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# CAESAR TURNS HIS THUMB DOWN

## Petrillo Bans Foreign Radio Programmes From U.S.

RECENTLY we saw photographs of British Members of Parliament and American Congressmen exchanging broadcasts of Christmas carols. This move, possibly optimistic, was an effort to achieve a common level of international understanding and goodwill. Of the fact that no nation can live to itself alone, even in the cultural sense, we have had ample proof, and the carolling may have something to commend it from the social aspect alone.

But hard on the heels of the expressed hope of the United Nations leaders for a great exchange of broadcast programmes of all nations comes an order from the president of the American Federation of Musicians that the broadcasting of any musical programmes emanating from "foreign" countries should cease as from December 31.

And the man responsible for this major setback to what promised to be an excellent scheme for promoting international friendship is James Caesar Petrillo, who has broken into the news in his own picturesque fashion periodically. Petrillo is a man who is popularly believed to be what the Americans call a tough labour boss, who rides in a bullet-proof car and keeps a pistol in his desk. For more than 20 years he has been giving up his time, not without ample recompense, to increasing the employment and wages of musicians in the face of mechanical music in theatres and dance halls and over the radio.

According to a biography, Petrillo started to play a trumpet when he was eight; then he organised his own orchestra. Finally he entered union politics. His first affiliation was with the American Musicians' Union and at 22 he was its president. After three years he was beaten in the elections and transferred his affections to the American Federation of Musicians. In 1922 he became its president at 100 dollars a week.

### Join or Pay Up

Then he began to fight for the musicians of Chicago. He invented the "stand-by" system by which men outside the union playing for radio stations must either join the union or pay a musician to stand by and do nothing. He even arranged it so that the men who attend to the records when recorded music is broadcast became union musicians at union rates of pay.

Petrillo's powers were disputed in 1927 by the Chicago theatres. Two thousand musicians went on strike, but in four days the strike was over and theatre musicians all became unionists. In 1931 Petrillo told the managers of all the hotels in Chicago that there would be no music on New Year's Eve unless they joined the union. They joined. In 1936 he forbade Chicago musicians to make records for broadcasting; in 1938 a contract was signed giving the American Federation of Musicians control over



CAESAR PETRILLO  
*Stormy is the only adjective*

the output of recorded music in 589 radio stations.

Petrillo saw to it that no high school band played where a union band might; when a giant panda was to be welcomed to a zoo by a troop of Boy Scout buglers he demanded that an equal number of union men should be engaged as well—and they were.

### "They All Belong To Me"

According to the union constitution, Petrillo is able to call strikes at his discretion and he may levy fines of up to 5,000 dollars on any member; further, he can revise or suspend the constitution itself. He stirred up more trouble in 1940 when he informed the instrumentalists of the American Guild of Musical Artists (including Heifetz, Horowitz, Zimbalist, Iturbi and so, on) that they must join the American Federation of Musicians or be prevented from radio recording. "They're musicians and they belong to me," he is reported as saying. "Since when has there been any difference between Heifetz and a fiddler in a tavern?"

Rather than sacrifice concert work in the federation's territory, which included every important musical centre except the Boston Symphony Hall, most of the virtuosi joined Petrillo. But Lawrence Tibbett, president of the Guild, and later of the American Federation of Radio Artists, sought an injunction to prevent Petrillo's action, which, he declared, reflected the ambition of one man to make himself dictator of culture and entertainment in America. The injunction was refused, but Tibbett continued to fight Petrillo nevertheless.

### Petrillo is Patriotic

Not long after the outbreak of the 1939-45 war, to promote interest in American national defence, the Mutual

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