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institutions—the right of free expression. It is the logical extension of the Discussion Groups which the ABC has been fostering with the same object for some years, and it will furnish the listening groups with an extra stimulus and a new sense of the excitement of free discussion.

"Free discussion of the community's problems at a public meeting goes back to ancient Greece. The adaptation of this form of public debate to radio, which has become one of the most powerful methods of communication and education, goes back 10 years to the inauguration by the National Broadcasting Company of America of a session, *Town Meeting of the Air*.

"*Town Meeting of the Air* was a direct revival of the traditional New England gatherings where any delegate might have his say, where the spark which led to the Boston Tea Party was kindled, where the armies that fought the Rebels at Lexington were recruited. The motive of many of these early political debates, however, was to win support from audiences by appealing to prejudice or partisanship, and the meetings often ended in disorder.

"The radio *Town Meeting* was initiated by George V. Denny, associate director of the New York League of Political Education, which for nearly half a century has been conducting non-partisan education in New York City."

#### Listening to All Sides

The American magazine *Movie-Radio Guide* noted that *Town Meeting of the Air* by 1941 was being broadcast over more than 100 medium and short-wave stations in the U.S.A. to an audience of about 6,000,000 people, and was being followed up by over 1400 Listening Groups. It added:

"*Town Meeting* is Mr. Denny's remedy for a common ailment—our refusal to listen to the other fellow's opinion. Mr. Denny has noticed that people generally associate only with other people who share their own attitudes, read only those books which express their own viewpoint, buy only those newspapers which support their own prejudices. Realising the danger to democracy apparent in this situation, Mr. Denny decided that America needed a radio programme where listeners would have to listen to more than one side of a question."

Scientists, businessmen, politicians, journalists have appeared in *Town Meeting*. The audience is allowed to heckle and talk back, a development which the ABC hopes to bring in to *Nation's Forum of the Air* as soon as security conditions permit.

*Movie-Radio Guide* sums up the atmosphere of the session: "Obviously, the excitement and entertainment value of America's *Town Meeting of the Air* is merely a by-product. The real aim is to get the American public to think for itself about vital national problems. And Mr. Denny's broadcast has done more to accomplish that aim than 100 years of political bombast."

In the same way the ABC hopes that its *Nation's Forum of the Air* will come to stand for tolerance, reason, and justice, and that it will establish radio as an active force in political education.



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