. That one had received it in an edition of the *Sun-Times* that he had purchased from a newsstand. If Mr. Leonard Evans, the publisher, was being quoted correctly in your article, then the purpose of the publication to establish a dialogue with whites is being defeated by this selective distribution to the Negro community in Chicago.

ROSE M. FINKEL.

Chicago, Ill.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The total Sunday circulation of the nine newspapers in which "Tuesday" appears monthly is at least 5,500,000. As indicated in Mr. Sullivan's article, "Tuesday" prints 1,500,000 supplements, clearly far short of the circulation of newspapers in which it is published, but no mean accomplishment for any fledgling magazine. If his article even implied that "Tuesday," after two months, had already equalled these newspapers' circulation, Mr. Sullivan regrets the implication. As for "Tuesday's" own objectives and achievements, a statement by its editor and publisher, Leonard Evans, should be of interest. Responding to a letter from a white resident of Chicago asking why he did not receive a copy of

"Tuesday" in his "Sun-Times," Editor Evans said: "'Tuesday' is growing. Its circulation is restricted by finances, not by the newspapers. For a start, we cannot afford to publish the 6,000,000 copies necessary for the total circulation of the newspapers we appear in. Of 1,500,000 copies, more than 250,000 go into white homes right now. 'Tuesday's' ultimate goal is total circulation in all of its papers. We have made the start in Rochester, N.Y., where we are in all 150,000 copies of the 'Times-Union.'"

I WOULD LIKE to tell you how much I enjoyed the article by Wilson Sullivan. I am a regular reader of the *Sunday Bulletin* here in Philadelphia and I enjoy the *Tuesday* supplement very much. I think it will help dispel a lot of unreasoned prejudice in the "white community." I myself deal with all kinds of people on a daily basis in their homes and find that there are good and bad in all places.

As a white person, I have noticed that there is a great lack of news in most sources about a large segment of our population, and I am glad to see that we are finally getting some news about it in some of our major newspapers.

RICHARD C. BISHOP.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Xerox and Its Programs

AS R.L.T.'s EDITORIAL puts it, "Xerox Proves a Point" [SR, Nov. 13] with its courageous endeavor at undertaking, despite opposition, the presentation of the United Nations story by means of television. I feel impelled to applaud this commercial organization for refusing to be intimidated and in taking the time and effort to analyze the many written protests received. The repetitious pattern evident in so many of these letters provides its own commentary.

I must, nevertheless, admit to a feeling of chagrin that the programs thus far broadcast have fallen lamentably short of what I and others with whom I've spoken had anticipated. Perhaps such topics don't readily lend themselves to dramatic treatment. Must they, however, seem quite so mannered, so artificial? These objectionable elements were especially noticeable in "Once Upon a Tractor." Obviously the conviction exists that the viewer must be beguiled by the slapstick approach even when serious subjects are to be examined. It seems to me that through such procedures even the ardent enthusiast is apt to find himself alienated. As for those far more numerous individuals—the uncommitted—are they likely to be persuaded?

Possibly the offerings still to be shown will help redress the balance. On the basis of what has up to now been revealed, however, I can't help suspecting a certain irony