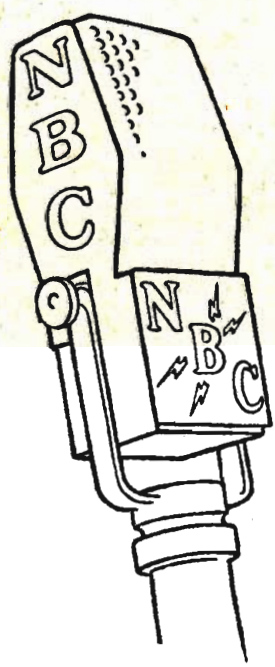


Mr. Shanon

Interpretation of NBC POLICIES

As Applied to
B R O A D C A S T S
DURING *the* CURRENT
E U R O P E A N W A R



Interpretation of NBC Policies as Applied to Broadcasts during the Current European War

The outbreak of war in Europe and the issuance of a proclamation of neutrality by the President of the United States have increased greatly the responsibility of broadcasters to their millions of American listeners.

Mindful of this, the National Broadcasting Company has adopted the following self-imposed regulations governing broadcasts during the period of neutrality, to be observed in letter and spirit by all concerned.

INTRODUCTION

War existing in Europe, the President of the United States has issued a proclamation of neutrality under existing laws of this country. No act of any broadcaster should violate this declared neutrality, either in letter or spirit.

Within our own company strict attention will be paid to the content of programs and established standards will be meticulously enforced. Let us give no grounds for any feeling that radio sacrifices the welfare of the people as a whole to seek sensationalism for its own profit.

There are set forth below certain interpretations of our policies and certain procedures which will apply to all programs of the National Broadcasting Company during the neutrality period. These interpretations and procedures are issued on the basis of the situation as it exists at the present time and are subject to modification from time to time as the circumstances require.

GENERAL POLICIES

Every effort consistent with the facts will be made to avoid horror, suspense and undue excitement. Particular effort will be made to avoid suspense in cases where the information causing the suspense is not of particularly great importance to listeners. Descriptions of hypothetical horrors which do not actually exist, such as discussing the things that might go on if another ship were to be torpedoed, will be avoided. In all broadcasts dealing with the essentially human side of the war, such as the plight of refugees, the number of killed and wounded, etc., we will use our best news judgment and try to avoid undue shock to the radio audience without taking upon ourselves an unjustifiable responsibility of concealing actual facts.

We will make every effort to be temperate, responsible and mature in selecting the manner in which we make the facts of war and its attendant circumstances known to our audience.

We will at all times try to distinguish between fact, official statement, news obtained from responsible official or unofficial sources, rumor and matter taken from or contained in the foreign press or other publications so that by reporting and identifying these sources we can help the radio audience to evaluate properly the news brought to it.

The radio audience should be clearly informed that the news from many sources, whether it be press bulletins or direct broadcasts, may be censored and should be appraised in the light of this censorship.

EUROPEAN PICK-UPS

We may from time to time broadcast news and news analyses from Europe. So far as possible these broadcasts will be made by Americans and each individual employed by the company to make such broadcasts will be instructed in the principles set forth in this memorandum. So far as broadcasts of European pick-ups contain news analyses they are to conform to the policies of the National Broadcasting Company applied to programs of news analyses originating in the United States.

Speeches by foreigners from abroad, the reading of public proclamations and statements, and like matter, are to be handled in each individual case as seems to best serve our audience, but it is essential that fairness to all belligerents be maintained and that this phase of our operations be carried out in such a way that the American audience shall be as completely and fairly informed as possible.

If broadcasts become available from scenes of battle, bombed areas, air raid shelters, refugee camps and so on, we will not deprive our audience of the ability of radio to give it first hand information, but we will use tact and judgment to prevent such broadcasts from being unduly harrowing.

PROPAGANDA FROM EUROPE

Whether to broadcast propaganda disseminated by radio stations, or the press of European countries, or distributed by those countries in any other manner, will be determined individually in each case with full consideration for the news value of the statement. If such material is broadcast we will endeavor in each case to label it by giving the precise source of the material and will do this sufficiently often so that no reasonably careful listener is likely to be misled. We will also be governed by our usual rules of fairness in presenting all sides of controversial questions, though not necessarily in the same broadcast nor necessarily with actual quantitative equality. In this connection it is recognized that there are certain hazards in bringing broadcasts of this type direct to this country and extreme care will be exercised in so doing.

DOMESTIC NEWS BROADCASTS

All the foregoing principles, of course, apply to domestic broadcasts dealing with any phase of the war. All news broadcasts, whether sponsored or unsponsored, are to remain under the strictest control of the company in order that the standards set forth in this memorandum may be maintained. News analysts are at all times to be confined strictly to explaining and evaluating such facts, rumors, propaganda and so on as are available. No news analyst or news broadcaster of any kind is to be allowed to express personal editorial judgment or to select or omit news for the purpose of creating any given effect and no news analyst or other news broadcaster is to be allowed to say anything in an effort to influence action or opinion of others in favor or against any belligerent. It is not intended, however, to forbid any news analyst or news broadcaster from attempting to evaluate the news as it develops, provided he substantiates his evaluation with facts and attendant circumstances. His basis for evaluation should, of course, be impersonal, sincere and honest.

In order not to keep the public unduly disturbed and alarmed we will, exercising our own news judg-

ment, endeavor to interrupt programs for news bulletins as little as seems consistent with good operations.

COMMERCIAL PROGRAMS

No propaganda in connection with the war will be permitted in either commercial announcements or the context of commercial programs. Nothing in this shall be interpreted as barring straight news or news analysts as herein described from commercial programs.

DOMESTIC SPEECHES

The safeguards of fairness and program balance now applied to the handling of speeches on controversial issues will continue to be applied and in order to make this effective every effort will be made to obtain the text of speeches before they are scheduled.

PROCEDURES

1. Programs of unusual importance may be fed to both networks simultaneously.
2. Except for the above, each of the two networks will be considered as separate entities and programmed accordingly with full consideration of program balance and open periods of time.
3. As in the past, where it is feasible to do so, the same facilities from Europe may be used for transatlantic broadcasts which are being carried by NBC, CBS and Mutual.
4. We will not put on the air secret or coded radio messages which may be intercepted, or confidential information which we have acquired from any source.
5. The shortwave broadcasts of foreign stations of combatant nations will not be placed on the standard wave broadcast stations either by direct pick-up or by electrical transcription. Since there is a great difference in reception, due to variance in technical facilities of the different stations, and since such broadcasts are either propaganda or heavily censored material projecting the sending government's political or military aims, they are likely to misinform the American public;

they do not give equal opportunity to all sides, and tend to create unmerited prejudices. Shortwave direct pick-ups from foreign stations are available to all having adequate shortwave receivers.

6. The regular press and other news broadcasts, such as AP, UP and INS, will continue as at present.
7. For the present, news summaries from Europe will be limited to two a day on each network, and preferably one. This is subject to change dependent on circumstances in Europe.
8. News broadcasts, such as that of Lowell Thomas, will continue under the same rules and procedure as before, as interpreted by this memorandum.
9. Comments on war news in such broadcasts as those of Broadway and Hollywood commentators, will be carefully edited for the over-dramatic, the sensational, the confidential, the unconfirmed rumor, and personal bias and unwarranted gossip. If the speaker fails to cooperate in this, such programs will be cancelled.
10. Commercial broadcasts will be cancelled for war programs only on authority of the President, Executive Vice-President or, in the absence or non-availability of either, the Vice-President in charge of Programs.
11. Programs will only be interrupted for purposes of flash-news announcements concerning events of outstanding importance. Other flash-news announcements will be broadcast where appropriate and technically feasible.
12. Full credit will be given to the press and wire services whose news and assistance we receive. Every effort will be made to assist those organizations in carrying out their normal functions.

September 7, 1939

