

# BBC Expert Probes Procedure for FCC

## Charles Siepmann Is Specialist in Programs

By ROBERT K. RICHARDS

IS THERE a move afoot to BBC-ize American broadcasting?

An efficiency expert who formerly was director of program planning for the government-operated British Broadcasting Corp. is conducting a behind-the-scenes examination of the FCC license renewal procedure.

He is Charles I. Siepmann.

He has been hired by the Commission at \$8,000 per year plus \$6 per diem expenses for a "temporary internal assignment". Everyone at the FCC is mum about his activities. It is understood, however, that he is assigned specifically to the law department to devise some means for "expediting" license-renewal methods.

On such an assignment, probably he would take an avid interest in programs. This is indicated both by his background and his public writings, as well as by the fact that his presence in the Commission was said to have been inspired by Commissioner Clifford J. Durr.

Commissioner Durr, who lists to portside in his social philosophies, believes there is too much commercialism in American radio. He thinks station program policies should have closer FCC scrutiny in licensing proceedings. He has avowed that the commercial-sustaining aspect should be weighed carefully in determining whether a program is a "public service".

Mr. Siepmann is being assisted in his present task by Eleanor Bontéque, former employe of Justice Hugo Black and more recently a \$5,600-a-year specialist in the Dept. of Justice. (Commissioner Durr is Justice Black's brother-in-law).

Mr. Siepmann came to the United States in 1939 as a visiting instructor at Harvard University. He left that position in 1941 to join the Office of Facts and Figures in Washington. When that agency became the Office of War Information, he was assigned to the Overseas Division. He became chief of the OWI broadcast section in San Francisco, was promoted to an assistant policy directorship—at a reported \$7,000 a year. He resigned from this position.

OWI spokesmen told BROADCASTING last week that Mr. Siepmann could be reached by calling EXECUTIVE 3620 (the FCC number) "and asking" for Commissioner Durr's office.

Mr. Siepmann was reached but he was not communicative. He said his home was in Newfane, Vt. He said he had been at the FCC for three weeks, that he was on a "temporary internal assignment" and that his biography—for which he was asked—had no bearing on his present assignment.

Some of his philosophy on broadcasting is revealed in an article entitled "Radio's Big Chance",

which he wrote for *The New Republic* (Issue of Jan. 12, 1942).

The article, published at the outset of America's entry into the war, voiced a challenge to broadcasters and to the NAB. It reviewed briefly the various problems facing the broadcasting art in this country at that time, and stated:

"But they remind us of issues unresolved and of the basic paradox with which radio stands uncomfortably saddled—how far can a system built entirely on private profits function adequately in the public interest, to which it is also theoretically committed?"

Mr. Siepmann did not attempt to answer this question, but he presented some clues as to his own disposition in the matter. He wrote:

"Sponsors are back again—the same voices, the same blurbs, the same high-pitched tones of blustering persuasion or of intimate appeal. At best they are incongruous; at worst an affront to listeners. Sponsorship we recognize, but not crude assaults on quickened sensibilities."

And elsewhere in the article, "We prefer bulletins and news commen-

tators without sponsorship. We plead that in any case sponsors shall be brief."

To the commentators he addressed this plea: "Your personalities we welcome. . . Spare us, however, your prejudices; and spare us prophecy."

And to sponsors he gave this quotation: "Radio is the preferred medium of the most suggestible. That is a social fact. For radio it has been a source of profit, and an unrecognized responsibility."

He reminded the NAB: "You have a code manual of decent practice in broadcasting. Enforce it!"

Seeing the war as a possible turning point in American broadcasting's programming for public service, Mr. Siepmann wrote: "The prerequisites of public service are there. All that is lacking is a policy, a strategy of action that envisages a future different from the past—in the problems it sets, the demands it makes on us and on the qualities of mind and spirit that are going to be paramount. Radio's continued independence is at stake. Will it anticipate in time the

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## Associated Lines Up 17 Key Markets

### Alternate Stations to Provide New York, Chicago Outlets

LIST of stations already signed as outlets for programs of Associated Broadcasting Corp., which plans to get under way Sept. 16 as the fifth cross-country network, was announced last weekend by Leonard A. Versluis, president [BROADCASTING, June 4, July 23].

In New York and Chicago the new network has made special arrangements rather than straight affiliation contracts, having a coop-

erating station and an alternate outlet in each. WMCA is cooperating station in New York, WOV the alternate. In Chicago the cooperating station is WJJD, with WIND as alternate.

Mr. Versluis denied reports that Marshall Field has any interest in the network, financial or otherwise. "The only connection," he said, "is that WJJD, the Field station in Chicago, has a contractual relationship with the network to broadcast our programs in that area."

#### List of Affiliates

Other outlets of the new network are: WMEX Boston, WITH Baltimore, WWDC Washington, WLEE Richmond, WWSW Pittsburgh, WBNY Buffalo, WTMV St. Louis-E. St. Louis, WMIN Minneapolis-St. Paul, KNAK Salt Lake City, WFOX Long Beach-Los Angeles, KLS Oakland (changing call Sept. 10 to KWBR), KSAN San Francisco, KWJJ Portland, KRSC Seattle, KMYR Denver.

In Cincinnati, WCKY has agreed to provide facilities to Associated upon request for availabilities, although the station is not a regular affiliate of the network. Negotiations are still to be completed in Philadelphia, Detroit, and Hollywood, Mr. Versluis said, and are under way in other cities with a goal of 35 key markets.

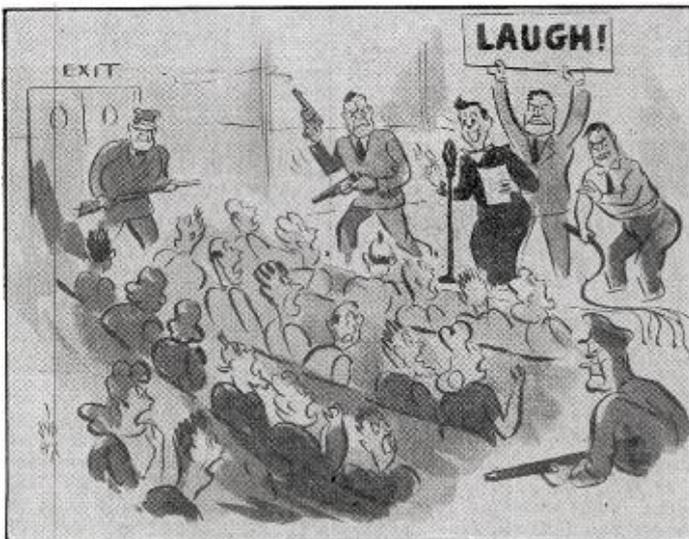
Mr. Versluis, with Richard Connor and William Henderson, vice-presidents of his network, went to New York last week to confer with Gene Kraemer, who will have

charge of New York sales activities and to assist in organization of New York headquarters. They conferred with Charles Stark, program manager of WMCA New York, and with Ben Strouse, general manager of WWDC Washington, and Ira Walsh, program director of that station, regarding public service programs.

WWDC will cover the White House, Congress and other Capitol highspots for Associated. Mark Austed, WWDC newsmen, will do a thrice-weekly Washington news roundup. Ian Ross MacFarlane, commentator of WITH Baltimore, will also be heard, Mr. Connor said. Negotiations are under way, he stated, with Walter Compton, Dr. Frank Kingdon, Leo Cherne, John B. Hughes, Sammy Balter, Dr. J. Raymond Walsh, Edgar Ansel Mowrer and other news analysts for the network.

Overseas pickups are under discussion, Mr. Connor said. Also in the public service field, he added, the network is offering time to major educational institutions and quarter-hour weekly periods will be made available to both the AFL and CIO for a labor series which Associated will offer affiliates.

Plans are developing for an extensive sport schedule, Mr. Connor reported. An evening schedule of name dance bands will top off the network's 16-hour daily program service, he said. Associated will be on the air from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m. New York time and on the Pacific Coast from 8 a.m. to midnight.



Drawn for BROADCASTING by Sid Hix