



LEFT: Overseas students attending the Seminar at Boston University. A. E. Black of the NZBS is sixth from the right

Current Trends in U.S. Radio & TV

THAT radio broadcasting in New Zealand compares favourably—both in facilities and programme content—with broadcasting in the United States was the overall impression received by Senior Technician Albert E. Black, of 2YA, who recently returned from an International Seminar on Radio and TV, conducted by the U.S. State Department.

One difference, however, and a very big one, Mr Black told *The Listener* the other day, was in the field of news coverage. This, he said, was developed in the States to a very high degree both in radio and TV.

"One of the most impressive things, in TV particularly, is the speedy coverage of topical events," he said. "Coming fresh to this sort of thing from New Zealand I felt for a while that far too much was made of events like bank robberies and catastrophes like Hurricane Audrey."

Hurricane Audrey, said Mr Black, was covered by on-the-spot broadcasts from the places eventually destroyed, broadcasts that were maintained up to within a few hours of the hurricane striking. Then there was the follow-up afterwards when viewers could see the scale of destruction and even the bodies of the victims being removed from the ruins.

"Though at first I thought too much was made of events like this, I must admit that soon I became not only accustomed to the TV treatment of news, but to also expect and look forward to it."

The average American was very conscious of his news broadcast, Mr Black added, but being a foreigner what he quickly noticed was the lack of international news on TV and radio. Only major events got any treatment.

After a month spent at the School of Public Relations and Communications at Boston University, the specialists attending the Seminar moved on for a period of station observation in New York. Following this period each

member of the course was placed on a station of his own choosing for a month.

"In my case," said Mr Black, "this was the TV station KOMU, Columbia, Missouri, a full commercial station whose licence is held by the University of Missouri. I found that once I had got used to the operational details and so on, I fitted in fairly well, though my only background had been technical reading in New Zealand and the study I had done since I arrived in America. The greatest difference was in the handling of 'live' studio shows. This, of course, is the greatest difference between TV and radio."

KOMU, including its transmitter, had an operational staff of four, said Mr Black, but for live studio work that was increased by anything from three to 10 technicians. Most of the programme of such small stations was originated on film or on network. The biggest shows on TV incidentally were never originated by studio organisations, said Mr Black, but by the so-called networks, which had "all the finance and facilities under the sun."

"The biggest and most regular live show at KOMU was the children's hour in the evenings. Other live shows were the inevitable talent quest, cooking demonstrations, agricultural demonstrations, and so on. KOMU also served the purpose of an educational station, for though it was a full commercial station the licence was held by the University of Missouri, and they used the station facilities to produce a large number of educational and documentary programmes which were distributed widely throughout the States."

In the U.S. at the present time, said Mr Black, there are a growing number of stations which devote all their time to educational programmes. These stations, by and large, are financed by philanthropic organisations and educational institutions. They have a limited but consistently growing audience, mostly students who want to benefit from some special series of programmes.

Viewing by the general public is limited by the fact that competing commercial stations are going all out to capture as many viewers as possible with pure entertainment.

"Another use of TV for education is in closed circuit installations in schools. In this system skilled teachers located at a teaching centre have their lessons televised in many classrooms, where the supervision is by less experienced teachers—sometimes student teachers. In this way, the relationship between student and teacher is retained, and a great deal more teaching effort can be utilised by the skilled teacher, who not only has more preparation time, but also the scope of the medium to assist him."

There was, however, said Mr Black, a tendency in some places to dispense with the supervisory teacher and thus save personnel.

"To me, this system seemed too impersonal, too much like Huxley's *Brave New World* to be either successful or good for children."

Colour was the big preoccupation of the American TV industry at the present, and received a great deal of advertising attention during the autumn just finished when, more than ever before, network shows were being produced in full colour.

"One Chicago station now produces its complete programme in colour—the first U.S. station to do so. Over quite a short period, the domestic 21-inch colour receiver has fallen in price from 1200 to 400 dollars. Because of this drop in price, more people are buying sets and, of course—the process being cumulative—more programmes are sponsored in colour."

Summing up, Mr Black said that he had found the trip and the experience very valuable. He was especially appreciative of the assistance he received from State Department officials.



ALBERT E. BLACK

N.P.S. photo



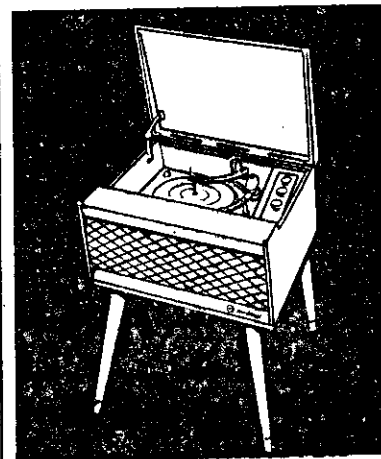
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