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GOOD MANNERS, GOOD TASTE AND GOOD JUDGMENT

A Canadian on the Art of Announcing

A READER has drawn our attention to an article in a recent copy of the "New York Times" on the art of radio announcing. It was taken by the "Times" from "Radio," a journal published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for members of its staff, and was written by the CBC's Supervisor of Broadcast Language, W. H. Brodie. Conditions in broadcasting in Canada may be very different from ours, but this article is on those aspects of the technique of announcing that are the same anywhere in the world, and we reprint here some excerpts from it.

THERE is no such thing as a correct style for announcing; style must vary as the nature of the programme varies, and every good announcer will tend to have a style of his own which generally reflects something of his own individual personality.

There are, however, certain general over-all principles which should govern the announcer's approach to his work. The remarks which follow are intended to stimulate thought and discussion, and to encourage every announcer (and for that matter producers and continuity writers) to consider his proper approach

to the various programmes and problems which confront him.

Good announcing requires the active use of the imagination. The announcer must be able to put himself in the place of the listener and to consider not only what goes into the microphone, but what comes out of the loudspeaker, how it comes out and when.

Considerate Visitor.

The announcer is a visitor in the home, and he must be as careful of the feelings of his listener as he would be of the feelings of his hostess. It may be said that there is no such thing as



"Have YOU Filled YOUR Coalbin?"

a typical listener, that conduct which is pleasing to one may be obnoxious to another. Very true. But there are certain lines of conduct which would be regarded as bad manners in any company. Individuals in their home don't want to be addressed as if they were a public meeting, nor to be shouted at as if they were an awkward squad being ticked off by a sergeant major. Bullying is bad selling. The type of announcing here referred to is all too common—"It's YOU I'm talking to, Mrs. Householder. Have YOU filled YOUR coalbin?" or "Attention, please, LADIES and GENTLEMEN." This sort of thing is bad manners and bad radio. Listeners generally resent anything that sounds like showing off. If you are a guest in somebody's home you do not try to impress your host with the beauty of your voice or with your mastery of the tricks of elocution. Speak to him as naturally at the microphone as you would in his home. If you were enthusiastically telling a friend that Jack Benny was coming in person to the next club gathering, your enthusiasm would be obvious in your speech—you couldn't help it; but you wouldn't say "and—JACK BENNY" with the name ten times as loud as the rest of the sentence and up an octave in pitch.

Chamber and Jive

It has already been said that listeners have varied tastes and standards. This is a fact that must be remembered when an announcer is studying his approach to a programme; and here imagination plays a part. The announcer must visualise the type of audience that is likely to be listening; he should then tailor his style to their ear, always remembering, though, that there may be other listeners who might be offended by too great a departure from general standards. For

a recorded programme of "hot" dance music, for instance, the audience is likely to consist of the younger and gayer crowd, who will tolerate and even enjoy a certain amount of smart and up-to-date slang; but even for this audience there is no need to indulge in vulgarity or inanity. At the other extreme there is the programme of severe chamber music; on such a programme it is easy to get too academic and to talk in terms that are over the head of any but a select few—and to them what you say is likely to be stale news.

Perhaps the most unforgivable fault is carelessness or slovenliness of speech. The mispronunciation of English words, the use of ungrammatical or illiterate speech, are as reprehensible as to appear at a dinner party with dirty fingernails and soiled linen. Ignorance is no excuse, for the means of curing ignorance are always at hand; the neglect to consult a dictionary when in doubt is an insult to the listener. Moreover, in this respect the announcer must remember that his speech is listened to by many who consciously or unconsciously take him for a model; his responsibility then is great, and he must be correspondingly careful to exercise it properly.

Studio Audience

Finally comes the difficult problem of handling a show with a big studio audience. Here the announcer has a dual function; he has to consider not only the listeners actually present, but also the listeners at their radios. It should never be forgotten that on a network show the radio listener's outnumber the studio audience by thousands to one, and that consequently the announcer's first duty should be to the radio audience. It is perilously easy to succumb, unconsciously maybe, to the temptation of playing to the live audience. The announcer's attitude and performance should be governed by this idea: his aim should be to give the studio audience an opportunity of overhearing his remarks to the home listener, rather than to ask the latter to picture him enthralled an audience of which the man at home does not form part.

Listener's Guest.

To sum all this up: Whatever the programme may be, the announcer is not, in the last analysis, a part of the show.



"Likely to be Stale News"

His function is, as a guest of the listener, to introduce the show, to explain it, or comment on it when necessary. For this, apart from the obvious requirements such as a good, clear voice, clear speech, and a pleasing microphone personality, the announcer must possess good manners, good taste, good judgment, and some knowledge of whatever he may be called upon to talk about. Perhaps, after all, the most important of these is good judgment.

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