

RICE FIELDS

JOURNAL

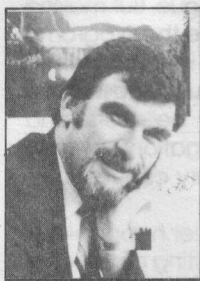
Volume III No. 1

March 1990

Editorial

Into the 90's . . . Boldly

Who among us is entering the 90's without some degree of fear and trepidation? Let's presume it to be a healthy fear, of course—the kind that sniffs out the possibilities as well as the problems, takes a deep sigh and then commits itself with a measure of apprehension to the task ahead.



To kick off this first RICEFields of the 90's let's try a little crystal ball-gazing to see what lies ahead of us in radio . . .

The Bible uses a number of metaphors which we could well apply to our role as broadcasters—prophets, watchmen, ambassadors, the "aroma of Christ," just to name a few. But they each carry with them a high degree of responsibility, a role which needs to be taken seriously. At the same time, as the people of God, we are privileged to have been given a glimpse into the future. Not only do we have the inside track on how it is all going to end but we are also given pointers to look out for along the way.

First, we as media people, by definition, also need to be "in the know." Perceptive. Prophetic. We must grapple objectively with developments in our world—at home and abroad—and formulate opinions in the light of biblically revealed truth. To do this we lay aside faulty presuppositions and look for fresh interpretations as world history unfolds before

our eyes, dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the USSR notwithstanding. We must be well-read people, balanced in our outlook, endowed with good common sense, while open to the Spirit's leading. Daily we find news items which cry out for Christian commentary—but on which we too often remain silent. God is gagged.

But what's new? Only this, that world events are going to become harder to read in the days ahead. Confusion will increase and distinctions increasingly blurred between what is right and wrong, good and evil, better and best. Someone will need to provide the insights.

Our second responsibility is specifically toward the Christian faithful. Like it or not as Christian broadcasters we are shaping the outlook of the believers for better or for worse. We are sending signals as to what is important not only by what we do say but also by what we don't. A biblically-based faith must find expression in daily events, social problems, opinions such that the Christian community is able to function as salt and light in a darkening world. The faithful need to be kept on track, solidly grounded in the Word of God but also exerting Christian influence in all areas of daily life.

To our condemnation the cults are cashing in on areas of life where the Church has large-

(Continued on next page)



Ricefields Journal is the official journal of the Radio In Church-planting Evangelism initiative of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Aims:

Ricefields Journal is a forum which aims to inform, stimulate and encourage Christian media workers in radio broadcasting, by documenting, evaluating and promoting radio's contribution in Christian mission. *Ricefields Journal* seeks to assist inter-agency cooperation and networking, and promote accountability and evaluation of the performance of radio broadcasting in Christian mission.

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Into the 90's . . .

ly remained silent. Pulpits have no comment except on strictly spiritual matters whose relevance to daily life is not always apparent. The New Age Movement, meanwhile, fields wholesome practical help and guidance at the grass roots level on many fronts while advocating change on environmental issues. Sadly, by so doing, New Age ushers unwitting adherents into the occult and into direct confrontation with biblical truth. All the time the credibility of the Church is being eroded. Truth and error sometimes have only a fine dividing line between them.

A third area reflects the need for Christians to become more active in the public media—the market place where the man-in-the-street goes to find his information and entertainment. The Christian ghetto has sobering limitations in many social contexts and cannot be thought of as the main means of reaching the masses. One of the implications of this is that our young people will need to be encouraged in seeking professions in the broadcast media and the arts generally. More than that, they will need understanding support from both church and family if they are to function effectively and salt their daily output with Christian wisdom and values on a sustained basis.

A fourth area is something more tangible and measurable: the Gospel by radio in all the world's main languages by the year 2000. This is a responsibility we bear towards the unreached peoples of this world while we in English-speaking circles gorge ourselves on endless broadcasts in our mother-tongue. But making it happen is not so easy. Finding people to prepare the programs; getting the time right so that it is not a "foreign" idea but rather owned by "local" believers who speak the language—assuming there are such people; turning listeners into believers and encouraging the establishment of local congregations even in inaccessible areas. These are some of the primary concerns.

The last challenge is one scenario that may never happen—but is quite probable: the curtailment of our broadcasting activities in the days ahead. We must not forget that we are on alien territory and radio stations can only operate courtesy of a national licensing authority. Public opinion could easily be whipped up against Christian stations and false accusations made. The net result could be that we would find ourselves looking back on today as being the golden days of radio, rueing the fact that we did not make better use of our present opportunities.

Articles in this issue grapple with a number of these and provide insights as to the way ahead into the nineties.

As in Kadesh Barnea grapes are out there for the picking—clusters of them, ready for harvest. Giants too are waiting in the wings, lots of them, and we may feel like grasshoppers under their threatening gaze. It is going to be costly and lots of risks will need to be taken but then that is the nature of faith and the height of our calling. Christ has left us an example . . . (1 Pet 2:21)

Draw encouragement from the words of Joshua and Caleb: "If the Lord is pleased with us, he will take us there and give us that rich and fertile land." (Numbers 14:8 TEV)

Go to it!

Rice Seeds

Recent Research Studies on the Use of Sound

by Ross James

Radio is sound, therefore all meaning has to come through sound—the words chosen, the way the voice is used, the diversity of auditory effects.



The practical side of this is shown in four fairly recent studies which have turned up some very interesting findings. Only two of the experiments research radio programming specifically but their findings are of interest to radio workers because they demonstrate the power of sound to gain listener attention, to help people remember information, and its effect on source credibility.

In the first, (1) 192 children were tested to determine whether radio would be more stimulating to the imagination, and whether television would transmit more information than radio. Under experimental conditions, children of various ethnic and social class groups either listened to a cassette tape of a story or watched an animated videotaped version of that story. The videotape used the identical soundtrack. The major findings indicated that the audiotaped version stimulated more imagination and highlighted verbal information than the animated version. Overall retention of storyline action in particular, was significantly enhanced by the video.

Another study (2) investigated the use of sound effects in children's television programming. The use of sound effects increased selective attention. Children remembered more when sound effects helped them to recognise, or infer what was happening or being said.

Speaker credibility is a characteristic of a radio performer that is wholly a matter of audience perception: it is assigned by

a listener. It is the listener's perception of how a radio voice "sounds." In an experiment (3) on how vocal frequency, or pitch, affected perceptions of the speaker, different levels of pitch affected perceptions of speaker competency, honesty, and persuasiveness. The perceptions varied, however, according to the sensitivity of the listeners to this type of nonverbal stimuli.

Radio news editors commonly believe that the broad spectrum of sound contained in voice reports and actualities



add to the appeal of news. One study (4) has found no support for that belief. Further, it did not find evidence to support the view that voice reports and actualities help listeners to remember the facts of news stories.

In their own way, the findings of each of these studies challenge radio producers to use to greater effect, the range of sound at their disposal. Sound is the tool of our trade. Let's use it wisely and use it well.

End Notes:

- (1) Greenfield, P. and Beagles, Roos, J. 1988. Radio vs. Television: Their Cognitive Impact on Children of Different Socio-Economic and Ethnic Groups. *Journal of Communication*, 38 (2).
- (2) Calvert, S. and Gersh, T. 1987. The Selective Use of Sound Effects and Visual Inserts for Children's Television Story Comprehension. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 8 (4).
- (3) Bond, R. et al. 1987. Vocal Frequency and Person Perception: Effects of Perceptual Salience and Nonverbal Sensitivity. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 16 (4).
- (4) Grady, L. 1987. How Voice Reports, Actualities Affect Recall of Radio News. *Journalism Quarterly*, 64 (2/3).



A CHALLENGE TO BROADCASTERS

In The Light of World Evangelization Needs

by Viggo Sogaard

The evangelization of our world demands communication of the Good News to people of all tribes and tongues so that they will see Jesus as relevant and meaningful to them, and respond to him in faith.

Radio people are often called communicators, and probably all of us who write in this magazine, or even read it, are convinced of the tremendous potential of radio in the service of evangelism. But we have to confess that not all radio speakers are good communicators. We often get the feeling that relevancy and the creation of true meaning are not the primary concerns of the producers. Consequently, the listeners are not helped and communication has not taken place.

In a communication process, we send messages with the intention of engaging the minds of the listeners in an information processing activity. The big question is then, Did my listener understand? Unfortunately, we often do not know the answer to such a question, but take understanding for granted. The listeners will probably understand . . . but in their way and within their context. But that understanding may not be the same as the broadcaster's, in fact, for a Hindu or a Buddhist it may be the direct opposite. The BIG challenge to radio broadcasters is to get to know their audience so well that they know the answers to such questions. Listening to the audience will make it possible for you to get them to listen to you.

Recently in India, we were evaluating a new radio program produced for people in the state of Karnataka. We had been challenged by a script writer from All India Radio who claimed that it

is of no use to read from Scriptures on the air as the listeners would not understand. We then decided to do a little test. The intended audience were fishermen on the west coast of India, Kannada speakers, basically illiterate, and Hindu. I took the New Testament,

Listening to the audience will make it possible for you to get them to listen to you.

opened it randomly on Luke 7, and asked them to say "stop" every time there was a word or concept that they did not understand. So I started reading:

"When Jesus (stop) had finished saying all these things to the people, he went to Capernaum (stop). A Roman officer (stop) there had a servant who was very dear to him; the man was sick and about to die. When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent home some Jewish elders (stop) to ask him to come and heal his servant. They came to Jesus and begged him earnestly, "This man really deserves your help. He loves our people and he himself built a synagogue (stop) for us."

I gave up. The point was made. It would obviously be very difficult to read even such a simple text on a radio program without proper background information, notes, and other helps. If we are to communicate, we are to create true meaning.

We are also discovering that a non-literate person finds it very difficult to follow readings from a written text. Writing is based on linear thinking, a process we acquire as we learn to read and write. The non-literate has not learn-

ed such a process, so his or her mind cannot follow a reading based on linear thinking. We could say that listening to written texts requires literacy, but so many of our listeners are not literate. Realizing that this is true, brings an even more serious problem into focus.

In our follow-up, we have largely overlooked, or refused to face the fact that most listeners cannot be reached by our follow-up systems which are based on literacy (letters). By so doing we include the majority of our listeners from the chance of being followed up. This is one of the most crucial problems facing radio broadcasters in the light of Lausanne II and "World by 2000."

There is no easy answer, but it is obvious that the broadcasters must allocate a large portion of their budgets to this issue if they are to be effective. Maybe 25% would be a realistic start? But I am, unfortunately, too "realistic" to believe that this will happen; I still hope that a large portion of budgets will be allocated to this, and part of the solution will be a total reorganization of the way in which we go about doing "follow-up."

Maybe another answer would be to analyze this concept of follow-up? Follow-up to what? By using the word, we are really implying that the start of the communication/evangelism process is the radio program, and that may be the problem. Frank Gray has called for community, community among the producers, and community-creation among the listeners. What about more community in strategy, so that the start will be the church (the community of believers), followed by radio, continued by the church? Most follow-up programs are

In our follow-up, we have largely overlooked . . . the fact that most listeners cannot be reached by our follow-up systems which are based on literacy . . .

still non-community. The task is carried out from a desk in a far away office building, and the approach does not relate to community, or it brings in community far too late in the process. Do not let the end justify the means, but let us find ways to let community be the way in

(Continued on page 7)



RADIOFILE

A Burmese Research Study —Over The Air

by Eila Romo

(Editor's Note: In the wake of articles on research in previous issues which pointed out the shortcomings of letter response in research, readers will find the following study of interest.)

The primary purpose of the research was to determine the current status of FEBC's listening audience in Rangoon. This was in preparation for a workshop in the Unreached Cities track at Lausanne II in Manila in July 1989.

Time was short and an update on the current situation was imperative given the upheavals which have been taking place in Burma (Myanmar) in the past two years. The local situation also precluded any opportunity for conventional survey research to be done. This would have invited trouble. Time was another key factor. It was therefore decided that, although not ideal, questions would be asked over the air. Response from Burmese listeners was traditionally good – of the order of 1500-2000 letters per month – and there seemed to be good prospects for a significant response that would yield the desired information in a short space of time.

In addition to basic demographic information, feedback was sought in two particular areas – listening habits and preferences, and insights into personal and family problems confronting listeners. This would provide an opportunity for listeners to express themselves openly and reveal what problems were uppermost in their minds.

Method:

Eight questions were prepared which sought out basic demographics, listening habits, as well as probing current problems. These were as follows:

- (1) Age; (2) Sex; (3) Education; (4) Occupation;
 - (5) When they listened; (6) Why they listened;
 - (7) One problem they face;
 - (8) One problem their family faces.
- Plus:
- (9) Name and Address (for response)

The questions were prepared in the Burmese language by our staff in Manila and were included in regular programmes aired in FEBC's Burmese services broadcast from Saipan and Manila, twice in each block. This amounted to a total of six times daily – twice from Saipan and four times from Manila, morning and evening. No advance warning was given of the questions to be asked. A small gift was offered in return to all those who answered all questions.

The oral questionnaire was asked for a period of seven days beginning Easter Sunday March 26, 1989. April 12 was set as the cutoff date for responses to be received in FEBC's Rangoon office before transmittal to the Philippines for evaluation.

By the end of May almost 5000 letters had been safely transported to Manila, all hand-carried by individual travellers. Our Burmese staff were overwhelmed. Not only did they contain large amounts of quantifiable information, but the open-ended questions dealing with problems yielded short essays of valuable comments – a gold mine for program material and for new ideas.

The Analysis:

The immediate task now was to extract the information and come up with a meaningful analysis. The biggest obstacle was that it was in the Burmese language and hence needed to be translated selectively into English before being codified and analysed by computer.

First, it should be remembered that an analysis of our Rangoon listening audience was our primary objective. Anything that would be learned about our Burmese audience generally would be an extra bonus. Index cards were prepared and attached to the first four hundred letters showing a Rangoon address. On this card was summarised by numeric code or abbreviated comment the responses to each of the questions.

The information from each of the cards was then entered into a database and after 408 entries had been made the exercise was terminated and analysis of the data was performed. From this data a report was prepared for use in the Unreached Cities workshop. Subsequently an analysis was performed in a similar manner on the wider Burmese data (sampling every tenth letter) and comparisons made between Rangoon in particular and Burma as a whole.

Results:

As might have been expected the response came predominantly from young people. Two thirds of survey respondents were from the 15-24 age group, divided equally between male and female. Compared to the age distribution of the nation as a whole this age-group was over-represented.

By occupation the proportion of students was found to be higher than the population as a whole. Religious preference, however, showed the reverse, but with an encouraging 75% nevertheless indicating they are Buddhists (total population is 87% Buddhist).

Differences were also found between the Rangoon sample and the wider non-Rangoon group. Generally the latter might be considered rural people. Rangoon had a much higher percentage of Muslims and unemployed. It also has more medical workers and manual workers while the countryside attracted more teachers and farmers.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RANGOON (N=408) AND THE NATION

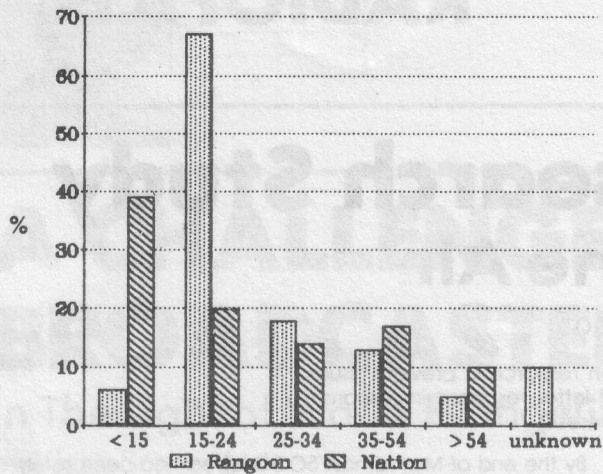


Figure 1

Demographic differences aside, why do they listen? The strongest reason given was for the music, including folk songs and hymns. But a high percentage stated the furtherance of their knowledge of the Christian religion (Bible, Jesus Christ) as their main reason for listening.

Fig. 2 RELIGION IN RANGOON AND BURMA
RANGOON (N=408), BURMA (N=377)

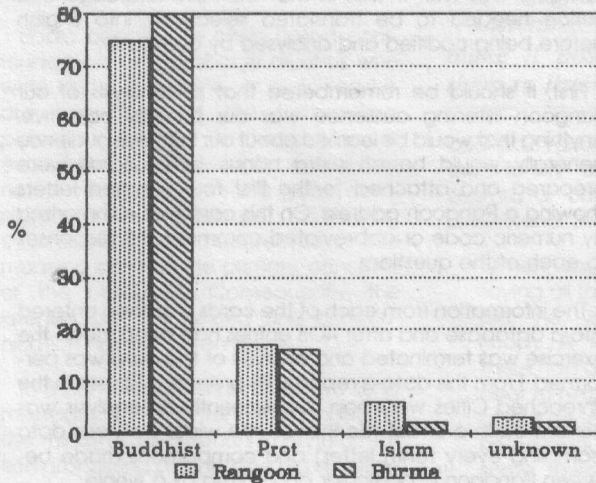
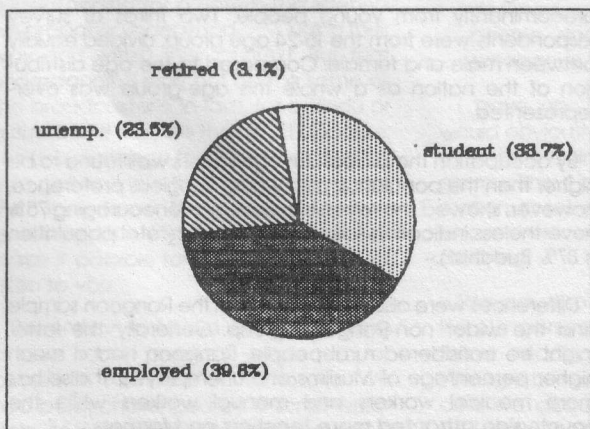


Fig. 3 EMPLOYMENT STATUS
RANGOON (N=408)



The answers to the question on personal and family problem areas reflect the actual needs of the sample audience. The schools were closed at the time the questionnaire was aired. It may have increased the number of educational problems. 21% of the audience outside of Rangoon and 14% of the Rangoon audience mentioned the closing of schools and graduation as a problem. Also on the personal level, besides education and finances, unemployment and the work situation cause most problems in the capital. Respondents are either unemployed, or they have poor income in business, or an unpleasant working place. But these are not major problems in the countryside. Instead, the audience sample there had more health-related problems.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS
BURMA (N=377)

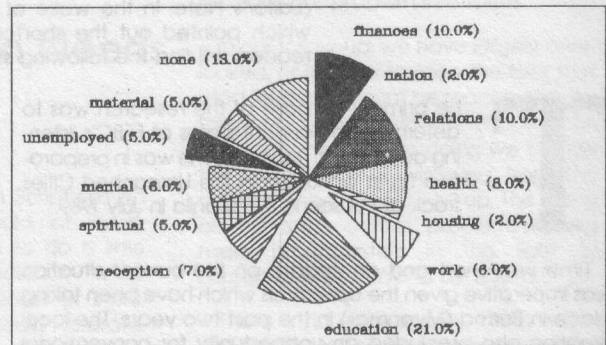


Figure 4

PERSONAL PROBLEMS
RANGOON (N=408)

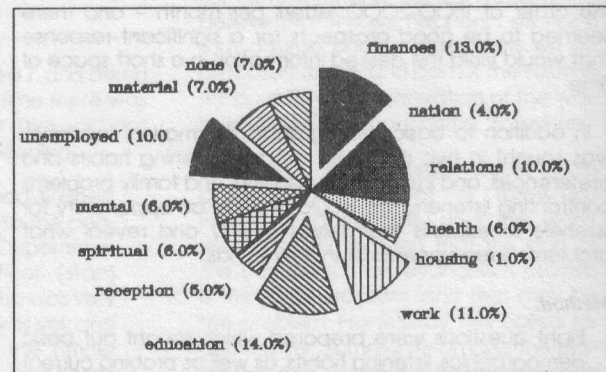


Figure 5

Relationships also were a problem area both in the city and outside. In age groups below 24 years old relationship problems are more common on the family level than the personal level. Family problems exist mainly among young families or were experienced in their parents' family, often between children and their parents.

The cost of this kind of research is minimal, apart from the commitment to reward those who replied with a small token of appreciation as promised. It was clear that with (a) such large numbers responding and (b) the problems encountered in getting things in to Burma (they would not want anything from within) any attempt to send anything large to all respondents could be both difficult and expensive. A specially printed postcard was decided upon which depicted 25 years of FEBC's broadcasts to Burma. These were printed in Manila and privately transmitted to Burma without going through the mail system. This single item of printing proved to be the largest expense. Second to this were the additional administration costs encountered by our Rangoon office as they individually responded to listeners.

What was learned?

We have learned quite a lot about a distinct segment of our listening audience - those who write letters. We also know which of our FEBC stations they listen to, and when they prefer to listen. This is of great value as we plan our schedules. We have also been surprised at their motivation for listening. A surprisingly high percentage listens in order to know more of the Gospel, and for this we should be encouraged. But the open-ended questions also provided a wealth of information as to what is going on in peoples' lives. It showed us where they were hurting, and what is uppermost in their minds. Now, if we choose to target this group with specific programs we have a lot of information already on hand which serves to provide a profile of the 15-24 yr-old Burmese Buddhist. The comparisons drawn between Rangoon respondents and those from Burma generally also draw some distinctions between the average Burmese and those who live in Rangoon where most of the student unrest has been located.

The limitations of this kind of research should not be minimised. We were, after all, polling those who write rather than listeners in general. Comparative studies done in India by the BBC have shown that there can be a large disparity between listeners in general, and that segment of listeners who write letters. We could argue, then, that the results are not of any real value. But we could equally argue that those who write letters are of particular interest to us as Christian broadcasters because they are potentially those who can

be followed up. These are individuals who have chosen to make themselves known, for some reason or other. It is necessary that we learn more about them.

Conclusions:

Research is only of any value if it leads to changes and management decisions being made. This research exercise is clearly doing that since it has forcibly pointed to a very clear segment of Rangoon listeners as a very appropriate target for evangelistic programming. This segment, characterised by 177 members of the Rangoon sample, is 15-24 years old, Buddhist, and mostly student by occupation. They listen largely to FEBC's music but are also very interested in extending their knowledge of the Bible, Jesus Christ and the Christian religion in general. They appear to be open for change. FEBC's Burmese department is therefore planning special daily programmes to reach this segment with the Gospel together with a specially designed follow-up programme based in Rangoon.

For this development alone it would be worth it. But there is more. This study has put members of our Burmese department back in touch once more with their own people. Now they appreciate better their hurts and feelings, their frustrations and longings. They can now make better programmes for real listeners.

Eila Romo comes from Finland and is a researcher with FEBC in Manila.

A Challenge . . . (from page 4)

which we follow up. Also, as mentioned above, most follow-up systems leave out most of the listeners due to illiteracy.

This issue of community and radio broadcasting has brought to my remembrance the warning Gavin Reid gave twenty years ago. The greatest threat to the church is a breakdown in communication:

Unless Christians can find ways of saying things to modern non-community men then not only is modern man in a desperate plight, and not only is the Church facing extinction, but Almighty God Himself is gagged." ("The Gagging of God", 1969, p.17).

So the concern for meaning and true communication, a concern for the listeners (in particular the non-literate), and a concern for true Christian community together provide us with a challenge to which we must find true and workable answers. It will obviously lead us into strategic planning, so that "follow-up" can start long before the program is on the air. There must be a

We need to let the initial stages of the evangelization process be given top priority.

system in place prior to broadcasting, so that it will function before, during and

after the radio programs. Even though much of this will be dependent on the local church, we must place the responsibility for its realization on the broadcaster.

SUMMARIZING SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACING THE CHRISTIAN BROADCASTERS:

1. We must develop effective integrated strategies that get started in community, in particular with local churches in the country. Even if there are only a few Christians, they are the nucleus community to which new Christians must become united. Let us learn to use radio as community and for community.

2. We must solve the problem of follow-up among non-literate listeners who form the majority in Asia, and in particular the unreached multitudes. This will include a willingness on behalf of broadcasters to commit significant funds to this activity, and a willingness to develop decentralized follow-up systems.

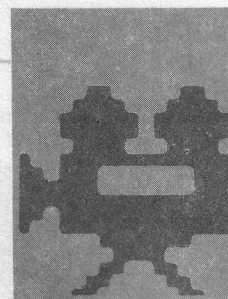
3. We must get away from the traditional preaching formats in evangelistic programs and focus on teaching. Great care should be exercised to develop programs that communicate the Good News in such clear messages that it indeed will be good news to the listeners. True meaning with relevance is the result we aim for.

4. We must find ways to greatly improve our research capabilities. In particular, programmers need to learn pretesting and program research among the audience. Active listening to the audience, including the non-literate, is the most superior program preparation method we have. Listen to them so that they may listen to you.

5. We should cease to use the word pre-evangelism. The connotation of the word is that decision-making is evangelism, but that other activities are inferior to that. We need to let the initial stages of the evangelization process (when radio is strong) be given top priority. That is, like Jesus, we teach little by little so that understanding will be achieved and true communication will be the result.

I am not implying that no one is working on such issues. In fact, we are beginning to see promising approaches develop here and there, but there is a long way to go. Let us commit ourselves to the challenge to make radio live up to its potential in the evangelization of men and women around the world, the making of disciples of Jesus Christ, and the strengthening of his Church.

Dr. Viggo Sogaard is Director of Ministry Communications for the Lausanne Committee, a consultant to the United Bible Society, and Director of the Asian Institute in Christian Communication. He is also an adjunct professor in Communications at Fuller Seminary. He was formerly a missionary to Thailand and now lives in Denmark.



The Christian and Public Media

by Nick Page

(Adapted from a Lausanne II presentation by Nick Page. Copyright LCWE. Used by permission.)

The media are all around us. They speak to us when we are least aware of them; they replay their messages in our minds when we do not expect them. The media that we are most aware of often take more concentration to engage with. The media are part of our culture; they affect us all. We are all products of our culture. We are affected by it. So the media obviously influence the way we think and speak.

But how do we respond to the media? First, we must distinguish between the public media and the specifically missionary or gospel media.

Some of us use supermarkets for most of our groceries, but occasionally we seek out delicatessens, or private bakers to provide some particular food we like. Likewise Christians, although receiving most of their information, education and entertainment from the public media, turn to gospel radio and TV stations, and to Christian magazines, to fulfill the distinctive, specialist needs they have which the public media cannot provide.

The media have been likened to a see-saw: at one end you can say a lot to a few, and at the other a little to many. The Christian media is on the former end, the public media on the latter.

Many people want to break the see-saw. They want to force the media to do what they cannot do. A pastor friend of mine is not only a preacher and teacher, but also a writer and broadcaster. He was saying to me that it is important for us to understand that television, for instance, is a creation medium not a salvation medium. It is very difficult to use it to express deep spiritual truths without them getting distorted. He is a regular speaker on Britain's main national radio news magazine. His underlying aim is to subvert the non-Christian culture, to create doubt in the minds of unbelievers. That is a wise use of the medium he is contributing to.

But this oblique communication is not a new

fad. William Wilberforce used what he called "launchers" in conversation with non-Christian friends. They were teasers that they could pick up, and question him further about his faith and about Jesus Christ.

The Lord himself did not teach or preach in detail to the general public. That was reserved for the disciples, his followers. In public he mostly told stories, and responded to questions with more questions. We must think very carefully HOW we communicate – both through specialist channels and through the public media. Public media can have impact because they have public attention – and that is why it is imperative that we encourage others with a Christian understanding to get involved as well.

I suggest that there are three main reactions among Christians to the public media:

1. We recoil in horror at some of the things we see and hear – the offensive, the divisive, the materialistic, the permissive, the atheistic, the violent. We say this is not honouring to God. We will no longer buy newspapers, read novels, watch television, listen to radio. We will concentrate instead on building stronger relationships within the family, with our church fellowship; we will read the scriptures more, and books of

Many people want... to force the media to do what they cannot do.

biblical commentary, and Christian biography. We will watch Gospel television and hire films by Dr. Dobson or Dr. Graham, but at all costs we will remain unspotted by the world. We won't risk being contaminated by the evil which communicates itself through the public media. That's one approach to the issue.

2. The second and opposite approach that's widely practised is that for one reason or another we soak up everything we see and hear indiscriminately. Some-

times, I think people assume that everything we see that isn't expressed in theological terms is somehow neutral. So we fall into the trap of thinking that with the exception of excessively violent or sexually explicit scenes, most of the output of television companies, and book and magazine publishers, has nothing to do negatively or positively with our faith.

So while the first reaction to the public media is one of total rejection (at least in theory), the second is unthinking acceptance. But there is a third way...

3. Those on the receiving end of the media (that is, all of us) must develop a response to the media in which we do just that – "respond." We must encourage people not to be seduced by the idea that

The ideas of the permissive society have not been sold to our young people by philosophical treatises or lectures by secular humanists.

everything that is not explicitly making a point is therefore neutral. And not to assume that if we use apparent wholesome, creative, entertaining TV, or radio or films or novels, or magazines or music to help us unwind, to relax, to give us some well deserved (and of course strictly rationed) entertainment, then we don't need to apply any real standards of judgement. We may find ourselves beginning to think that judging, testing the spirits, is for theological issues, for philosophical arguments, not for entertainment. That can be very wrong. The ideas of the permissive society have not been sold to our young people by philosophical treatises or lectures by secular humanists. They have been soaked up by being implicitly advocated in much of their light entertainment, demonstrated in the lifestyles of their heroes and of their friends. It is subconscious, and thereby that much more dangerous.

But then Jesus did most of his teaching to the general public by stories. He had very important things to say yet he communicated those ideas by simple, and sometimes entertaining stories. This is just how much media communication is packaged today – and not just films or novels. As Marshall McLuhan points out:

"It is misleading to suppose that there's any basic difference between education and entertainment. This distinction merely relieves people of the responsibility of looking into the matter. It's like setting up a distinction between didactic and lyrical

poetry on the ground that one teaches, the other pleases. However, it has always been true that whatever pleases teaches more efficiently."

The church must be challenged to understand what it is taking in from the media. There is nothing wrong as such in watching many of the films, television plays, etc., which truthfully portray the standards of society in which we live, but which often differ from the standards that God has set us. However, if we just take on board the implication that that is the way things are, and therefore somehow they are acceptable, we are heading for a sort of spiritual and moral malnutrition.

As Paul warns us in 1 Thessalonians 5, "Test everything, hold fast that which is good."

This does not mean I am advocating that all things are lawful, so therefore let's cast off any restraints that we have put on ourselves. But I am emphasising that we have been taking on board things which need to be handled with care, while being unaware of their powerful effects on us. Simply to preach a monastic abstinence from the media is not an alternative. While we live in our mixed societies, the media are each society's form of communication. If we withdraw from communicating with that society, we invalidate ourselves as ambassadors of Christ to the world. We can't communicate with people if we don't know the way they think or if we don't understand the way they live. We must engage with the media, get into the market place of our society, to understand what those around us are really doing. We must also evaluate what we receive, weighing everything against the standards of God's Word.

I am always disappointed at the relative reactions to two comedy shows screened in the United Kingdom a few years back. One of them called "Till Death Us Do Part" has since been imitated in the United States as "All In The Family." It features a small, poor family presided over by the grossest bigot you can imagine. He is a racist, sexist, chauvinist, a petty nationalist, and he expresses those sorts of views with verve and crudity. I would have thought no-one watching the programme would imagine that Alf Garnett (Archie Bunker in the US version) is any kind of role model. He is an overplayed but truthful example of the ugly, unpleasant sort of character that can be found in the grassroots politics of our inner cities.

If we withdraw from communicating with...society, we invalidate ourselves as ambassadors of Christ to the world.

By contrast, when "Till Death . . ." was in its heyday there was another very different kind of show on the other channel. It was called "Miss Jones and Son" and it was a very gentle comedy about an attractive girl who, although unmarried, had a baby boy. There was no strong language in the series, there were no heavy scenes with the boyfriend, but I feel that this was the series that Christians should have been warned against. "Till Death Us Do Part" was truthful. It portrayed wrong attitudes, even unpleasant attitudes, but you

were in no doubt that they were wrong. "Miss Jones and Son" painted a dangerously irresponsible picture of a sadly very common situation. Here is an unmarried mother living alone, but there are no problems. The flat is decorated and furnished like an advertising supplement, there is no shortage of money, no problems with babysitters, no tensions with the boyfriend, no sense of insecurity, no hint of the real, honest, truthful problems which result from that lifestyle.

Christians need to engage with the media, and to evaluate the impressions conveyed, wisely and from a clear biblical position.

But it doesn't stop there. If we are living in our society and are in good standing with our non-Christian neighbours, they'll want to tell us what they think about the great and small issues of the day and they'll want to hear what we think. The great and small issues of the day are often those which have been raised in the media, in news or in fiction. If we are living in the market place, if we have engaged with the media and evaluated what we see every day against the authority of Scripture, we can and should express our opinions.

So far we have been thinking about our response as receivers of the media, as Christians whose area of influence is their family, their friends, their workmates, those within their own social milieu. I feel very strongly that the grassroots response to the media in a wise, biblically informed way – a double listening (to society and to God) – has great potential for presenting the claims of Jesus Christ to our world.

Christians need to engage with the media, and to evaluate the impressions conveyed, wisely and from a clear biblical position.

But I want to go further, to think of those who are able to contribute back to the media themselves. I say "contribute" because I find the word "use" has offensive overtones. It implies a sort of brute force, taking the media and using it inappropriately, abusing it, for our own purposes. In many societies – not all, I know – the door is open for us to contribute far more than we are always aware.

So why do so many of us turn our faces from the opportunity? Some, I understand, look on it as enemy territory and don't want to be trained by the world.

But some just aren't good enough to communicate professionally. I've met a number of Christians who have complained that they could not get work in the media, and implied that it was their faith that got in the way. But I would not have felt able to employ them. They were not committed to being good communicators.

There is another reason why Christians don't take up the communications opportunities that exist (and this one may be more true of certain groups rather than individuals). It is that they don't want to be constrained by the good regulation of truth and honesty that pertains on some of our public broadcasting

systems. I've seen so-called Christian programmes which so distressed my wife that I had to turn them off. On the surface they seemed to be everything we would want the world to know, but in reality they employed all the dishonesty we associate with second-hand car salesmen.

But I am not laying the blame for our failure to speak with a greater voice in the public media of the world, entirely on the shoulders of incompetent or intellectually dishonest Christians.

Those who opt out of the responsibility to keep a presence in the public media are playing into the hands of some governments and authorities.

There IS some resistance to the real message of Jesus Christ from some people in authority. There always will be. But we need to persist in our commitment to communicating to the WHOLE world. Private channels are NOT an alternative. Their purposes are very different. But those who opt out of the responsibility to keep a presence in the public media are playing into the hands of some governments and authorities.

Os Guinness has described the approach of some governments to Christianity as "containment." In media terms, of course, nothing could suit such governments more than keeping Christians on their own stations, as long as it kept them out of the mainstream communications channels. Keep the Christians in their subculture, speaking their own language and on their own terms to their own people. But that is not enough.

A widespread, consistent, grassroots influence is vital. In an address on 20th September 1912 at the opening of the 101st session of Princeton Theological Seminary J. Gresham Machen said,

"We may preach with all the fervour of a reformer, and yet succeed in winning only a straggler here or there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation and of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. . . . So as Christians we should try to mould the thought of the world in such a way as to make the acceptance of Christianity something more than a logical absurdity."

We need Christians in all walks of life and in all strands of the media. Wholesome scripts will be a reflection of God's Kingdom, of his nature, his will. That's good in itself, and will produce an atmosphere conducive to listening. Some people cannot receive the Gospel at the moment. They have a block in their lives. We should be ready to remove that block, whatever it is – to relieve bondage, discouragement and so on – before expecting people to listen.

Nick Page is a presentation announcer with BBC Radio 2 and is on the board of ICMC. Among other responsibilities he is also director of the Arts Centre Group in London, and director of Elm House Christian Communications.

Injustice: Should Christian Broadcasters Speak Out?

by Jim Bowman



The Broadcaster's Dilemma:

Most Christians understand that "spiritual ministry" means an activity which relates to the development of the invisible, or spiritual side of a man. Thus we direct our energies toward two broad objectives: 1) the salvation of the soul and 2) the development of Christian character. In "Christianese," this would be "evangelism" and "upbuilding of the believer," or other similar terms.

However, almost every ministry is inevitably faced with situations which require stepping outside the confines of that narrow definition. A local church may find itself at the City Council advocating the banning of pornography stores. It may find it necessary to oppose a political candidate whose views and lifestyles are immoral and anti-Biblical. It may feel that it needs to speak out against abortion. It may run an Alcoholics Anonymous or similar program. Almost every church has a fund for the economically destitute. Churches do, in fact engage in many activities which are not strictly speaking, "speaking," "spiritual."

But should Christian broadcasters speak out against injustice at the national and international levels? If our job is to change society at all, should we do so only by converting its individual members at the spiritual level? Or should we speak out directly against leaders and governments whose policies and practices defy every Christian principle of righteousness?

The Christian's Response:

It would be naive to say the answer to this is uniformly applicable. Realistically, it is a very difficult question, and many books and articles have been written on it over the decades. The most useful book on the subject I have read is Charles Colson's "Kingdoms in Conflict." (1) Mr. Colson has researched many authors, and has studied the history of the Church's struggle with socio-political involvement. He points out the tendency of Christians to avoid political conflict, and shows how the general silence of the German Church, helped permit Hitler to create a State of brutal, murderous totalitarianism. Even while Jews were being hauled off to the camps by the millions, Christians remained silent, for fear of persecution. Those Church leaders who did speak out were imprisoned; some were executed.

When a government engages in murder and deceit, and when it has become otherwise accountable, the issue is clearly moral. If we Christians do not speak out, then of what stuff is our gospel made? How can we speak and act against smoking, drunkenness or adultery, yet remain silent and "apolitical" in the face of mass murder and public deceit? When, why and how should Christian radio be involved?

When: The Christian voice should always be ready to speak on matters of righteousness, personal and corporate. The real decision revolves around how this is to be done, in a Christian way, during times of crisis. But we must always do so with adequate debate, counsel, and prayer. Even though we may be fearless in so doing, we should count the probable cost before we take the risks.

Why us? Because Christian radio in or to any community is part of the leadership structure of the Body of Christ. In many cases, such as China, radio is often looked to as the highest Christian authority available. Even with many non-Christians, Christian radio is the only reliable source of unbiased information.

How: I believe FEBC must continue keeping people informed of what is true. It is also important, in some broadcasts, to give the Christian worldview as a perspective against which to measure the information reported. (2)

Christian listeners must learn what being "the salt of the earth" means to the community and to the nation. Thus there should be not only news and information programs for the public, but a regular series for Christians, so they know how to respond to national crises such as those we have seen in the Philippines, China, Eastern Europe and even Panama.

The Risks: There are a number of risks, and as already mentioned, they vary from situation to situation. Some of the major ones are:

1. Radio Station license. If the license is held in the country of crisis, then the license itself may be in jeopardy. If the station is lost, Christians will say that if the station had stuck to its job of "preaching the Gospel," this would not have happened. However, in most cases, when a totalitarian government takes control, it is only a matter of time before a witnessing station will come under its control.(3)

2. Polarization of believers. No matter how eloquently the case may be made for speaking out for corporate justice, many believers firmly hold that it is wrong to do so, or that the issues being addressed are not so clear as to declare moral bankruptcy.(4) Many will say that the Christian way is to remain neutral (and thus silent) in the face of political struggles. When the radio station engages in "speaking out," it will incur the wrath of some otherwise loyal friends and supporters.

3. Loss of focus. It is far too easy to cross over the line of concern for justice and truth, and find one's self absorbed in, and struggling for the issues themselves. I have seldom seen anything truly good come from the Christian's attempt to support a political solution to a moral problem. Too often concern becomes anger and even hostility, especially when the struggle is waged from the human standpoint.(5) The Bible itself can become a political tool in the hands of incorrectly motivated people.(6) There is a very great danger that Christians can be seen as "political extremists," rather than a people who love truth and light. At the radio station, strong programming leadership must be exercised to keep the focus biblically based and spiritually oriented. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."(7)

4. Harm to others. There are times that our decision can affect the safety of others. A radio station has to think about its listeners or even fellow broadcasters, as well as about its own license. However, leadership often requires making decisions which bring risk to the corpus. FEBC's view is that China listeners tune in voluntarily. Hard as it may seem, it is also our view that in times of moral crisis, Christians should be challenged to be willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. This will make many people uncomfortable.

Bottom Line:

The simple principle is that the Christian radio station can be a powerful influence for national and international righteousness as well as for individual salvation. Radio plays a leadership role. It is not a question of whether we should be involved; it is only a question of the Biblical, Christian way to do it in the specific circumstance.

End notes:

- (1) Colson, Charles, Kingdoms in Conflict, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1987).
- (2) One of the motivations for FEBC International's decision to form its own news gathering agency, is the consistent political and spiritual bias in the international wire services. Located in Manila, FEBC's agency became operative in September 1989.
- (3) Station YNOL in Managua, Nicaragua is a good example. The Sandinistas have clearly stated that as long as the station sticks to religion, its license is in no danger. In reality, however, the government is doing its best to take away control of the station from Evangelicals and get it into the hands of the Government sanctioned church association.
- (4) During the People Power Revolution in Manila, FEBC employees were divided almost exactly 50-50 as to whether being a Christian meant being loyal to the existing government, or whether it meant speaking out for moral justice. In fact, FEBC did neither, but rather simply reported the events as they occurred, while giving a biblical perspective on the "Christian's responsibility" to pray during times of national crises. Still, by not condemning the uprising, or by not giving support TO it, FEBC "got it" from all sides!
- (5) In one case in the U.S. recently, an advocate of the anti-abortion (Pro-Life) movement bombed an abortion clinic!
- (6) Hitler used the Bible frequently to win friends and support among leaders of the German Church.
- (7) Zechariah 4:6, (NASB).

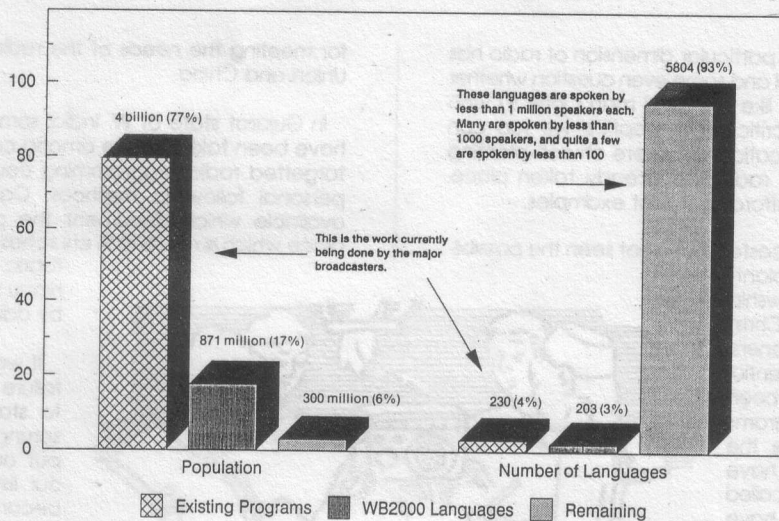
Jim Bowman is Director of Field Operations for FEBC and has his office in La Miranda, California.



A World By 2000 Status Report

by Phill Sandahl

World by 2000
The Task Described in terms of.....



The World by 2000 commitment statement made by four international Christian broadcasters proposes that gospel radio programming will be available in all megalanguages (those with more than one million speakers) by the year 2000. This will mean that 96% of the world population will have radio broadcasts in their own language.

This commitment places some significant demands on the broadcasters.

1. Dependence on God—The goal is too big to be accomplished by human effort in the time frame. While there are just over 300 megalanguages spoken in the world today, of the more than 200 languages broadcast by WB2 stations only 130 are megalanguages. Such vision drives the broadcasters to dependence on God to achieve the goal.
2. Needs a Driven Strategy—Historically, broadcasters frequently added languages to their schedules when someone came asking for their help, prepared to produce the programs, and to help pay for the air time. Now broadcasters are asking themselves where the greatest needs are found and planning accordingly.
3. Kingdom perspective—The commitment is bigger than any one group of missions can accomplish. This puts the task in kingdom perspective and calls for the combined talents and efforts of the whole Body working together.

This means it cannot simply be a radio initiative. Radio is only a tool—one of many. The challenge calls for multi-mission and multimedia, integrated evangelism strategies. Planning must take into account the people and their culture, the environment (context), and existing and planned ministries, so that the whole church works together to see people

come to fullness of life in Christ.

Practically, we find that in many cases church and mission leaders are supportive of radio broadcasts as a part of an evangelism strategy but when it comes to making their own plans they fail to consider radio. If they do include it, it is often unrelated to the rest of their plan. This demonstrates a lack of awareness of how to utilize radio in an integrated approach. It says to us that broadcasters need to spend more time participating in forums with these groups, listening and learning. Only then can we understand the vision and needs of the church.

Languages without gospel broadcasts frequently represent groups which have fewer ministries reaching out to them. They are usually more difficult to reach, either because of restricted access to them, or because of their resistance to the Gospel. In such cases radio can multiply the efforts of the few workers.

How is the development of new languages proceeding?

Since joining together in their commitment the broadcasters have added 14 megalanguages (as well as several smaller ones). At this rate the goals will never be reached on schedule. As we enter the final decade before the year 2000 it becomes apparent that the number of gospel broadcasts will have to grow at an average annual rate of 10% to complete the goal. Historically the rate has been much slower, but the momentum is building. Continuing research locates heretofore unknown existing gospel broadcasts in megalanguages thus reducing the number needing development.

To offset this, on the other hand, new languages are reaching the million population

mark and thereby adding to the list. But these figures all need to be kept in perspective. (See chart above.)

Twenty three more languages are under some development. Their status ranges from early stages of research, to strategic planning, training of personnel, or production and funding. Some will be on the air very soon; others are still years away from going on the air.

Often the key for developing gospel radio broadcasts is not in finding the speaker (though that is obviously necessary), but a project (or language) coordinator. Think of him as an entrepreneur. His greatest strengths are vision for ministry, ability to motivate others, and resourcefulness. This person could be a national or an ex-patriate. Above all he has to understand the people to be reached and be committed to seeing ministry develop among them. Broadcasters are seeking to identify and train people for this strategic task. Some work has been done in this area but it has not traditionally been a part of missions and even the training process is still being developed.

As we look to the end of the millennium we must conclude that only by the grace of God will this goal be met, and it is only because of that grace we dare attempt it.

Editor's Note:

More case studies and models illustrating how multimedia strategies work in the varied cultures of the world need to be made known to the church. The author invites readers to share any experiences they may know of for use in the future.

Phill Sandahl is the HCJB World Radio researcher at the World By 2000 research office in Pasadena.

USING RADIO IN WORLD MISSION

The Ultimate Goal of Radio Ministry — The Planting of Churches

We continue in this issue with the third in a series of excerpts from the booklet "Radio In Mission"

It seems that this particular dimension of radio has been overlooked and some even question whether it is possible. But like the blind man (John 9) who testified to his critics and sceptics, we too can point to the indications of where church-planting associated with radio has already taken place. China possibly affords our best examples.

Historically, radio broadcasters have not seen the possibilities of encouraging the planting and nurturing of fellowship groups, or "worshipping Christ groups", among their listeners. If they have seen the potential their attempts have not been explicit. No end of programs have sought to prepare the grounds for evangelism, have taught basic Gospel and called for decisions. Believers have been nurtured, instructed and disciplined. But little, if any, attempt has been made to tell new believers how they might practically spawn a worshipping Christ group among relatives and friends. Encouragement has been given for the listener to attend local churches, but little more. This is all well and good if there is a local church—but what if there is not? Even in highly developed Japan this is often the case.

But in spite of this apparent omission it appears that churches of various kinds have been brought into existence under certain circumstances through listening to the radio. Barrett draws our attention to the large numbers of isolated radio churches which exist in the Soviet Union. These are defined as "new, indigenous house churches, cells or nuclei composed of isolated radio believers brought into being solely through Christian broadcasting and/or Bible correspondence courses by mail, etc."

From China many letters are received which make reference to the fact that groups of listeners meet for fellowship and teaching around their radios. There would appear to be a gold mine of information yet to be unearthed here if only we could research the growth of the Chinese church during the last 40 years and the role that radio has played in it. A knowledgeable spokesman for the Chinese church has estimated that one half of China's recent believers have had their first introduction to the Gospel through radio broadcasts.

Today blocks of airtime on various stations are set aside

for meeting the needs of the radio churches in the Soviet Union and China.

In Gujarat state of W. India, some very interesting things have been taking place among caste Hindus as a result of targetted radio programming coupled with sensitive and personal follow-up methods. Case studies are already available which document the process that has taken place which is resulting in churches being planted within the

fabric of respectable caste Hindu society and encouraged by daily broadcasts.

It would seem as though our failure to explicitly explain how to start churches has largely sprung from our own inability to put ourselves in the place of our listener who has recently become a believer, possibly out of the background of another religion. What questions are in his mind?

How can he attend a local church given the hostility from within his own family? What if his parents discovered he were a believer? How can one worship God unless there is qualified leadership and a proper place to worship? What do you do if you don't know any Christian hymns and don't know how to pray? Why should believers need to come together anyhow?

Are we telling him how?

But we must first define our terms. What do we mean by "church" in this context?

In the strictly biblical sense we mean a group of individuals who meet together in the Name of Jesus, for the express purpose of worshipping Jehovah God and Him alone. Such meetings are characterized by the practice of Bible study and prayer. By so doing a real sense of Christian fellowship is experienced and a desire kindled to witness to the reality of the living Lord Jesus Christ in their midst.

The size of the group is immaterial, for "wherever two or three are gathered in my Name there am I . . ." Neither is the composition of the group of any consequence. It may be just a family group, or an association of friends or work mates. If the group is spiritually strong it will most probably be characterized by growth or be responsible for the establishment of other similar groups, at least, in the immediate area.

