

THE NEW ORLEANS PRESS-RADIO WAR AND HUEY P. LONG, 1922-1936.

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

In

The Department of History

By

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B.A., Louisiana State University, 2000

August, 2002

## Acknowledgements

I have incurred debts from many people throughout the course of writing this thesis, without whose help, it would have never been finished. I'd like to thank the staff of the Paul Hebert Louisiana State University Law Library, particularly Government Documents Librarian Charlene Cain and Librarian Services Coordinator Randy Thompson, as well as Arthur Carpenter, Archivist at Loyola University in New Orleans. Thank you, Stan Campbell, for being there when I had no intention of writing my thesis, and every intention of playing my guitar. Endless thanks are deserved and heaped upon my advisor, David Culbert, whose enthusiasm for the subject perhaps exceeded my own and whose abundant patience did not go unnoticed. My family deserves many thanks as well, particularly my parents, without whose love and, at times, financial support, this endeavor might not have materialized. Most of all, to my fiancée, who put up with my countless night-long and day-long typing sessions, as well as the books, papers, and scribbled notes scattered all over the office. Thank you.

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## Abstract

The introduction of radio in America in the 1920s was greeted with much fanfare by the general public and by newspapers and politicians as well. Its popularity soared as radio sets became cheaper and more accessible. Newspapers were eager to boost their circulations by featuring the latest craze; many newspapers even started their own stations as a means of publicity. As the country sank deeper into the Great Depression in the 1930s, the relationship between the country's press and radio worsened. The newspapers felt threatened that radio would take away their advertising revenue in addition to stealing their news dissemination function. The struggle for power and primacy that resulted is called the Press-Radio War. This thesis addresses the issues of the Press-Radio War in the 1920s and 1930s in New Orleans, Louisiana. The relationship between the press and radio in New Orleans around this time is intriguing because of the city's size and status in the South. Another intriguing element of New Orleans during the press-radio war is the presence of Huey P. Long, who dominated the politics of Louisiana at the exact same time the relationship between radio and the press was most volatile. This thesis describes the introduction of radio into New Orleans and addresses the increasing animosity between newspapers and radio, which culminated in the Press-Radio War, and how Huey Long, using his political skill, manipulated both mediums and affected the course of the press-radio relationship in New Orleans.

## Introduction

The emergence of radio in America in the early 1920s was, at first, considered a novelty. Many newspapers scrambled to affiliate themselves with the new medium because it was a good source of publicity. Headlines began to emerge in newspapers all over the country either about new radio stations beginning broadcasting or about newspaper-radio affiliations. However, members of the press, including the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) and American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), quickly became concerned by radio's remarkable growth and popularity. Radio was soon looked upon by many members of the press as a threat and a direct challenge to the future stability of the newspaper industry.

The result of radio's challenge to newspapers was the Press-Radio War. This war, was fought in three different stages. The first stage (1922 to mid-1933) involved assessing the threat radio posed to newspapers and the response, if any, that the press would take against the new medium. The second stage of the Press-Radio War (mid-1933 through 1934) was characterized by unity and action by the nation's newspapers as they tried to unite their power in an attempt to block radio's growth and development. The final stage (1935 to 1939) was a time of alliance and acquisition by radio and the press. Newspapers realized that their efforts were increasingly becoming unsuccessful and began forming alliances in order to control or at least be a part of the new medium that had ultimately "won" the war.

The Press-Radio War was played out in similar fashion in virtually every city and state throughout the country; Louisiana was no exception. For several reasons, New Orleans is of particular interest to those looking at the relationship of radio and

newspapers during this time. It was one of the biggest cities in the South and as such, had quite a few newspapers as well as radio stations. By mid-1925, New Orleans was home to nine of the fourteen radio stations broadcasting in Louisiana. It was also home to several of the largest newspapers in the state, including the *Times-Picayune*, the *States*, the *Item*, and the *Morning Tribune* (published on Sunday as the *Item-Tribune*).

Following the typical pattern of other cities its' size, New Orleans newspapers were responsible for helping to start several of the city's first radio stations: The *Item* was responsible for WGV; the *Times-Picayune* started WAAB; and the *States* helped start WCAG. All three of these affiliations between the city's newspapers and radio stations started in 1922. Less than a year later, however, the *Times-Picayune*'s WAAB was off the air and the other two newspapers transferred ownership of their stations to other local businesses. There were two main reasons for the departure of newspaper affiliation from radio - lack of interest on the part of the newspaper and lack of funds. The *States* later helped form WDSU and briefly provided news for WWL as well.

The New Orleans press-radio war was unlike other cities, however, in several important ways. First, the New Orleans newspapers managed to implement a radio blackout for a period of about two years – from June 1932 to March 1934. Articles pertaining to radio sets or radio programs, including program logs, disappeared from the New Orleans newspapers, except as paid advertising only.

Another peculiarity of New Orleans during the war between the two media is the presence of Huey P. Long. Long dominated the politics of Louisiana at the exact time the relationship between radio and the press was most volatile. Most of the state's urban daily newspapers as well as some rural weeklies were outspoken in their opposition to

Long's regime. In addition, Long began to realize and implement the advantages that the new medium of radio had to offer. Even before he began his national broadcasts as senator, Long used Louisiana radio stations to appeal to the people and to denounce his enemies, including Standard Oil and the state's daily newspapers. In 1934, Long barred the press from entering a Louisiana legislative committee that was meeting to discuss alleged corrupt practices in the New Orleans city government. Long broadcast his questions and the responses on New Orleans station WDSU, thus getting publicity while simultaneously controlling what he wanted the public to hear.

In 1934, the Long dominated legislature passed a bill that taxed the advertising of newspapers with a circulation of over 20,000. The bill passed under the pretense of being a legitimate revenue raising tax, but the Louisiana newspapers insisted Long was simply using the old tactic of taxation as a means of censorship. He was simply using the tax as a guise to destroy the Louisiana dailies. The court case that resulted from the challenge of the thirteen newspapers affected by the bill went all the way to the Supreme Court and in 1936, it ruled unanimously in favor of the newspapers.

The existence of the press-radio war during the heyday of Huey P. Long in one of the South's biggest cities is an extremely provocative topic and one that no one has yet attempted to address. It is obvious that Long had an antagonistic relationship with the Louisiana dailies and that he tried to silence them. It is also obvious that Long stood to gain a great deal through his exposure on radio broadcasts, both nationally and in the state. It is possible that Long's advertising tax on newspapers had the dual role of silencing the state press opposition while serving as a warning and example to local radio stations. A host of questions must necessarily be answered in order to correctly address

this topic. Is it possible or perhaps, even probable, that Huey Long's effect on New Orleans newspapers was to make them more united than in other cities of comparable size? Why did Long not impose the advertising tax on radio stations? Could it be that the threat of the tax was more persuasive than the implementation of it? Could Long have gotten away with an advertising tax on radio stations? How did Long use the constitutional differences between print and broadcast media to get what he wanted? In what ways did Long directly or indirectly influence the course of the press-radio war in New Orleans?

Two court cases are used in this thesis to represent the different stages of the press-radio war in New Orleans. Two of the cases – *Grosjean v. American Press Company* (1936), and *Daily States Publishing Company v. Uhalt Broadcasting Company* (1929) – are found in the Paul Hebert Law Library at Louisiana State University.



## Chapter I “New Orleans Is Wild Over Radio”

In early January 1921, Dorr Simmons, a New Orleans factory manager for the Interstate Electric Company began broadcasting phonograph music on his small “wireless instrument.”<sup>1</sup> This event marks the first amateur broadcast in Louisiana. By the time New Orleans’ first radio stations went on the air in April 1922, Louisiana was home to over fifty licensed amateur radio operators – more than any other Southern state in the Fifth District.<sup>2</sup> There were amateurs in Baton Rouge, Thibodeaux, Covington, Alexandria, and Shreveport; New Orleans was home to well over half.<sup>3</sup>

Amateurs like these and others throughout the United States formed the foundation of what we know as network broadcast radio.<sup>4</sup> In 1916, an amateur operator in Pittsburgh was amongst the first to broadcast in the United States. Dr. Frank Conrad transmitted signals from an instrument in his suburban home, using the call letters 8XK; his “station” was the precursor to KDKA. After airing phonograph records provided by a local music store, Conrad built a station at the same Westinghouse plant where radio sets were manufactured. The company made the sets; KDKA provided the market for them. On November 20, 1920, KDKA broadcast Warren Harding’s presidential victory over

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<sup>1</sup> C. Joseph Pusateri, Enterprise in Radio: WWL and the Business of Broadcasting in America (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980), 8; “N.O. People Raid Radio Stores; Listen In On Item,” New Orleans Item, 9 April 1922, 1.

<sup>2</sup> The Bureau of Navigation (Department of Commerce) divided the United States into nine regional radio districts. The Fifth District comprised Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. New Orleans, Louisiana was home to the fifth district’s headquarters.

<sup>3</sup> “Item Publishes First List of All Licensed Radio States in Fifth District,” New Orleans Item, 9 April 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Erik Barnouw, A Tower in Babel: A History of Broadcasting in the United States To 1933 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 33.

James Cox, and the reaction from as many as one thousand listeners was extremely favorable. The number of licensed radio stations thereafter grew exponentially. In 1921 there were twenty-eight additional broadcast stations; by the end of 1922, 570 stations were licensed in America.<sup>5</sup>

Even before the pioneer broadcast of KDKA, the major technological breakthroughs, and much of the jostling of companies that came to define the realities of the radio industry, had already taken place. The story of radio's path from idea and theory to everyday use is explained by a series of inventions and discoveries near the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1886, Germany's Heinrich Hertz demonstrated the nature of what came to be known as radio waves. Building on the idea that Hertz had established, a young Italian, Guglielmo Marconi, traveled to Britain in 1896 to demonstrate an invention. In July 1897, Marconi received a patent for the black box that transmitted radio waves. He also got half of the stock in a company named after him, plus £15,000 cash.<sup>6</sup>

Early experimenters, such as Lee De Forest and Reginald Fessenden, improved Marconi's invention. Instead of transmitters sending out interrupted waves, Fessenden argued, the waves must be continuous. Fessenden, as well as De Forest, through experimentation, found that Marconi's apparatus for detecting waves -- a coherer -- was primitive and unreliable. Instead, Fessenden designed the "electrolytic" detector; De Forest developed the "responder". The Marconi Company patented a new detector made

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<sup>5</sup> Pusateri, Enterprise in Radio, 7-8; Barnouw, A Tower in Babel, 68-74.

<sup>6</sup> Concurrent to but separate from Marconi, Adolphus Slaby, in collaboration with Count Arco in Germany, developed the Slaby-Arco system, which won several patents. In addition, Alexander Popov, the Russian "Father of Radio," was also experimenting with spark transmitters, with positive results.

of a glass bulb in 1904. De Forest improved on the vacuum tube glass bulb by adding a third element. He called it the audion and patented it in 1906.

The development and improvement of radio continued in small increments for some time. By 1910, Fessenden and others were experimenting with ways to transmit music and the human voice through the air. Wireless operators accustomed to hearing the dots and dashes of the Morse code, occasionally heard music or voices in their headphones, causing no small amount of bewilderment and excitement. Wireless enthusiasts, or amateurs, as they were known, caused the United States Navy much grief, as they contacted fellow enthusiasts and ships at sea, often garbling official naval communication. To control amateur transmission and regulate airwave traffic, the United States Radio Act of 1912 was passed. The law divided the electromagnetic spectrum into two parts: one for government; the other for public use. All transmitting equipment had to be licensed and all users of the equipment had to have an operator's license. In addition, the act dictated the frequency and power with which a transmitter could be used. By 1917, there were 8,562 licensed transmitters in the United States (excluding those transmitters that numerous amateurs never bothered to license).<sup>7</sup>

Disputes over patents soon became a major hindrance to radio. Most wireless activity came from big companies poised to take over radio, instead of wireless enthusiasts and inventors. In 1916, the Marconi Company sued De Forest, alleging that his improvement to its vacuum tube to be only a minor modification. De Forest, in turn, sued Marconi, enjoining the company from using his grid in its vacuum tubes without his permission. The patent litigation left use of the audion to the courts, discouraging further

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<sup>7</sup> Barnouw, A Tower in Babel, 7-38.

experimentation. In addition, De Forest sued Edwin Armstrong for patenting the audion, claiming Armstrong's patent was in conflict with his own. To many, litigation seemed but a formality: in 1915 De Forest sold his audion patent rights to AT&T and Armstrong sold his patent claims to Westinghouse in 1920.<sup>8</sup>

The entrance of the United States in World War I increased wireless experimentation and radio's importance, contributing to its impressive growth after 1918. According to the Radio Act of 1912, the federal government had the power to take over wireless transmitters in time of war, and so from April 1917 until November 1918, radio-transmitting stations either closed down or were run by the government. The Navy announced to companies supplying radio equipment that it had suspended all patent rights associated with radio for the duration of the war, hoping it would facilitate experimentation and improvement in wireless technology. In addition, the Navy taught thousands of men how to use and maintain wireless equipment. Many became wireless operators or broadcast station workers after the war.

At the close of the war, American Marconi expressed an interest in buying and using General Electric's Alexanderson alternator. The federal government expressed its disapproval of an arrangement that would give a foreign-controlled company an increased monopoly over the wireless market. Instead, the government proposed, and all parties agreed, that GE buy the British-owned stock of American Marconi. The company was renamed the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). In 1920 and 1921, RCA and GE negotiated with AT&T, Westinghouse, and the United Fruit Company (for patent rights connected with operations in Central America), to form a monopoly of unrivaled power.

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Tillinghast, American Broadcast Regulation and the First Amendment: Another Look (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2000), 9.

Within a short period of time, the companies managed to squeeze out wireless inventors and smaller companies, in order to dominate almost every area of communication: telegraph, telephone, and radio.<sup>9</sup>

The companies began producing finished radio sets to sell to the public. From then on, wireless amateurs were not the only ones listening-in, rather, average persons with a little disposable income and no wireless experience joined the new fad. To create a market for the sets, radio stations such as KDKA, WJZ, and KYW were formed. Enthusiasts lined up at electrical suppliers to buy parts and sets, and department stores added radio sections to fill the need. Nearly a year after KDKA's successful election broadcast, WJZ in Newark, New Jersey created some excitement of its own on October 5, 1921, when it broadcast a "play-by-play" of the World Series between the New York Giants and the New York Yankees. In Chicago, Westinghouse opened KYW, and transmitted performances by local opera stars. The public clamored for more sets. Radio promised large profits, though the real boom in sales had not even begun.<sup>10</sup>

Before radio sales began to really take off, however, something upset the cozy arrangement among the five companies of the communications cartel. The amateurs that had been shut down during the war and the men the Navy trained to use and maintain wireless equipment were building radio sets and stations of their own, and in large quantities. In 1921, the Department of Commerce officially designated "broadcasting" as a new radio station classification. The number of licensed stations in 1921 was five; in January 1922, eight; February, twenty-four. For the remainder of 1922, some eighty

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 25-29; Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, 57-61, 72-74.

<sup>10</sup> Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, 69-72, 84-90.

stations were newly licensed each month. Many station transmitters were made by amateurs using whatever parts were at hand. Some amateurs obtained the new broadcast licenses, enabling them to change frequencies and power. In addition, amateurs began making sets for family and friends, while some opened their own radio stores. Small radio companies formed to capitalize on the increased demand for sets the radio stations had caused.<sup>11</sup>

Though things took longer in New Orleans, the situation was the same. Leading the way were three New Orleans newspapers, the *New Orleans Item*, *States*, and *Times-Picayune*. Wireless amateur Dorr Simmons setup a transmitter for the station of the *Item* and Interstate Electric Company, WGV, on the seventh floor of the firm's building. Amateur Clyde Randall, manager of a storage battery company, installed the *States's* WCAG transmitter in his home; amateur Valdemar Jensen used his own home wireless equipment to broadcast for the *Times-Picayune's* WAAB. The transmitting equipment of Loyola University's WWL consisted mostly of pieces from a discarded Morse code transmitter found on a ship docked in port. The men who installed the WWL equipment, however, were not amateurs. One was a Jesuit seminarian and physicist named Edward Cassidy and the other was Joe du Treil, a field inspector for the Fifth Radio District.<sup>12</sup>

Just as in Pittsburgh, Newark, and Chicago, soon after the first broadcasts in New Orleans, people began to line up at local electrical supply and radio stores to buy sets or parts to make sets. In April 1922, following popular WGV broadcasts, the *Item* observed:

The over-worked clerks sold the sets as long as they held out and gave expert advice to those who contemplated building big sets or purchasing the more expensive ones....At the Nola Company's salesrooms amateurs came early and came late. They

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 71-72, 81-82, 91.

<sup>12</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 18-19, 23-25.

wanted just one thing – radio material of every sort and description....At the Rose Radio Supply Company, Mrs. Rose said that the amateurs had simply cleaned out the place of practically everything....Mrs. Rose said that the big manufacturing plants were so far behind on orders that it would be necessary for the local dealers to begin manufacturing apparatus here in New Orleans to meet the enormous demand.<sup>13</sup>

Situations like this occurred in cities across the United States. A 1921 New Orleans directory listed only two radio supply stores, “Rose Louis A.” and Nola Radio Company. By 1925, the same directory listed thirty radio set and supply stores in New Orleans, many started by local amateurs. Of the \$60 million Americans spent on radio sets and supplies in 1922, only \$11 million went to RCA. Local radio and electrical stores throughout the country, as well as small radio manufacturing companies not part of the RCA-GE-AT&T-Westinghouse-United Fruit monopoly, took a large chunk of what RCA executives thought was rightfully theirs.<sup>14</sup>

In the early 1920s, how-to diagrams for building radio receiving sets became more frequent in New Orleans newspapers, and not just in the children’s section of the paper. After the three dailies in New Orleans started their own radio stations in the spring of 1922, the *Times-Picayune*, *States*, and *Item* all ran diagrams showing how to build an inexpensive “radiophone set.” The diagrams were simple so that “even young boys” would be able to follow the directions.<sup>15</sup> All sets required an antenna (the newspapers called it an aerial) placed thirty feet above the house. The antenna connected to a primary condenser by a string of enameled wire, which then attached to a tuning coil. A crystal

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<sup>13</sup> “New Orleans Is Wild Over Radio,” *New Orleans Item*, 9 April 1922, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Soards New Orleans City Directory, 1922; Soards New Orleans City Directory, 1925; Barnouw, A Tower in Babel, 115.

<sup>15</sup> “How To Build Own Airphone; Only 75 Cents,” *New Orleans Item*, 9 April 1922, 4; “Complete Directions for Making a Radiophone Set at Home; Cost Comparatively Insignificant,” *Times-Picayune*, 9 April 1922, 12.

attached to the tuning coil as well; these items allowed the set to receive a radio signal. A small screw located near the tuning coil tuned the set and, because most did not have speakers, headphones were required to “listen in” on radio programs.<sup>16</sup>

Because of their small numbers, plus the vagaries of constantly evolving transmitting and receiving equipment, amateurs felt a kinship towards each other. The first amateur radio organization in New Orleans was founded in 1914 at the home of one Harry Salzer who lived on North Villere Street. The New Orleans Radio Club had six members and “met every two weeks to practice the code and discuss technical points.” The club ceased operations in April 1917 when the federal government closed down all radio stations for the duration of the war. After the Armistice in November 1918, the Nola Radio Club and Loyola Radio Club were formed. In early 1922, the two clubs, plus the New Orleans Wireless Improvement Association, combined to form the New Orleans Radio Association, with seventy members. Applications for membership in the association were printed in the city’s newspapers and called for monthly dues of twenty-five cents. An applicant was required to sign and agree to the following statement:

I desire to become a member of the NEW ORLEANS RADIO ASSOCIATION and by so doing express my willingness to fully cooperate with the officers and members thereof in furthering the interests of Radio Amateurs in New Orleans and vicinity, and abide by any rules and regulations that may be adopted by the Association, or governmental authority.<sup>17</sup>

Many of the city’s current and future important leaders in radio were members: WAAB’s Valdemar Jensen, WGV’s Dorr Simmons, WDSU’s Joseph Uhalt, Fifth Radio

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<sup>16</sup> “Complete Directions for Making a Radiophone Set at Home; Cost Comparatively Insignificant,” *Times-Picayune*, 9 April 1922, 12; “Expert Tells Readers of States How To Build Radio Receiver,” *New Orleans States*, April 1922; “How to Build the Junior Item Airphone,” *New Orleans Item*, 10 April 1922, 4.

<sup>17</sup> “Amateurs Fight Against Ban On Radio In Homes: Organization Launched in 1914 Found Hard Struggle During War Period,” *Times-Picayune*, 9 April 1922, 12.



District Inspector Theodore Deiler, WWL's Rev. Edward Cassidy, and association president James Bowling. "Considerable interest was shown" when a Miss Margaret Bailey declared her intention to join at the first meeting. She was the first woman and her signature on the roster "was received with cheers." In addition, the Interstate-*Item* station, WGV, volunteered its space on the seventh floor of the electric company's building as a meeting space for the association and invited all New Orleans amateurs to consult its reading table filled with "all the latest radio magazines and books."<sup>18</sup>

In 1913, Loyola University opened what was probably the first wireless telegraphy school in Louisiana. The classes consisted mostly of practicing code and learning theory; the course ran for six months. Eight to ten students were taken for each course and all expected "to find eventual jobs as wireless operators on ships or in coastal stations." Taken over by the government for training in WWI, the school reopened after the war. In June 1922, the school closed for good because of local competition. For example, a 1927 New Orleans city directory listed "Radio Schools" as a category for the first time - most of them being electrical, radio, and appliance repair stores.<sup>19</sup>

In April 1922, the *Times-Picayune* declared "radio fever truly" has "New Orleans in its grip;" according to the *Item* headline, "New Orleans Is Wild Over Radio."<sup>20</sup> Almost daily, the newspapers would print photographs of amateur radio setups, broadcast station receiving equipment, or people "listening-in" on programs. The April 8 *Times-Picayune*

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<sup>18</sup> "Amateurs Form Radio Association," *New Orleans Item*, 8 April 1922, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Enterprise in Radio*, 14-15; *A Tower in Babel*, 37; *Soards New Orleans City Directory* (New Orleans: Soards Directory Company, 1927). The Soards directory is located in Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

<sup>20</sup> "Amateurs Praise Times-Picayune Radio Program," *Times-Picayune*, 8 April 1922, 2; "New Orleans Is Wild Over Radio," *New Orleans Item*, 9 April 1922, 4.

printed a picture on the front page of “the youngest radio fan so far found in New Orleans”: two-year-old Joe Preis listening to a WAAB “Tinker Bob” bedtime story. The caption said that the boy’s father, Joseph Preis, “is one of the crack amateur radio operators of the city and has a fully equipped outfit set up in his home.” The newspapers had a reason to publicize radio in New Orleans – because three of the city’s first six broadcast stations were started by daily papers.

The newspapers published all kinds of information about radio, including advice columns, and informative and entertaining stories. A comic strip called “The Radioscope” wondered what would happen were Congressional proceedings broadcast over the airwaves. One cartoon depicted a perspiring radio listener fanning himself with his hat, with his wife by his side. “You look kinda’ warm,” the wife says to her husband. The man replies, “Yeah, my radiophone is connected up with Congress an’ the hot air is coming thru the phone.”<sup>21</sup> There were also columns, such as “Jimmie and Dad Radio Stories”, with lighthearted tales designed to teach lessons about radio parts and techniques. In one column, the son, Jimmie, explains basic radio knowledge to his well-intentioned but clueless father. Another column, “Static Observations”, offered “fun facts” about radio listening in America and new developments in the radio field.<sup>22</sup> That the newspapers were trying to appeal to a wider audience than just the wireless amateur is apparent in the heavy-handed “levity” of the bylines: “Broad Caster” and “Sparks.”

Most American newspapers recruited local professionals or, sometimes, amateur operators, to answer reader questions about radio. Questions ranged from how to improve

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<sup>21</sup> “The Radioscope,” *New Orleans Item*, 9 April, 1922.

<sup>22</sup> “Jimmie and Dad Radio Stories;” “Static Observations,” *Times Picayune*, 14 May 1922, 8.

existing or damaged radio sets to techniques allowing the listener to tune in to distant stations. Hubert de Ben, an amateur operator in New Orleans (5AA), answered reader questions in a column for the *States*, while the *Item* employed a Tulane University Physics Instructor, J.C. Morris Jr. Questions from readers came from near and far, the latter extending to Alexandria, Louisiana; Ocean Springs, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama; and even Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>23</sup>

The newspapers often gave special emphasis to musicians that performed on the radio. Most of the entertainment for stations around this time came either from local talent (from university or city orchestras), or phonograph records provided by local music stores. An inaugural first night for the *Times-Picayune*'s WAAB featured tenor Enrico Caruso singing "Memories of Naples," as heard on a portable Victrola. The two next numbers included records of "Lazy Daddy" by the Dixieland Jazz Band and "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny" by opera singer Alma Gluck. Live cornet solos by H.C. Voorhies "provided an unusual radio entertainment," the *Times-Picayune* noted, "but it was a series of banjo solos played by Mr. Voorhies that easily carried off the honors of the evening." A local New Orleans music supply house – Philip Werlein, Ltd. – provided all the music.<sup>24</sup>

The first broadcast of the *Item*-Interstate station, WGV, featured musicians borrowed from the Saenger Amusement Company and the Strand Theater. Vocalists Suzanne France and Gene Jerome, from the Saenger, sang "I'll Forget You;" cellist A.N.

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<sup>23</sup> J.C. Morris, Jr., "Radio Questions Answered," *New Orleans Item*, 4 May 1922, and 16 May 1922; Hubert de Ben, "States Radio News," *New Orleans States*, May 1922; Gwennyth L. Jackaway, *Media at War: Radio's Challenge to the Newspapers, 1924-1939* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995), 14.

<sup>24</sup> "Times-Picayune Offers News and Concert By Radio," *Times-Picayune*, 7 April 1922, 2.

Walker of the Strand Orchestra sent “out into the night the haunting strains of the [Schumann’s] Traumerei, deep-swelling, pulsing rich notes and...fine true harmonics.” It “was a treat lovers of music would have come miles to enjoy,” the *Item* stated. “But through the marvelous intervention of modern science, there was no need for any lover of music to journey to hear” it.<sup>25</sup>

Although all three newspapers boasted of the success of their own stations, they could not claim to be the first to broadcast in New Orleans. On March 31, 1922, Loyola University received approval by telegraph to begin broadcasting. The station, given the call letters WWL by Washington, went on-the-air the very same day. WWL may have been the first to broadcast, but there was still a race among the three newspapers to see which one could get its station on the air first. The *Item*’s WGV was second to broadcast in New Orleans, transmitting in the afternoon of April 6, while the *Times-Picayune*’s WAAB broadcast that same night, making it third. Other stations made their way to the airwaves in April, including Tulane University’s WAAC, and WBAM, operated by New Orleans realtor I.B. Rennyson. The *States* finally received its license on May 4, making WCAG the sixth radio station in New Orleans.<sup>26</sup>

Early on, the newspapers began to capitalize on the radio excitement they had created. The day after its first broadcast, the *Times-Picayune* announced its plans to add a special radio department and section. It hoped to gain additional readers and new advertisers eager to sell their radio wares. Even before the *States* started its own station, it developed a regular radio section. The *Item*, intending to attract advertising from local

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<sup>25</sup> “First Orleans Airphone U.S. OK’s is ‘Busy’,” *New Orleans Item*, 7 April 1922, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 23-28; New Orleans newspapers throughout the months of April and May.

stores specializing in radio parts and repair, announced a new radio section in its

“ITEMized Ad Pages.” Typical classified advertisements included:

RADIO receiving sets, serial installations,  
instruments made to order. The Elec-  
tric Repair Shop, 332 Chartres, Main 1859

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RADIO INSTRUCTION  
PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR RADIO  
NOLA RADIO SCHOOL, 134 CHARTRES  
MAIN 1436

-----  
RADIO Receiving Sets for sale cheap;  
9322 Melpomane St.<sup>27</sup>

The entrance of radio into New Orleans, according to the newspapers, generated great excitement. The first radio contest in New Orleans was held on the *Times-Picayune*'s WAAB. Several local musicians played on “Amateur Night” and the one with the most mail response won three appearances at the Palace Theater. An “unusual feature connected with the second ‘Amateur Night’,” the *Times-Picayune* stated, was that a contestant’s husband had “listened in” on his wife’s songs from Pensacola, Florida.

WAAB also claimed to be the first station “in this section” to feature a ukulele in a broadcast. The *Item* had a few New Orleans firsts as well, including the first children’s program, first radio drama, and first “society news” program. In a headline titled “Golf By Wireless,” the *Item* explained the premise:

The radio bug bites as hard and as effectively as the golf bug. Why not combine the two? Do you slice your tee shots? Are you as accurate with your mashie approach as the average housewife in throwing a brickbat at the family cat? Is hole number 9 on the City park course a ‘mental hazard?’ Overcome these faults by radio. Leo Diegel, nationally famous professional of the New Orleans Country Club, will begin tonight a series of ten-minute talks over WGV, the Item-Interstate broadcasting station, on common golf faults and how to correct them....So far as the Item knows, this is the first set of golf lessons given by radiophone in the history of the world.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> ITEMize Section, *New Orleans Item*, 4 May 1922.

In addition to claiming “firsts” of various sorts, the newspapers boasted of the clarity of their broadcasts. The *Times-Picayune*’s treatment of the sound quality of its first broadcast was typical of the other two newspapers:

With a sending apparatus brought to a degree of perfection which eliminates mechanical noises and vibrations, the various numbers of the program were broadcasted [sic] clearly and distinctly. On the proper wave length, the tones to the ear of the listener, even in some of the musical numbers of complicated or of classical nature, came through rich and clear as though the artist were standing but a few feet from his hearers.<sup>29</sup>

One detects the spirit of special pleading. Despite claims by all stations of programs being broadcast “clearly and distinctly,” in mid-May 1922, the airwaves were far from clear. The government gave every station that petitioned for a license in 1921 or 1922, the designation of 360 meters. Radio sets in the city could not pick up distant signals if a local station were broadcasting at the same time. Unless all six stations in New Orleans agreed to a broadcast schedule, listeners would hear nothing but a jumbled mess. The broadcasters agreed to a schedule and adhered to it, more or less, until Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover reallocated the airwaves, putting the stations with at least 500 watts power in the favorable frequency range of 300-345 and 375-545 meters. No station in New Orleans qualified for this “elite” class B group. One good thing the reallocation did, however, was to spread station assignments over a range of frequencies, ending temporarily, at least, the “Tower in Babel.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> “Golf By Wireless,” *New Orleans Item*, 8 April 1922, 1; “Radio Contest Winners To Play At Palace Theater,” *Times-Picayune*, 14 May 1922, 8; “Entertained Army of WAAB Fans,” *Times-Picayune*, 20 May 1922, 10.

<sup>29</sup> “Times-Picayune Offers News and Concert By Radio,” *Times-Picayune*, 7 April 1922, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, 100-101, 121-122; Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 32-35.

Even though there were extensive problems caused by crowded frequencies, the radio industry grew tremendously. There were 25,000 to 50,000 receiving sets in the United States at the beginning of 1921; there were close to 1 million by the end of 1922. In April 1922, there were about 250,000 sets in use, and nearly half of those had “broken into the radio game in the past thirty days,” according to a promotional newspaper story. Sales of radio sets in 1920 were \$2 million; in 1922, \$60 million.<sup>31</sup>

Louisiana’s radio progress, compared to these national figures, seems limited at best. United States Fifth District inspector, Theodore Deiler, claimed: “At the very least there are 800 receiving sets listening into the radiograph and radiophone concerts in Louisiana alone and from the radio craze is progressing (sic) it is safe to say that there will be 4,000 sets listening to the concerts in less than a year. This I regard as a very conservative estimate.”<sup>32</sup> If Louisiana had 800 radio sets and the United States had about 250,000 in April 1922, that means Louisiana owned only one-third of one percent of all the sets in the U.S. In short, the radio craze in Louisiana, in the spring of 1922, was still a gleam in the eye of local promoters.

The city’s radio stations were well aware of crowded frequencies and anemic radio set sales. Most of the stations, too, realized that running a radio station was costly and time-consuming, with little or no tangible results. In May 1922, when the city’s stations negotiated for time slots in which to broadcast, the *Times-Picayune*’s WAAB

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<sup>31</sup> “Radio Sweeps Country,” *Times-Picayune*, 9 April 1922, Sect. 2 Pg. 9; Frank Arnold, “Popular Reactions to Radio Broadcasting,” in Little Books on Broadcasting Nos 1-12, New Series A-E, (New York, National Broadcasting Company, 1928), 9. In 1924, the sale of radio sets in the U.S. topped \$360 million and in 1927, sales of sets reached \$600 million.

<sup>32</sup> “New Orleans Is Wild Over Radio,” *New Orleans Item*, 9 April 1922, 4; “Radio Sweeps Country,” *Times-Picayune*, 9 April 1922, Sect. 2 Pg. 9; Erik Barnouw, Mass Communication: Television, Radio, Film, Press – The Media and their Practice in the United States of America (New York: Rinehart, 1956), 34. By 1930, there were close to 15 million sets in the U.S. and by 1940, there were 45 million.

was conspicuously absent from the line-up. On May 14, the newspaper announced, “not without a tinge of regret,” its “decision to discontinue radio broadcasting indefinitely.”

It cited several reasons for its abandonment of the new medium, including the chaos of the airwaves that the government had yet to settle – suggesting that the performance of its own inferior or lower class station would always suffer at the hands of the “elite” class B stations. It also cited the pending patent disputes, and the cost of running a station. “To put in a permanent, efficient broadcast station would call for an investment of considerable proportions. Good business would hardly sanction it when” the future of the radio industry is so uncertain. There is no return, the newspaper added, “except perhaps a certain indirect return in the form of good-will, with which to offset the heavy expenditures called for.”<sup>33</sup> Apparently, the amount of good-will received by the *Times-Picayune* for station WAAB was not enough, even if the *Item*-Interstate collaboration was successful enough to keep WGV going – at least for another year or so.

As the year 1922 drew to a close, there were four stations left broadcasting in New Orleans – WWL, WCAG, WAAC, and WGV. The *Times-Picayune*’s WAAB and realtor I.B. Rennyson’s WBAM both went off the air. The *States* ended its relationship with WCAG in mid-1923 and the *Item* shut down its station in 1924. The cost of setting up and maintaining a radio station, although rather inexpensive at first, quickly added up. The Detroit *News* radio station, WWJ, cost \$3,606 in the first year of operation and \$5,760 in the second. But for 1922, its third year, costs went up to \$80,000. In order to have a station with decent working equipment and a transmitter of sufficient size in order to be placed in the “elite” class B group, one would have to invest a large amount of

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<sup>33</sup> “WAAB Will Discontinue Broadcasting Service,” *Times-Picayune*, 14 May 1922, 1,14.



money. If stations were not willing or able to spend the necessary money to qualify for class B status, the *Times-Picayune* and others wondered, what was the point?<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, the gamble of investing heavily in radio seemed too great a risk in New Orleans. Both Loyola and Tulane University were left with less than satisfactory frequencies and time slots after the reallocation of airwaves in May 1922. Newspapers too, already in tight competition with each other for the city's readership, began to think again about investing in radio broadcasting. Despite New Orleans' large population and encouraging economy, it was not nearly as well off as other cities its size. Could it support a thriving radio industry?

In 1920, New Orleans was the biggest city in the Deep South, with roughly 387,000 people. The nearest rivals were Atlanta with 200,000 and Birmingham with 178,000. In Louisiana, the state capitol of Baton Rouge had less than 22,000 citizens; Shreveport, the second largest city in Louisiana, had about 44,000.<sup>35</sup> The economy of New Orleans dominated Louisiana and stood out as one of the most powerful in the South. Despite its large number of retail stores and manufacturing plants and companies, however, its total retail net sales and value of products after manufacture was little better than its Southern competitors, Atlanta and Birmingham. The worst sign of all for those in New Orleans eager to exploit potential radio fans and customers was a problem for the entire South: New Orleans was grossly underrepresented in terms of total wattage used by broadcast stations in the area, and percentage of total radio families.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.; Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, 105.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 – Population* Vol. 3, Part 1 (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932).

<sup>36</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 80.

This problem continued into the late 1920s. Some critics of the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), created by the United States Radio Act of 1927 to oversee and manage radio, accused the government agency of discrimination. The commission's chairman, Admiral W.H.G. Bullard, defended the FRC's reputation in a letter made public 24 August 1927:

The Federal Radio Commission is not in any manner acting against the interest of Southern States in their desire to have broadcasting stations, and the commission cannot accept the statement that the South is being badly treated by the Radio Commission....It is a fact that the Southern States are not particularly well represented in the broadcasting field, but it is also a fact that this commission can not be held responsible for that state of affairs, because if the people of the South do not want broadcasting stations and do not make application for them the commission can not take any action whatsoever.<sup>37</sup>

The Radio Act of 1927 divided the United States into five zones, with the third zone comprising the South, including North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. In July 1927, the third zone had but ninety-seven radio stations with a total power of only 44,080 watts. Zone four, with a somewhat smaller population (26.7 million), had 203 stations with over 140,000 watts. With a population (11.2 million) less than half the size of the Southern zone, the fifth zone had 135 stations with a total power close to 60,000 watts.

Compared to the other Southern states in the third zone, however, Louisiana fared rather well. Only Texas (30 stations at 16,000 watts), Tennessee (15 stations at 8,200 watts), and Florida (13 stations at 6,600 watts) had more stations and more wattage than

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<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), Appendix C (11), 82. The Federal Communications Commission website contains complete copies of all seven annual FRC reports and the first FCC report to Congress, in addition to monthly Radio Service Bulletins from 1921 through 1927. <<http://www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/decdoc/engrser.html>>

Louisiana (12 stations at 3,400 watts). South Carolina and Mississippi were way behind with only one 75-watt station, and two 100-watt stations, respectively. Compared to its rivals, Atlanta and Birmingham, New Orleans had more stations but not necessarily more wattage. In 1927, New Orleans had seven stations with a total power of but 835 watts, while Birmingham had two stations with a total power of 260 watts, and Atlanta had two stations with a total of 1,500 watts. The city of Shreveport, Louisiana, with a population of less than one-quarter the size of New Orleans, had five stations and 2,550 total watts. For a city of its size, New Orleans was sadly neglected.<sup>38</sup>

The South, in general, and New Orleans, in particular, would not see an equal share of broadcast station wattage until the Davis Amendment to the Radio Act of 1927, passed in March 1928. The amendment “required that the radio supervising authority of the United States shall as nearly as possible make and maintain an equal allocation of broadcasting licenses, of bands of frequency or wavelengths, of periods of time for operation, and of stations power, to each of said (five) zones” and “to each of the states within each zone, according to population.” This legislation had a substantial impact on radio stations throughout the country, especially in the South.<sup>39</sup>

As a result of the Davis Amendment, the FRC allocated to each of the five zones, twenty percent of the nation’s total broadcast facilities and wattage. Within each zone, each state received its share of broadcast facilities and wattage based on population. Louisiana’s population of nearly 2 million allowed it 1.4 percent of the nation’s total

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<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), Appendix C (1), 64-65; First Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission, 1927, 66-67.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Fourth Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1930, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), 57-58.

radio facilities. Georgia's population of 3.2 million allowed it 2.3 percent of the U.S. radio facility total. In addition, each zone was allocated a set number of full-time stations of different powers. Each zone could have up to eight five-kilowatt "rural" stations, twenty-five 800 to 1,000-watt "regional" stations, and thirty 50 to 100-watt "local" stations. According to the FRC, Louisiana was allocated one-half of a high-powered rural station, 1.8 regional stations, and 2.1 local stations – all full-time.<sup>40</sup>

Responding to the Davis Amendment, the FRC issued General Order 32, which set out to reduce the number of radio facilities in zones that were over-represented. The commission released a list of 164 stations it felt did not meet the public interest, convenience, or necessity (a yardstick by which radio stations were judged); 83 were denied license renewal and a number of stations were reduced in power. Although a few stations in the South were reduced in power, not one radio facility in the third zone was put on the list to be shut down because of General Order 32 and the Davis Amendment, an indication that the FRC was committed to equality.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Davis Amendment meant that the South and Louisiana would see equal broadcast facilities and wattage, it also guaranteed that a few elite high-powered clear channel stations in each zone would dominate the lesser regional and local stations. For WWL, Loyola University's station, this was good news. On 11 November 1928, WWL was placed on a desirable cleared-channel of 850 kilocycles, sharing it with Shreveport's famous and powerful KWKH for the next five years. Four months later,

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<sup>40</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), Appendix G (5), 218-219. Alabama's population of 2.6 million allowed it 1.8 percent; and Mississippi's population of 1.8 million allowed it a total percentage of 1.3.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), Appendix F (4), 151-163.

WWL's power was increased to 5,000 watts. Thenceforth, the station would become an anomaly; a powerful, commercially successful university-owned radio station.

The fact that decisions made by the FRC often determined whether a radio station failed or thrived was not lost on the commissioners. Favorable decisions for stations oftentimes meant chain affiliation and increased revenue. In its Second Annual Report to Congress in 1928, the FRC expressed official "surprise" at such a turn of events:

The Commission has never favored chain stations in its assignments because of any affiliations with the chain. It has uniformly selected for the preferred positions such stations as are entitled thereto because of their individual history and standing, their popularity with their audiences, the quality of their apparatus, and their faithful observance of radio rules of the air. It is interesting to note, however, that in many cases stations which were not affiliated with chains at the time they received favorable assignments from the commission thereafter entered upon such affiliations.<sup>42</sup>

In November 1928, New Orleans station WDSU, though less than six months old, obtained an increase of power from 250 watts to 1 kilowatt, making it the most powerful station in the city (until WWL increased to 5 kw four months later).

Chain broadcasting emerged in the summer of 1923 when AT&T connected three radio stations together by phone line. By the end of that year, six stations were connected together and by the end of 1924, a coast-to-coast connection of twenty-six stations was realized. The advent of chain broadcasting allowed the whole nation to tune in for newsworthy moments, such as an address by President Warren Harding in St. Louis on 21 June 1923; ex-President Woodrow Wilson's speech before the anniversary of Armistice Day; and up-to-date coverage of the Democratic and Republican conventions of 1924.

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<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), 21.

The National Broadcasting Company was formed in September 1926, allowing radio listeners across the country a chance to listen to consistent high-quality programming. NBC picked stations for affiliation based on their power, station channel, and overall listener coverage. With network programming, stations could provide continuous service, draw larger audiences, and procure favor from the FRC, often obtaining a distinct and, some people felt, an unfair advantage over their non-affiliated competitors.<sup>43</sup>

Rival networks soon appeared. The Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System went on the air in April 1927 and; six months later it became simply the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). In December 1926 and January 1927, NBC split up programming responsibilities between three different arms of its network; the Red and Blue Networks, which both originated in New York, and the Pacific Network, which provided much programming related to farming and agriculture for the Mid-West region. In 1934, the Mutual Broadcasting System formed. The idea behind MBS was that a number of stations would organize under a small network on a mutual basis, eliminating the need for a very expensive network programming department. The idea was a modest success.<sup>44</sup>

The attraction of network affiliation to radio stations in New Orleans was obvious. In three months time, WDSU affiliated with Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), making it the first chain affiliated station in New Orleans. Station WSMB, despite remaining at 750 watts, affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in

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<sup>43</sup> Barnouw, A Tower in Babel, 145-149, 186.

<sup>44</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Big Business and Radio (New York: Stratford Press, 1939), 294, 296, 301-321, 407.

March 1929. An affiliated station was not only paid by the networks to carry its programming but it also attracted more people to listen to the higher quality, highly-publicized, network programs. Popular programs included *Little Orphan Annie*, on NBC from 1931 to 1940; *The Amos 'N' Andy Show*, on NBC from 1929 to 1939; and *Buck Rogers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century*, on CBS from 1932 to 1936. A show originating on WWL in 1937, *Dawnbusters*, was highly popular in the Southern region and was broadcast nationally on CBS for a short time<sup>45</sup>

When WDSU began broadcasting in July 1928, the *States* promised that the station would become an affiliate. "According to present plans, [WDSU] will be linked in on the New York 'chain' seven days a week, thus bringing New York's famed Broadway to Canal Street." The people of New Orleans had waited long enough, the paper said, to receive the popular programs only the networks could provide. Because of poor reception caused by the weather and overcrowded frequencies, New Orleans residents were largely deprived of listening to the chain programs until the city's radio stations affiliated themselves.<sup>46</sup>

In 1935, WDSU lost its affiliation with CBS to WWL. The Loyola University station, boasting 10 kw. power and an 850 kc. cleared-channel, was clearly the most desirable station in Louisiana and surrounding states. WDSU quickly affiliated with the young MBS, which lasted two years. The station then switched to the NBC Blue Network in 1937. Station WSMB continued to affiliate with the popular NBC Red Network. New

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<sup>45</sup> Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, 273-275; Vincent Terrace, *Radio Programs, 1924, 1984: A Catalog of Over 1800 Shows* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1999), 24-25, 54, 133, 202-203, 303; Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 191.

<sup>46</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 60; *New Orleans States*, 13 May 1928.

Orleans residents in mid-1930s had a choice, then, of three different radio affiliates, and in the 1940s, one more was added.<sup>47</sup> The network affiliations in New Orleans and across the United States helped increase radio sales and total radio homes. In April 1922, Louisiana residents owned only one-third of one percent of all the radio sets in the country. Six years later, the FRC estimated that Louisiana had over 66,000 radio homes, representing about one percent of all sets in America (Louisiana's population represented 1.7% of the country's total population between 1920 and 1930). The radio industry's growth in New Orleans was helped bring Louisiana closer to the national average in terms of broadcast facilities, wattage, and radio sets. Radio had made tremendous advances since the days of Marconi; sales were high, and station power continued to increase; though radio's growth was far from over.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Pusateri, Enterprise in Radio, 164. WNOE was affiliated with MBS.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 80; U.S. Department of Commerce, Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), Appendix G, 222; Broadcast Advertising, (Washington DC: 1937), Volume 12, Issue 25. By 1936, with a population of 2.1 million, Louisiana had 260,000 radio homes, with 90,000 in Orleans Parish, 23,600 in Caddo Parish (including the city of Shreveport), and 12,100 in East Baton Rouge Parish.



## Chapter II

### The New Orleans Press-Radio War

In December 1928, an influential trade publication for journalists, *Editor and Publisher*, queried “editors of more than a score of influential newspapers and newspaper chains” on the “menace” of radio. Should press services provide news to radio? Fifteen editors opposed the distribution of news by press services to radio; eight editors either were in favor of it or considered it a harmless practice. New Orleans *States* and Shreveport *Times* owner, politician, and president of Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (SNPA), Colonel Robert Ewing, was among the fifteen who opposed distribution of news to radio prior to publication. “Exceptions should be made,” he said “in the case of general elections and for unusual occurrences as an accommodation to the public at large and particularly to those in rural sections.” On the issue of whether newspapers should print names of advertisers in radio program logs, Ewing stated: “Large advertisers today are serving noteworthy musical and other programs. It is a help to the reader when their programs are mentioned and it is due those who make possible such fine entertainments.” He failed to make it exactly clear whether or not he favored printing the names of sponsors.<sup>49</sup>

Ewing’s ambivalence about providing news to radio and particularly whether to publish names of radio program advertisers is representative of newspaper editors across the country. His 1928 reply was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that his newspaper, the *States*, had entered into a working relationship with New Orleans’ newest station,

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<sup>49</sup> “Giving News to Radio Viewed as Menace to Newspapers by Many Editors,” *Editor and Publisher*, (December 28, 1928): 4.

WDSU, in July of that same year, providing news and sports items. The opinions of other editors were also shaped by self-interest: did, or did they not have a “relationship” with radio?

Plenty did. In 1923, newspapers owned between seventy and one hundred stations. At the height of the craze, a few years later, as many as one-sixth of all American dailies owned or co-owned radio stations. These figures, however, do not include newspapers that had some sort of working arrangement with a station, exchanging news for publicity. Although it is impossible to be precise, the number of newspapers that either owned or had working relationships with radio stations constituted a sizable minority. For example, in 1922, the Interstate Electric Company and New Orleans *Item* both owned WGV, but only Interstate Electric was listed; in 1925, the *Item* had a working arrangement with WSMB; in 1928, the *States* had a working arrangement with WDSU. The vagaries of newspaper-radio association in New Orleans reflected nationwide experimentation. Though the number of those relationships is difficult to estimate, certain is the significant role newspapers played in the growth of radio.<sup>50</sup>

Newspapers played an even greater role by publicizing the new medium.<sup>51</sup> Beginning in 1920, the Pittsburgh *Post* and Pittsburgh *Sun* cooperated in the printing of radio program logs and news; many other publishers did so as well. The press was eager

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<sup>50</sup> Jackaway, *Media At War*, 14; Mitchell V. Charnley, *News By Radio* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 10-11; Harvey Levin, *Broadcast Regulation and Joint Ownership of Media* (New York: New York University Press, 1960), 42-47.

<sup>51</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 15-16.

to publicize the curious and exciting new medium. As *Editor and Publisher* stated:

“Newspapers, as is well known, helped build the new plaything of the nation.”<sup>52</sup>

Why should the nation’s press have been worried about radio? By 1922, less than one hundred broadcast stations were licensed in America; by February 1924, 534. Up until the birth of network radio in September 1926, with few exceptions, radio stations were individually owned and operated, making it difficult to advertise on a national scale. As a result, little information is available concerning advertising revenue for radio until 1927. In that year, newspapers received \$775 million in advertising; radio received \$5 million. With the advent of network radio, however, the newspaper industry saw its share of national advertising expenditures decrease.<sup>53</sup>

Newspapermen soon realized the “plaything” was hurting their advertising revenues. In 1931, W.G. Vorpe, Chairman of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and Sunday Editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, made his prolix point: “Radio, the infant which for several years has been nurtured on publicity pap, has grown to be quite a husky young fellow ready and pretty near able to give the newspapers a pretty hard sock between the eyes.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed it did. In 1928, among the three media – radio, newspaper, and magazine – newspapers took eighty percent of the advertising dollar, while radio took less than two. In 1931, newspapers took seventy-five percent of the ad

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<sup>52</sup> “Dailies Aided Greatly In Building Popularity of Broadcasting,” *Editor and Publisher* (February 14, 1931): 34.

<sup>53</sup> Levin, *Broadcast Regulation*, 109; Charnley, *News By Radio*, 10

<sup>54</sup> *Problems of Journalism: Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors* (Washington DC, 1931), 147.

revenue; radio, seven. In 1939, radio took a full twenty percent; newspapers, sixty-three percent. The primacy of newspapers as an advertising medium was coming to an end.<sup>55</sup>

The “infant” that the newspapers “nurtured” on publicity was not only stealing advertising, but threatening to take away the very purpose for which newspapers existed – to report news. As early as 1922, the dominant news agency, Associated Press (AP), issued a notice to its member newspapers, warning them that AP news bulletins were not to be used for broadcast. Radio was in no position to challenge the elder medium in the role of news dissemination, though even the thought of giving news to radio stations seemed unsettling to many AP members.<sup>56</sup>

Most broadcasts until 1930 focused on news of “intrinsic value,” narrowly construed as election results or sporting events. The formation of network radio, initially, did nothing to change this. The broadcasting of news was of little commercial importance; advertisers were not interested. Broadcasters, however, felt differently. News was valuable for two reasons: it helped satisfy a station’s obligation to serve the “public interest, convenience, and necessity,” and it was cheap. In 1928, the nation’s three most powerful news agencies – Associated Press, United Press (UP), and International News Service (INS) – allowed radio to broadcast Herbert Hoover’s victory over Al Smith. The public’s appetite for news broadcasts grew. A California station in late 1930 broadcast regular news announcements three times daily, for fifteen minutes, and hired its own news-gathering staff.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Levin, Broadcast Regulation, 109.

<sup>56</sup> Jackaway, Media at War, 12, 15; Charnley, News by Radio, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Charnley, News by Radio, 5-9.

The division among newspapermen about the subject of radio increased. Some recognized the danger but remained hopeful. *Editor and Publisher* commented in 1928:

There is no evidence that radio interests are attempting to force news on the air. In the first instance it was volunteered by the press itself. All the doubts concerning this business were present at that time, but in recent months the elaborate news coverage that had reached the air, mainly from local newspapers, has stirred among newspaper men a sense of future, if not present, danger. It has been said that the radio interests might ultimately go into the news collection business in actual competition with the press. We see no present possibility.<sup>58</sup>

Others viewed radio as a serious rival that would forever change news dissemination.

Radio...is a new journalism, a social revolution, the newest and greatest force to sway public opinion, the universal teacher....As newspapermen we are concerned with the effect radio will have upon our business of selling news and advertising. Because of radio the future of the press is in the air!...If newspaper publishers try to fight radio they will kick against the pricks. Here is a new force to sway public opinion which can produce certain effects, convey certain impressions and accomplish certain results.

Radio will never displace newspapers but it will supplement them and will trespass on some of their established functions.<sup>59</sup>

Some newsmen seemed unconcerned with the threat of radio, confident of newspapers' ability to dominate mass communication. An editor in 1924 opined that the newspaper is "the most effective engine of publicity ever devised." Marlen Pew, who oversaw *Editor and Publisher*, noted in 1930 "that the newspaper has grown to supreme dominance, both local and national, and its power is not only admired, but is feared and coveted. It is the nation's leading intellectual and moral force. It is the principal medium

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<sup>58</sup> "The Radio Question," *Editor and Publisher*, (December 22, 1928): 28

<sup>59</sup> American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Problems of Journalism, Proceedings of the American Society of Newspaper Editors* (Washington D.C.: Washington Press Club, 1927), 176-181.

of trade. Public acceptance of it proves its dominance.” Bold words, indeed, coming from an industry expert who, perhaps more than anyone, should have foreseen the decline. The year 1930 saw newspaper lineage drop fourteen percent; advertising revenues, almost twenty percent.<sup>60</sup>

Disunity among newspapers stemmed from whether they were affiliated in some way to radio stations, as well as to which wire service they belonged. Structural differences among the wire services resulted in varying opinions about “the radio question.” UP and INS were willing to supply news to broadcasters; AP, the most successful of the three, was opposed. UP and INS had their own news-gathering staff and sold news to anyone willing to buy it. AP was a collective news agency in which member newspapers shared their own stories and, in turn, received news from others. If AP allowed its news to be broadcast, it would be scooped by its own news. UP and INS, in contrast, had no obligation to their clients, whether radio or newspaper, other than to provide news.<sup>61</sup>

Two different approaches emerged among members of the press. The anti-radio camp – consisting of members of AP and those newspapers that did not own or affiliate with stations – was dominant. Newspapers which favored broadcasting news usually owned or affiliated with stations, and bought news from UP or INS. No hard and fast rule determined the sides chosen by newspapers. Many AP member newspapers owned or affiliated with stations, causing a considerable conflict of interest. Complicating matters

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<sup>60</sup> American Society of Newspaper Editors, Problems of Journalism, Proceedings of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Washington D.C.: Washington Press Club, 1930), 28; “A Look Ahead,” *Editor and Publisher*, (January 3, 1931): 32.

<sup>61</sup> Jackaway, Media at War, 16; Charnley, News by Radio, 5.

was the fact that member papers were not only forbidden to broadcast AP news, but could not broadcast news gathered by their own staff; news that was also considered AP property. The struggle for power and survival that resulted from radio's challenge to newspapers is known as the Press-Radio War, and, according to Gwenyth Jackaway in Media at War, was played out in three different stages.

The first stage, 1922 to mid-1933, involved assessing the threat radio posed to newspapers and the response, if any, that the press would take against the new medium. At first, newspapers embraced radio as a way to promote public awareness of their own papers. It was the latest craze and newspapers were eager to increase sales by featuring a novelty. As radio gained in popularity and started to seriously compete against the press for advertising revenue, and the public for their loyalty, most members of the press began to think less kindly of radio.

The second stage, mid-1933 through 1934, was characterized by unity and action by the nation's newspapers as they tried to combine their power in an attempt to block radio's growth and development. Several factors contributed to unite the nation's press, though the fight was ultimately unsuccessful. The final stage, 1935 to 1939, saw the nation's press and radio stations developing alliances as an increasing number of newspapers acquired radio stations. The alliances assured the press a certain amount of control over the new medium.<sup>62</sup>

The first stage of the Press-Radio War in New Orleans started in the first half of 1922, when the city's three main newspapers formed their own stations. Only days after the first broadcasts of the *Interstate-Item's* WGV and the *Times-Picayune's* WAAB, an

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<sup>62</sup> Jackaway, Media at War, 11.

event occurred which indicates exactly the reason why a rift developed between newspaper and radio. About 8:30 pm on Saturday, April 9, a fire broke out in the New Orleans Elks' Lodge, killing one fireman and injuring twenty other people. Both WGV and WAAB broadcast details of the fire to listeners. The next day, both newspapers praised their efforts. "Radio Speeds Elks' Fire Bulletins To All Listening In: Times-Picayune Service Praised", the *Times-Picayune* headline read. Listeners enjoyed the night's broadcasts, particularly details of the fire:

From all quarters late Saturday night came messages of congratulation from those who listened in and enjoyed the night's entertainment. Especially were the news bulletins which kept the hearers abreast of developments in the fight to save the Elk's home from complete destruction by fire appreciated. Though the closing hour of the Times-Picayune station is 10 o'clock, WAAB stood by for nearly three quarters of an hour until the fire was under control and an announcement giving a definite line on the exact situation resulting from the disaster was possible.<sup>63</sup>

The *Item* claimed that its bulletins of the fire were heard first:

The Item radiophone service was the first to put into the air the news of the fire which wrecked the Elks' Club Saturday night, according to C.F. Kirsch, radio operator of the United Fruit Company's wireless station here.... 'The world of the fire came right in the midst of a concert,' said Mr. Kirsch. 'The voice of the man speaking came strong and clear over the notes of the orchestra.' 'I had happened to drop down to 360 meters from the 600 meter range in which I usually keep my instruments tuned. Just for a moment, while I was shifting about in the lower range I heard the music of an orchestra and then over the music came the word "fire." I tuned in and listened.'<sup>64</sup>

Only months later, as a result of events like this, AP issued its warning to member papers not to broadcast any news items. Would the broadcasting of news over the radio have a negative impact on circulation? Perhaps, but certain was the fact that the news WGV and WAAB broadcast had scooped their own newspapers. Upon hearing the

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<sup>63</sup> "Radio Speeds Elks' Fire Bulletins To All Listening In: Times-Picayune Service Praised," *Times-Picayune*, 9 April 1922, 1.

<sup>64</sup> "Item Radioed Big Fire News First, Says Ship Sender," *New Orleans Item*, 11 April 1922, 14.



bulletins, a few wireless telegraph operators in the city relayed the story to other stations, bypassing the New Orleans newspapers altogether. The man who claimed to have heard the *Item*'s broadcast, C.F. Kirsch, said that: "If the news of the fire had not been carried on the radiophone, it is unlikely that it would have been broadcasted until the next day, because the regular 'press news' we send out during the night is obtained from the evening papers."<sup>65</sup>

Situations like the one in New Orleans occurred nationwide. In an attempt to promote their papers, publishers started radio stations. The news they broadcast as a public service and for community goodwill served to change the flow of information in society. Although in the 1920s, radio was a long way off from being able to challenge the press in news-gathering and dissemination, the public suddenly had a choice of news media that had hitherto been unavailable.

The Elks' Lodge fire stands out as an exemplary occasion in the broadcasting of news in New Orleans. Most of the time, news in the form of short bulletins could be counted on several times in a broadcast.

Over the Interstate-*Item* broadcasting radiophone station concert programs, speeches by nationally known persons, nightly news bulletins furnished by the *Item*, weather reports, crop reports, market reports, inning-by-inning reports of baseball games, solos by famous singers, recitals by famous actors, will be sent out into the ether night after night for everyone within a radius of from 300 to 800 or more miles to hear.<sup>66</sup>

The *Times-Picayune*'s WAAB broadcast news bulletins throughout its programming, on a typical night scheduling at least two or more. On its second night of broadcasting, the station scheduled half of its air-time, from 7:30 to 9:30, to news bulletins and market and

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid; "Newman's Offer To Give Headquarters Rooms at A. of C. Wins Radio Fans," *New Orleans Item*, 11 April 1922, 4.

<sup>66</sup> "Interstate Broadcasting Plant Nears Completion," *New Orleans Item*, 6 April 1922, 1,12.

weather reports. Subsequent broadcasts considerably reduced the time news was allotted. Occasionally stations alternated several times in a single night. A typical schedule looked like this:

Radiophone Broadcast  
Program Tuesday Night

WAAB

- 7:30 – Bedtime stories for the children.
- 7:35 – News bulletins.
- 7:37 – Soprano solo by Mrs. Edmund Mazurette.
- 7:42 – Piano solo by Mrs. Eugenie Wehrmann-Schaffner.
- 7:48 – Violin solo by Henry Wehrmann.
- 7:55 – Negro dialect stories by R. Emmett Kennedy.

Loyola

- 8 – “Loyola Talk” by President Cummings of Loyola University.
- Musical selection.
- Address by Judge Hugh Cage, dean of Loyola’s law school.
- Musical selection.
- Address by Judge John St. Paul, of the Supreme Court.
- Musical selection by Loyola’s Orchestra.
- Address by Father Michael J. Kennedy, regent of Loyola’s law school.
- Musical selection.
- Short talk on Loyola’s campaign appeal for \$1,500,000.
- Musical selection.

WAAB

- 9:30 – News bulletins.
- 9:32 – Musical program featuring Mrs Wehrmann-Schaffner,  
Mrs. Mazurette and Mr. Wehrmann.
- 9:50 – Negro songs by Mr. Kennedy.
- 10:00 – News bulletin.<sup>67</sup>

Two years after the advent of broadcast station broadcasting in New Orleans, no newspaper in the city owned or affiliated with a radio station. That was to change in April 1925, when the city’s first class B radio station went on the air. The Saenger Amusement and Maison Blanche Companies combined their resources and talents into WSMB (“S”

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<sup>67</sup> “Radiophone Broadcast Program Tuesday Night,” *Times-Picayune*, 11 April 1922, 1.

stood for Saenger, and “MB” stood for Maison Blanche). The *Item* (on Sundays, it combined with its morning paper to make the *Item-Tribune*) was recruited to publicize the station and give daily news reports, which, according to the original schedule, amounted to an hour of “sport bulletins, stock reports, general news budget, and dinner musicale” on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. This was the first real attempt in the city to establish a radio station with any amount of permanency. All parties involved, it seems, expected to put forth the requisite resources to keep the station alive:

Elevator service day and night; an administrative and operating force; stenographers and telephone operators for ‘fan’ follow-up and contact; engineers, and announcers; a branch office of the Western Union Telegraph company for immediate acknowledgements direct long-distance lines to all parts of the United States; auxillary studios at the Strand and Liberty theaters operated by remote control to tune in to synchronize time; and the mighty fountain of entertainment at all times to be tapped by the Saenger Amusement company – gives a brief idea of the scope and operating policy necessary to man WSMB.<sup>68</sup>

To commemorate the occasion, the *Item-Tribune* dedicated its front page and several other pages entirely to the new station. In the middle of the front page is a large picture of the two 126-foot tall radio towers atop the Maison Blanche building on Canal Street. The prominent headline reads: “CITY WELCOMES BROADCASTER WSMB.” Although the station was lauded as a “powerful broadcaster” and had sufficient power to classify as a class B station, at 500 watts, its power was but a fraction of what the most powerful stations enjoyed. The picture of the towers on top of the buildings, at first impressive, is actually a testament to the radio station’s meager power and, in general, the

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<sup>68</sup> “South’s Greatest Station Will Broadcast Inaugural Program Tuesday At 9 P.M.: Saenger-Maison Blanche Make Gift to the City,” *Item-Tribune*, 19 April 1925, 1.

radio industry's infancy. Stations would soon increase to huge five, ten, and fifty kilowatt transmitter towers located in rural areas outside of big cities.<sup>69</sup>

The top floor of the Maison Blanche building on Canal Street was modified to act as the station's studio. Although the *Item* boasted the studio was the "best that money, brains, and talent can give to radio," it was actually a testament to rough-and-ready. A picture of the studio inside reveals the early techniques of sound-deadening - using rugs, and drapes to muffle resonance - in addition to using newer methods - padded walls, padded ceiling, and rubber-tiled flooring.<sup>70</sup>

The station's program director was Clyde R. Randall, the same amateur who started the *States'* station, WCAG, three years earlier. In April 1925, Randall operated his own amateur station (5AA), his own commercial station (after the *States* abandoned WCAG in mid-1923), and WSMB. WCAG was scrapped for good only months after he became program director for the new station.

Following the lead of other stations that affiliated with newspapers, a remote studio (a ten foot square cubicle) was built on the third floor of the *Item*, where reporter Ted Liuzza read news copy for fifteen minutes during the "noontday" and "dinner programs." As the station expanded and broadcast longer hours, its programming expanded as well. Soon, WSMB broadcast play-by-play reports of the city's baseball team, the New Orleans Pelicans. Reporting from the game, Liuzza would get an assistant to call the studio and give them notes from the previous inning. In addition, a remote line

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<sup>69</sup> "City Welcomes Broadcaster WSMB," *Item-Tribune*, 19 April 1925, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid; Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, 71, 85; Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 46-48; Laura Fletcher Lemoine, "A History of Radio Station WSMB, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1925 Through 1967" (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1969), 10-40.

was setup in Tulane's football stadium press box to broadcast play-by-play. If the team went on the road, Randall would follow and telegraph the results to WSMB, where Liuzza aired them. Thanks to WSMB and the *Item*, New Orleans sports fans no longer had to buy newspapers to find out the results of a game.

Radio demonstrated itself as an "agent of mercy" in March 1925, when Chicago station WLS broadcast the news of a damaging cyclone, and appealed to listeners to help with relief efforts and give money; over \$150,000 was raised in a matter of days. In August 1926, WSMB was in a similar position to help residents of Louisiana and New Orleans. The station warned its listeners of a potentially powerful hurricane – giving bulletins every half-hour. The storm damaged many towns throughout Louisiana and caused an estimated \$250,000 in damage to New Orleans. Never before did New Orleans have up-to-date reports of a hurricane over the radio; WSMB was congratulated.<sup>71</sup>

WSMB was not the only station to broadcast sporting events and prize fights. Soon after the founding of WCBE in 1924, the New Orleans *States* occasionally arranged to broadcast such events over the station. In the summer of 1927, the *States* used WCBE exclusively. In May 1928, WCBE officially changed its call letters to WDSU and on July 6, the "new" station formally began broadcasting. The old station's power was 5 watts; WDSU broadcast at 250 watts. New Orleans now had its second radio-affiliated newspaper. The main studio was built on the top floor of the De Soto Hotel, and the name of the station – WDSU – appropriately stood for the *De Soto-States-Uhalt* venture (Joseph H. Uhalt had owned WDSU since its inception in 1924 as WCBE). A remote

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<sup>71</sup> "Radio Helped Storm Victims: Became Agent of Mercy During Recent Cyclone," *New Orleans Item-Tribune*, 19 April 1925, Radio Section; *New Orleans Item-Tribune*, 22-26 August 1926; "WSMB Will Send Bulletins To Lonely Coast Fishermen Giving Progress Of Storm," *New Orleans Item*, 24 August 1926, 1; "WSMB Keeps South Posted On Hurricane," *New Orleans Item*, 25 August 1926, 3.

studio was setup in the *States*' building for periodic "sport events, exhibitions, shows and news bulletins," and a daily program from 5:00 pm to 5:30 pm "featuring advertisements and other matter in the newspaper published daily."<sup>72</sup>

The relationship between the two New Orleans media –WDSU and the *States* – serves as a microcosm of newspaper-radio relations nationwide; a marriage soon gone sour. When WDSU attempted to end its affiliation with the *States*, presumably to make more money, the newspaper refused to sever its ties. From the time of the first broadcast in July 1928 to the bitter court case at the end of the *States*' relationship with WDSU in August 1929, the station increased its power to 1,000 watts and obtained an affiliation with CBS. The joint "adventure" between the two was borne out of a desire to increase their exposure and make more money. The radio station would give publicity to the *States* over the air; WDSU would receive free space in the newspaper.

There were no problems to speak of early in the WDSU-*States* relationship. In the first-half of 1928, Col. Ewing (owner of the *States*) agreed to use his political connections in Washington to secure an increase of power for WDSU. The fact that an arrangement with a 1,000-watt, network-affiliated station would mean more advertising dollars for the *States* was not far from the minds of Col. Ewing and some of his staff. To that end, a contract was drawn-up between WDSU and the *States* on 2 June 1928, and amended on 6 February 1929.

The first signs of discord occurred in April 1929 when Uhalt asked the *States* to run a story about one of his advertisers, the Louisiana Marmon Company, an automobile

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<sup>72</sup> *Daily States Publishing Co. v. Uhalt*, 28, (Orleans Civ. Dist. Ct., 1929). Copy located in Paul M. Hebert Law Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. Many thanks to Charlene C. Cain, government documents librarian, for helping locate this unique document.

agency; the *States* refused because the company did not advertise with them. The deteriorating relationship clearly had much to do with a misunderstanding, on both sides, as to what was expected from one another. An excerpt from the court transcripts between *States* attorney, L.L. Dubourg, and Joseph Uhalt follows:

- Q Outside of this story of the Louisiana Marmon Company, Inc., which you wanted the *States*, to carry because you thought they should carry it because you would get some money from the Louisiana Marmon Company as an advertiser, is that it?
- A Yes, sir.
- Q In other words, your contention is that the *States* should have carried free for anybody with whom you had an advertisement contract for your station?
- A No, sir, not everyone of my advertisers. When I went into this arrangement with them I thought they would assist me in that light, but they did not.<sup>73</sup>

Another disagreement resulted from the *States* placing too much emphasis on its affiliation with the station, losing business for Uhalt. WDSU attorney, A.D. Danziger, questioned Uhalt:

- Q Has the *States* in every instance given you publicity of a kind and to a degree greater than that to other stations?
- A Why, I would say they have given me more publicity than they have other stations – that is, the amount of lines, probably, that is used. However, the space which had been given to me has been shared by them because of the fact that they put it there “Daily *States*” and “Uhalt Broadcasting Company.”
- Q I think you testified in answer to questions on cross examination that there were occasions when you took up the matter of their using the name of the *States*, as you thought, rather too prominently in connection with the advertising of WDSU. Did you ever get any results from these talks that you had with the *States* folks about this situation?
- A I did, if I remember correctly. One time I spoke to Mr. James L. Ewing, and he said he would discontinue the practice of referring to the station as the *States* Station, and he did, and it did not appear in the paper for perhaps two or three weeks, and then it was continued and has been so.
- Q Now has the emphasizing of the *States*’ name in advertising with reference to your station interfered any in your obtaining contracts for radio broadcasting, etc.?
- A Why, I would say yes.
- Q Can you give some specific instance where that is so?
- A Well, I can give one specific instance at this time or maybe two, and I daresay that I could refer to possibly ten or twelve....I can mention the instance of a company

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 68-69.

by the name of Klein Brothers, who told me that because the States was interested in the station, they would not give me any business.<sup>74</sup>

There were other instances of disagreement and misunderstanding between the *States* and WDSU. On 6 February 1929, the *States* considered the fee it paid the station to broadcast a news segment as too high, asking that it be cut in half. Uhalt flatly refused, insisting that he was already losing money. The Floorwalkers Program, as it was called, was canceled in favor of a ten-minute news period. Disagreements of this nature took place until August 1929, when WDSU notified the *States* it was canceling the contract.

The *States* sued WDSU, claiming the radio station had no legal right to cancel the arrangement, especially since it had upheld its end of the contract and helped the station secure an increase of power to 1,000 watts and a chain affiliation as well. Managing Editor of the *States*, Captain J. Walker Ross, was lead to believe by Uhalt that “if we were successful in getting this power we could have an exclusive and permanent arrangement with WDSU for sporting events and news broadcasts.” Uhalt admitted that he accepted the *States*’ help in obtaining an increase of power but argued that the efforts of Col. Ewing and the *States* made no difference. The request for an increase in power was granted by the FRC, Uhalt contended, simply because of the Davis Amendment to the Federal Radio Act of 1927, which sought to give all sections of the country relatively equal broadcasting opportunities.

The question of why Uhalt wanted to end his affiliation with the *States* is obvious. Once WDSU obtained a chain affiliation, it could make more money with less effort, carrying network programming rather than only broadcasting sports. With the New Orleans Pelicans games, prizefights, and periodic news and weather bulletins, the *States*

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-194.



was taking up entirely too much valuable airtime. The question of why the *States* refused to let go of the affiliation is also obvious. It was receiving a large amount of money from radio advertisers, especially from CBS - the network with which WDSU was affiliated. Because of its connection with WDSU, the *States* stood first among the newspapers of New Orleans in terms of radio advertising.<sup>75</sup>

Radio-affiliated newspapers, such as the *States* had won out over the anti-radio members of the Associated Press. In 1925, AP adopted a modified version of the radio-friendly United Press and International News Service rules, stating that it would “permit the broadcast of such news of the Association as it shall deem of transcendent, national and international importance, and which cannot by its very nature be exclusive.” The *States* and *Item* broadcast news over their respective stations in compliance with AP rules, much to the anger of non radio-affiliated newspapers. By early 1930, the division between the pro and anti-radio camps was intense. In 1930, New Orleans newspapers (*Item-Tribune*, *States*, *Times-Picayune*) had a combined total advertising of 37,615,705 agate lines, a total not seen since 1924.<sup>76</sup> From 1927 to 1932, advertising expenditures in radio increased sixteen times while expenditures in newspapers dropped more than a third.<sup>77</sup> To many newspapermen, radio was the reason for the drop in business. That members of their own profession, many thought, contributed to radio’s advancement by providing news and publicity, only made matters worse.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-136.

<sup>76</sup> Jackaway, *Media At War*, 18; “A Look Ahead,” *Editor and Publisher*, (January 3, 1931): 32; “Newspaper Linage, 23 Chief Cities, 1922-1930,” *Editor and Publisher* (January 31, 1931): 242-243. The term “agate” refers to a type size that is smaller than that used in regular news print, particularly found in classified advertisements.

<sup>77</sup> Charnley, *News By Radio*, 10.

Radio, though, was only partly to blame for newspapers' economic woes. The main reason for the drop in newspaper advertising was the Great Depression, beginning with the stock market crash in October 1929. Many national companies reduced advertising in newspapers, preferring to advertise over the popular new medium. While the nation's press saw declines in ad revenue, radio saw increases, prompting enthusiasts to term radio "depression-proof." The *States* saw an opportunity to attach itself to a growing and profitable station; its unwillingness to part ways with WDSU is understandable. In the end, however, Joseph Uhalt and station WDSU won the case; there was no Las Vegas-style divorce for the *States* in New Orleans in 1930.

The *States* had no intention of staying out of the radio business for long. In March 1931, the newspaper entered into an agreement, according to an unpublished history of WWL, "whereby the genial Thomas Ewing Dabney would be the official news commentator on WWL, using the 'Daily States' news as the subject matter." Two fifteen-minute programs were given daily from a remote studio in the *States* building setup by Loyola's Father Orié Abell. "Dabney, being a natural born philosopher and possessing a pleasing radio voice and natural personality, became a very popular commentator."

Despite the apparent success of Dabney's newscasts, sentiment among New Orleans newspapers and the nation's wire services was turning away from radio. Several events occurred in the early 1930s which served to unite the nation's press against radio; most important was the Great Depression. With advertising revenue slipping and radio growing more popular with listeners and advertisers, the city's newspapers determined to take action against the new medium. Two important national events – the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, and attempted assassination of president-elect Franklin Roosevelt – proved

that radio could be a formidable adversary to newspapers in the dissemination of disaster news. The ability of New Orleans stations, such as WWL, to scoop the papers with “spot” broadcasts worried and angered the city’s print journalists, whether they were affiliated with radio or not. According to “A Brief History of Radio Station WWL: 1902-1932” - written by the man most responsible for WWL’s success, Father Abell –newspaper animosity towards radio served no good purpose. For example:

His [Dabney’s] popularity was still growing and he was winning more and more listeners daily, when the newspapers of New Orleans decided to fight the radio stations instead of cooperating with them. The papers, of course, have never divulged the real reason for this silly action and the sillier attitude they maintained for a good many years, and still maintain to a great extent, if not mentioning the word “radio” even of news items of great moment to their subscribers. For several years the word was taboo. The real cause of this enmity against radio on the part of New Orleans newspapers can be explained by the great inroads that the radio industry had made into the revenue from advertising that used to flow into the coffers of the newspapers.<sup>78</sup>

Other journalists throughout the country similarly felt the anger of New Orleans journalists. In April 1931, the problem the nation’s newspapers had with radio was expressed most clearly by Merlin Aylesworth, president of NBC:

A study of the many statements issued by the spokesman of the newspapers opposed to further cooperation with broadcasting, reveals three fundamental complaints: 1. Radio news bulletins compete with the primary function of newspapers and take away from newspaper circulation. 2. Radio programs now published as editorial matter should be treated as advertising copy and paid for by broadcasters or program sponsors. 3. Radio advertising takes away from the advertising income of the newspapers, thereby creating a definite threat to the financial welfare of the press. The sum and substance of the newspaper viewpoint is that broadcasting can no longer be considered a normal editorial subject but, rather, must be handled as a serious and dangerous competitor for advertising and circulation patronage....An antagonistic frame of mind seems quite justified on such a diet of assumptions.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Father Orie Abell, “A Brief History of Radio Station WWL: 1902-1932,” (Unpublished paper, Loyola University, 1937). This paper and other early WWL information are available in the Special Collections and Archives at the main Loyola University library, as WWL Records, AR-19. I am grateful to Arthur E. Carpenter, university archivist, for his assistance in locating these documents.

<sup>79</sup> Jackaway, *Media at War*, 19-24; Robert McChesney, *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 170; Giraud Chester, “The Press-Radio War: 1933-1935,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13 (Summer 1949) 252-254.

Journalists were certain that the radio industry grew at the expense of the press. The collective action of New Orleans newspapers against radio preceded the reaction from the nation's press as a whole. On 10 June 1932, the city's four daily newspapers stopped printing radio program logs save as paid advertising. The only program logs that appeared consistently were the two national affiliates – WDSU and WSMB – paid for by sponsors. A typical program log began: "For the benefit of the reading public, Feibleman's presents Saturday's program," or "Published daily as an added service to our patrons: Maison Blanche". The newspapers sometimes allowed the names of sponsored programming, such as "Maxwell House Show Boat," "Crazy Water Crystals Program," "Lucky Strike," or "Plymouth Motor Car Program." Logs for WWL appeared occasionally when either a program sponsor or "Friends of WWL" paid for it.<sup>80</sup>

The New Orleans radio-program-log blackout was unusual for several reasons. First, it took place almost a year before the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) did the same thing in April 1933. Second, most newspapers in other cities throughout the country found it difficult to continue the program log boycott, particularly in cities with competing dailies. If one newspaper reversed its policy of boycotting the logs because of reader complaint, then the others soon followed. *Editor and Publisher* lead the charge against printing radio program logs, echoing arguments of the broadcast reform movement:

Each day the presumably intelligent newspapers of America contribute without return \$500,000 worth of their valuable space to boosting the prosperity of a monopolistic monster equipped to destroy them. This is the radio industry as it calls itself,

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<sup>80</sup> *New Orleans States*, 18 June 1932, 3. New Orleans daily newspapers from 10 June 1932 to the end of May 1934.

maintained against competition by so-called regulation of the air by our government, for which and to which it makes no return. 'Free as air' has been turned into a pleasant fiction. While the owner of a radio set pays nothing for what he receives, it is all paid for in a manner that seeps the revenues of the press, coarsely designed as entertainment.<sup>81</sup>

L.K. Nicholson, publisher of the *Times-Picayune*, proved prophetic in his November 1932 circular to other AP members when he stated: "I believe the Associated Press is big enough and strong enough to take the lead in the matter of the broadcasting of its news, and I further believe that the other news services will immediately follow the example of the Associated Press without waiting to be forced into such change of policies by their clients." By April 1933, the nation's wire services stopped providing news to the broadcast networks and the ANPA adopted a resolution to stop carrying program logs. The resolution in itself was not very significant because the ANPA had no way of enforcing newspapers to comply. The Associated Press decision, however, carried much more weight in the fight of the press against radio because it was mandatory; any member newspapers that broke the rules faced expulsion or fines. In the wake of the AP decision and increasing pressure from anti-radio clients, UP and INS quickly fell in line with the rest of the nation's press. Thus began the second phase of the nation's press-radio war.<sup>82</sup>

In the second phase, the press attacked radio on three different levels: economic, political, and legal. The press attacked radio by refusing to sell news to the networks. The only newspaper in New Orleans still affiliated with a radio station in the spring of 1933 was the *Item*, which was assessed an additional AP fee and allowed to broadcast on

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<sup>81</sup> "Radio Reform Imperative, Says Seitz," *Editor and Publisher*, 19 December 1931, 9; "Competing Dailies Most Generous With Radio Space, Survey Shows," *Editor and Publisher*, 7 March 1931, 31; "The Radio Question," *Editor and Publisher*, 22 December 1928, 28.

<sup>82</sup> Jackaway, *Media at War*, 23-26.

WSMB only “brief news bulletins involving events of major importance.”<sup>83</sup> In addition, the New Orleans newspapers successfully implemented a program log blackout, damaging the city’s radio stations economically. The city’s four daily papers (*Times-Picayune*, *States*, *Item*, and *Tribune*) attacked radio in court in June 1933, when they sued station WDSU for news piracy. According to the *Times-Picayune*:

Joseph Uhalt, in charge of the station which bears his name, admitted during the hearing that news used in the WDSU news program was obtained from local newspapers. Talking machine records of broadcasts of news were offered in evidence by the plaintiffs to show that in many cases the items taken from New Orleans newspapers were not even rewritten before they were broadcast. The plaintiffs contend that this constitutes unfair competition; since they pay millions of dollars annually to collect and disseminate news and radios ‘pirate’ the items and send them to the public before newspapers can reach their subscribers or patrons.<sup>84</sup>

On 29 June 1933, the New Orleans civil district court issued an injunction against WDSU, barring it from broadcasting any news from the city’s newspapers less than twenty-four hours old. The practice of taking news from newspapers without permission by WDSU was found to be unfair competition.<sup>85</sup>

Newspapers in New Orleans depicted radio stations that broadcast news without permission as “pirates” or “thieves.” They attacked the credibility of news broadcasting, questioning the experience and accuracy of broadcast journalists while touting newspaper accuracy and objectivity. An Associated Press advertisement (printed only days after the New Orleans papers started the program log boycott) claimed that it provided not only “vivid” accounts, but that its “expert reporters will write up-to-the-minute, accurate

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<sup>83</sup> Jackaway, *Media at War*, 82; Giraud Chester, “The Press-Radio War: 1933-1935,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13 (Summer 1949): 255.

<sup>84</sup> “WDSU To Continue ‘Rewriting’ News , Ewing Testifies,” *Times-Picayune*, 21 June 1933; “WDSU Case To Be Argued Monday,” *Times-Picayune*, 22 June 1933.

<sup>85</sup> “Newspapers Win In Fight To Halt ‘Pirating’ By WDSU,” *Times-Picayune*, 30 June 1933, 1; “New Orleans Papers Win Radio Injunction,” *New York Times*, 30 June 1933.

accounts of all vital angles.” The copy noted that AP “is interested only in reporting the news, impartially and truthfully,” inferring that broadcast news was less than truthful.<sup>86</sup>

Radio had long been criticized by print journalists for being a superficial medium, ill-suited for the dissemination of detailed information. “The danger,” *Editor and Publisher* stated, “would be that shallow-minded or very busy people might be willing, if radio pretends to cover the news field, to rely upon its narrow and uncertain trickle of fact.” In a similar vein, newspapers condemned the idea of permitting radio to broadcast news at all. To avoid chaos of the airwaves, radio had to be regulated and stations had to be licensed. Radio, therefore, was susceptible to coercion and manipulation by the party in power in Washington D.C., a charge that turned out to have some truth to it. To permit the continuance of broadcast news, *Editor and Publisher* dramatically proclaimed, “would strike at the heart of the system of popular government.”

Print journalists also attacked radio on a political level by actively supporting the broadcast reform movement. Made up of educators, intellectuals, church groups, and print journalists, the broadcast reform movement attacked commercial radio on various levels. First, it attacked the ownership of broadcasting facilities, stating that the narrow point of view (concerning social, political, economic, and ethical questions) that would necessarily come from a nation with but two dominant networks, would serve to restrict the freedom of speech and variety of viewpoints that is crucial to a well-informed public. Second, it argued that the public airwaves should not be used for private profit. Radio advertising, broadcast reformers claimed, had a negative impact on the quality of

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<sup>86</sup> Jackaway, *Media at War*, 44, 109-111; “The Pageantry is Dramatic But Accuracy Is Fundamental,” *New Orleans States*, 14 June 1932, 9. (AP Advertisement)

programs, reducing radio to broadcasting silly and trivial entertainment for a profit only shared by two dominant networks.<sup>87</sup>

As a result of the three-tiered war – economic, legal, and political – directed by the press against radio, an agreement was reached by the representatives of both sides, heavily favoring the nation’s press. On 10-11 December 1933, representatives of NBC, CBS, AP, UP, INS, and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) consented to a ten-point “Biltmore Agreement” (because the conference took place at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City). The document ended network newsgathering efforts, of which CBS had built up a respectable agency in the roughly four months it had been in operation. Instead, a Press-Radio Bureau was formed whose job it was to furnish the networks limited daily bulletins of not more than thirty words each and sufficient enough to fill two daily broadcasts of not more than five minutes each. Occasional bulletins other than the two scheduled broadcasts were allowed for events of “transcendent” importance, as long as the broadcasts were “presented in such a manner as to stimulate public interest in the newspaper report.” In addition, perhaps radio’s most potent weapon in scooping newspapers – spot news – was eliminated.<sup>88</sup>

Why did the broadcasters agree to such a one-sided arrangement? Broadcasters took seriously the possibility of newspapers withdrawing not only program logs but every kind of radio publicity. The solidarity New Orleans newspapers – and papers in only a handful of other cities across the country - displayed in implementing the program log blackout caught the attention of network executives who feared a similar situation

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<sup>87</sup> “The Radio Question,” *Editor and Publisher*, 22 December 1928, 28; “Enter Radio News,” *Editor and Publisher*, 2 March 1929, 38; Jackaway, *Media at War*, 98; McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 92-97, 170.

<sup>88</sup> Chester, “The Press-Radio War: 1933-1935,” 256-257.



nationwide. Most importantly, however, the networks feared the power of the press and the publicity it could wield. They agreed to quit the newsgathering and dissemination business, except on a severely limited basis, if newspapers withdrew the threat of pushing for broadcast reform legislation, which was a topic of consideration in the upcoming Congressional session.<sup>89</sup>

The start of Press-Radio Bureau operations in March 1934 prompted New Orleans newspapers to resume the printing of program logs in late May. Because the agreement was between the press and the networks, only the city's two network affiliates – WSMB (NBC) and WDSU (CBS) – saw their program logs printed again, albeit, in niggardly fashion. The logs provided only the most basic information and took up only a small fraction of the newspaper page. Unless paid for, logs of independent stations did not appear in New Orleans newspapers at all.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the apparent success of the nation's press against radio, The Biltmore agreement had several substantial flaws. Most importantly, the nation's independent stations – 450 of the nation's 600 stations, including four of New Orleans' six – had not agreed to the plan. After the *States* stopped providing news to independent WWL, the Loyola University station started its own tentative newsgathering agency. It broadcast news gathered by its own staff and continued its practice of “spot” news and entertainment broadcasts throughout the city. The agreement also lacked power to prevent new wire-services from forming and selling news to the independent stations. Several new newsgathering services opened in competition with the Press-Radio Bureau,

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<sup>89</sup> McChesney, *Telecommunications*, 170-171.

<sup>90</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise in Radio*, 131; *New Orleans States*, 25 May 1934, 4.; New Orleans newspapers after May 24, 1934.

including the Yankee Network in Boston, the Continental Radio News Service in Washington, and the Radio News Association in Los Angeles. The most important one, however, was Transradio Press, started by the former head of CBS's news service, Herbert Moore.<sup>91</sup>

Print journalists, soon after the Biltmore agreement, found an enemy in Senator Clarence Dill, a co-author of the 1927 Radio Act and the more recent 1934 Communications Act, which established the Federal Communications Commission to oversee all the nation's communications, including broadcasting, telegraphy, and telephony. Dill attacked the agreement as one-sided, proposing an independent national wire service exclusively for radio, even offering to quit public office to run it himself. Newspapers had a monopoly over the flow of news, Dill said, and abused press freedom to the detriment of their readers; many broadcasters concurred. Before his radio wire service plan could get off the ground, however, the whole plan unraveled.<sup>92</sup>

The Biltmore Agreement simply imploded. Wire services that adhered to the plan lost out to new services like Transradio Press; they soon decided to sell their news for commercial sponsorship. In the midst of the Great Depression, some began to question why they opposed radio in the first place. A rift appeared along the same lines as before – AP members and non-radio newspapers on one side; UP, INS, and radio-affiliated newspapers on the other. Despite liberal modifications to the Press-Radio Bureau, which made the news more accessible, the Press-Radio Bureau's governing body refused to allow commercial sponsorship of its news. In April 1935 UP and INS left the bureau to

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<sup>91</sup> Chester, "The Press-Radio War: 1933-1935," 258-259; Jackaway, Media at War, 29-30.

<sup>92</sup> McChesney, Telecommunications, 194-199; Jackaway, Media at War, 29-30.

compete with the other services, selling news to newspapers and radio stations alike. The collapse of the agreement marked the final stage of the press-radio war.<sup>93</sup>

The nation's press had put up a united front against the encroachment of radio as an advertiser and news disseminator as long as it could. The agreement was too flawed and newspaper interests too diverse to succeed in holding back the development of radio newscasts. Instead of opposition, newspapers did what many radio proponents had long advocated – aligning with broadcast interests and acquiring stations of their own. In fact, from 1933 to 1938, newspaper-owned radio stations increased from about 80 to 211, an increase of over 160 percent, while the total number of stations went from about 635 to 750, an increase of eighteen percent. Many broadcasters had all along encouraged affiliation of radio by newspapers because they would then be sympathetic to its cause. After the press-radio agreement fell disintegrated, newspapers affiliated with radio stations faster than ever, attempting to shape the course of its growth and, if nothing else, share in its continued success.<sup>94</sup>

The relationship of New Orleans newspapers to radio was typical of the press-radio relationship nationally. Opinion fluctuated depending on which newspapers or wire services, and how many, were affiliated or not, in some way, with radio. The loss of revenue the newspapers perceived they suffered at the hands of the radio industry was an important motivating factor in their decisions. One factor, however, dictated the press decisions more than anything else – power.<sup>95</sup> Print journalists fought a war to retain their

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<sup>93</sup> Chester, "The Press-Radio War: 1933-1935," 262-264.

<sup>94</sup> Levin, Broadcast Regulation, 44-46; "Dailies Must Oppose Use Of Radio To Impair Democracy," *Editor and Publisher*, 30 April 1938, 18; Jackaway, Media at War, 31-33.

<sup>95</sup> Jackaway, Media at War, 154.

control over the flow of information. The actions taken by the nation's press – attacking the credibility of broadcast journalism, refusing to print program logs, suing stations for news pirating, and proposing broadcast reform legislation – all revolved around keeping that power. The tension between radio and newspapers in Louisiana was not lost on the Governor from 1928 to 1935, Huey P. Long.

## Chapter III

### *Grosjean v. American Press Company*

The press, it turns out, was justifiably worried about controlling the flow of information, because radio made it possible for anyone, particularly politicians, to bypass newspapers altogether. It so happened that the relationship between New Orleans newspapers and radio was most volatile at the same time that Louisiana's governor and soon-to-be-senator, Huey P. Long, was in a favorable position to manipulate that volatility.

From the beginning of Long's political career, he evoked strong feelings from both state residents and press. In July 1919, seven months after obtaining his first elected position, as Railroad Commissioner, the twenty-five-year-old political newcomer attacked two of the state's biggest targets – the Standard Oil Company and Governor Ruffin Pleasant – at a Democratic party rally. He reveled in the statewide attention he received from the press. Commenting on Long's speech that had depicted the governor as an "octopus" with its hands in many pockets, including Standard Oil, newspapers called the attack "vicious" and politicians called it "an outrage." Long acted on the belief he would demonstrate throughout his career that any publicity, whether good or bad, was beneficial.<sup>96</sup>

In 1920, Long, along with the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, supported John Parker for governor over Colonel Frank Stubbs, who recently returned from France after serving in World War I. Long and the *Times-Picayune* condemned Stubbs for his ties to

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<sup>96</sup> William Ivy Hair. *The Kingfish and His Realm: the Life and Times of Huey P. Long* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1991), 90-93; T. Harry Williams. *Huey Long* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 641.

the New Orleans “Old Regulars” – a political ring that controlled the politics and all the political jobs in New Orleans and many of those throughout the state – and praised Parker for his reform platform. Soon after Parker was elected in a landslide victory over the token Republican opponent, Long attacked him for “going soft” on the extraction industry, including timber salt, sulphur, gas, and oil.

Long was only loyal to a party or faction that could benefit him; if he felt his cause would be better served by attacking the reputation of an organization or politician, he never hesitated. Political allies and opponents were one and the same to Long, using each to his advantage as circumstance dictated. He proved this in 1923, when he announced his bid for governor, despite offering to support James Palmer, of Shreveport, who had defended Long, without fee, in a libel suit brought on by Governor Parker in 1921.<sup>97</sup>

In the 1924 governor’s race, Long did not have the support of even one daily newspaper, nor more than three of the state’s 120 weeklies. The last leg of his campaign, however, made Louisiana political history when, on 12 January 1924, his Saturday night rally at the Athenaeum in New Orleans was broadcast over WCAG (Only six months earlier, the station was abandoned by the New Orleans *States* and given to the amateur that had started it, Clyde R. Randall). An estimated eight thousand homes in the state had radio sets, the station’s owner said, and if half of them tuned in, with five listeners per set, Long had an audience of twenty thousand. This was the first radio address of Long’s career and the first by any Louisiana politician. He understood the new medium’s ability to reach large numbers of people over a long distance and quickly realized he could

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<sup>97</sup> Hair, Kingfish and His Realm, 119.

address the entire state over radio, no matter what the press said. In 1924, it is unlikely that Long addressed the rural poor families he appealed to for support – likely reaching mostly city dwelling, middle or upper class radio listeners – his use of radio became more frequent and effective. As radio became more common in rural areas, Long was able to influence the people for which his speeches were intended. His one-night radio appeal in 1924, however, failed to win him the Democratic primary.<sup>98</sup>

Long's loss was no surprise. The fact that he received as many votes as he did, though, was a surprise to many, especially since he was not endorsed by any established faction, and that some of the state's press denounced him. The *Times-Picayune* criticized Long's penchant for making farfetched accusations; the *Item* ridiculed Long in scathing political cartoons, calling him "The Prince of Piffle."<sup>99</sup>

Immediately after his loss in 1924, Long began to plan for the next election in 1928. Already having support from Protestant, North Louisiana, he needed some of the Catholic, South Louisiana vote. To that end he campaigned for the reelection of Senator Joseph Ransdell, a respected politician and devout Catholic from, ironically, North Louisiana. He also campaigned for the popular Catholic Senator Edward Broussard, touring the state and giving speeches alongside him. Long's efforts between his loss in 1924 and the governor's race in 1928 did much to increase his exposure and support.

Long knew the importance the state's press, especially in New Orleans, played in political elections. Therefore, after his defeat in the 1924 gubernatorial election, he allied himself with Louisiana press magnate, Colonel Robert Ewing. Long's reason was simply

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 136; Williams, *Huey Long*, 203.

<sup>99</sup> Williams, *Huey Long*, 198, 205-206.

that he wanted the support of Ewing's four newspapers – the New Orleans *States*, Shreveport *Times*, and two papers in Monroe. In all, he enjoyed the support of Ewing's papers as well as twenty other weeklies. Most of the state's other newspapers, however, opposed him, including many rural weeklies, the New Orleans *Item* and its morning edition, the *Tribune*, as well as the state's leading paper, the *Times-Picayune*. These papers ridiculed Long's cowardice, capitalizing on two instances when Long had quarreled with someone, hit them, and then run. One of the persons was a small-stature, one-legged legislator named Robert Proffit; the other, the fifty-nine-year-old, hefty former governor, J.Y. Sanders.<sup>100</sup>

In January 1928, *Time* magazine observed: "Louisiana elections are won and lost in the newspapers." This comment ignored the growth of radio sets in Louisiana homes and the increasing presence and power of radio stations in the state. In 1924, Long had gained the support of William K. Henderson, a wealthy Shreveport businessman who owned station KWKH.<sup>101</sup> Henderson gave Long much favorable publicity on his station in 1924 as well as in the 1928 election, and in August of that year, KWKH aired the soon-to-be-governor's political rally in Alexandria. Eight thousand people, including reporters from all over the state – filling the local high school's auditorium and spilling

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<sup>100</sup> Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 145, 156-157; Williams, *Huey Long*, 224.

<sup>101</sup> In the years from 1928 to 1932, KWKH was, by far, the most powerful station in Louisiana and surrounding states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia. In 1928, KWKH had 3,500 watts and was located in Kennonwood (it soon moved to nearby Shreveport). The second most powerful station in Louisiana was KSBA, which had 1,000 watts and was located in Shreveport. The most powerful station in New Orleans was WSMB, at only 750 watts, followed by WWL, with 500 watts, WDSU with 250 watts, WJBO (which moved to Baton Rouge in December 1934) with 100 watts, and three other stations with fifty watts or less. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Second Annual Report of the Federal Radio Commission: 1928*, (Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), Appendix E (2), 117-122. <http://www.fcc.gov/fcc-bin/assemble?docno=2810263>; also *The 1932 Radio Log*, "Compliments of Presto Face Cream" and distributed by D. Humbles Radio Service on Saratoga Street in New Orleans.



into the schoolyard outside – came to witness the animated speaker they had heard about for years.

Long’s campaign was extremely effective. The support he received from Ewing’s newspapers as well as the twenty weeklies, and the political connections he had gathered since 1924, had all been factors in his successful 1928 election. His exposure to thousands of people over the airwaves, as well as in person while making tours of the state was of major consequence. In person, Long’s animated speeches tended to attract rural followers while repelling many urbanites. He had yet to master the technique of speaking over radio – his voice became shrill when excited. Later, some people believed Long the best radio speaker in the country.<sup>102</sup>

The alliance between Colonel Ewing and Huey Long was short-lived. The Louisiana press magnate mistakenly assumed he would be able to control politics on a state level since he had helped Long become governor. Governor Long decided that the alliance was simply not worth the effort; despite support from the New Orleans *States* in the 1928 election, he still fared poorly in that city. The split and resulting animosity between the two became apparent in February 1929 when the *States* claimed that Long’s “feet are still off the ground and his head in the clouds. His delusions of grandeur and dictatorship continue.” Long nicknamed the walrus-mustached magnate “Colonel Bow-Wow,” and referred to him as such in private and in public.<sup>103</sup>

Events in late March proved the adversarial relationship between the governor and his followers and much of the state’s press. Long had warned Charles Manship –

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<sup>102</sup> Williams, *Huey Long*, 203.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 341; John Wilds, *Afternoon Story: A Century of the New Orleans States-Item* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1976), 232.

publisher of the two Baton Rouge papers, *State-Times* and *Morning Advocate* – to ease his negative editorials concerning a tax on Standard Oil, claiming he would publicly expose his brother, Douglas Manship, as a patient at a Jackson, Louisiana insane asylum. When the negative editorials continued, he made good on his threat by announcing on Shreveport station KWKH that Manship was printing lies and attacking him for no reason “and I am taking care of his brother in the insane asylum.” Manship’s reputation among members of the state press was highly regarded; many people were outraged. Long’s radio attack on Manship and increasing public denunciations of the newspapers that opposed him served to further alienate him from the state’s press. After allegations of bribery, corruption, vote rigging, and incompetence in office by members of the state legislature and by some members of the press, the Louisiana legislature approved impeachment charges against Long in late March.<sup>104</sup>

Those newspapers opposed to Long had grown to include the Manship papers, Ewing’s papers, all four New Orleans dailies, most of the state’s dailies, and a number of rural weeklies. Long’s attacks on certain newspaper publishers soon turned to blanket condemnation of the entire Louisiana press. In his defense, the governor went on a speaking tour throughout the state and over KWKH, as well as distributing circulars, claiming that Standard Oil “have covered their newspapers front, inside and out, with every imaginable lie and vilification.” An April 19 *Times-Picayune*, before impeachment proceedings were held, printed a statement from Long:

I don’t expect the newspapers to print a word of truth that they can keep from printing. I expect the newspapers to continue doing as they have done, which is, to print every kind of falsehood which they think will do any help to misrepresenting facts to the

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<sup>104</sup> Richard C. Cortner. *The Kingfish and the Constitution: Huey Long, the First Amendment, and the Emergence of Modern Press Freedom in America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 25-32.

people....Some of the newspapers today say that I claim to have fourteen senators; some say that I claim to have eighteen senators and some say that I claim to have over twenty senators. All of these statements are 100 per cent pure fabrications. I have made no statements of the kind....I am going before the people to tell them what the newspapers will not print. I do not even expect to see this in print, unless it is forged and misrepresented.

Long narrowly escaped impeachment – much to the amazement and disappointment of anti-Long forces, including nearly all of the daily press – after fifteen senators signed a “Round Robin,” pledging their votes against the charges.<sup>105</sup>

Long soon became convinced that the state’s press was not giving his policies enough positive exposure and publicity. The solution, he felt, was to start his own newspaper. On 27 March 1930, the first issue of the *Louisiana Progress* was issued. Its objective was to promote the issues and policies of Long and to attack the credibility of his opponents, especially the opposition press. The mission of the *Louisiana Progress*, he said in a speech over the radio, was to “stomp them flat.” Everyone knew who Long’s enemy was.<sup>106</sup>

Long’s assault on the state’s press took several forms. His increased use of radio, especially station KWKH, allowed him to speak to the people of the state directly, without the interference or help from the press. The *Louisiana Progress* was another vehicle for attacks against the press. In June, Long attacked the press further by introducing a bill into the legislature that created a fifteen percent tax on the advertising of newspapers and authorized injunctions against newspapers that were found to be defamatory and malicious. Had the bill passed, Long would have had almost complete

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 29; “Standard Oil Co. Blamed by Gov. Long for Trouble With State Legislature,” *Times-Picayune*, 29 March 1929, 17; “Paper Reports Are Falsehoods, Long Declares,” *Times-Picayune*, 19 April 1929.

<sup>106</sup> Cortner, *The Kingfish and the Constitution*, 35; Williams, *Huey Long*, 455-457; *Louisiana Progress*, 27 March 1930, 1.

control over the state's press. As it turns out, Long was unable to pass his anti-press bill, and the legislature adjourned on July 10 without passing a single piece of significant legislation.<sup>107</sup>

At the end of the legislative session in 1930, Long feared his grip on the state was waning. To achieve tighter control over Louisiana, he announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate on July 15. About a week before the senate election, Louisiana Attorney General Percy Saint opened an investigation in Baton Rouge of the state highway commission. He summoned Samuel Irby, the highway commission's chief chemist, as a witness. Irby was the uncle of Long's personal secretary and alleged mistress (and soon-to-be Secretary of State), Alice Lee Grosjean. Realizing the political damage that a charge of corruption in the state's highway program and an accusation of having an affair with his secretary would do, Long ordered the state police to arrest Samuel Irby and James Terrell, Grosjean's ex-husband. They were "arrested" at a Shreveport hotel and taken to separate secluded locations near the Gulf Coast. At the request of Attorney General Saint, U.S. District Judge Wayne Borah issued a writ of habeus corpus, demanding the governor to produce the two men. The sensational story did not go unnoticed by Long's opponents. Anti-Long politicians attacked the governor; New Orleans Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley characterized the abduction as "the most heinous public crime in the history of Louisiana," and Shreveport conservative Frank Looney described Long as "a destroyer of the peace and a traitor." The state's daily newspapers and some of the weeklies reported these events with gusto. The *Times-Picayune* editorialized:

Now comes the governor of Louisiana, in imitation of gangdom's methods, to order or

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<sup>107</sup> Cortner, *The Kingfish and the Constitution*, 43-44.

connive at the utterly lawless abduction of two citizens of Louisiana who have offended his erratic and autocratic majesty. So far as can be learned, no crime is or has been charged against them; no warrant issued by any court for their arrest, or search, or seizure, or imprisonment. Nevertheless they were forcibly seized by the governor's minions....They have been held captive in some secret hiding place in defiance of writs issued for their liberation and protection by the courts....You will vote at the polls next Tuesday...for or against the establishment of czarism and terrorism in Louisiana under a megalomaniac executive whose lawless excesses, abuses and tyrannies have amazed and astonished the nation and are bringing disgrace and black reproach upon Louisiana.<sup>108</sup>

The negative publicity so close to elections worried Long, however, his reaction demonstrated great political skill and ability to manipulate events. He came up with a plan to use both radio and press to his advantage and turn the situation against his enemies. On September 6, three days before elections, Long tipped off reporters that an important story would break on Sunday night, September 7, over the radio. He arranged for Sam Irby to “appear” at his room at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans, where the alleged kidnap victim would deny Long of any wrongdoing. With two reporters inside the hotel room and a throng of reporters outside the door, Irby read a statement into a microphone that was broadcast over New Orleans station WJBO (only 100 watts) and Shreveport station KWKH. In essence, Irby intimated that he went to Shreveport to entrap Long’s enemies. As payment for his testimony against the governor, he said, a few anti-Longites put \$2,500 under his Shreveport hotel pillow. When he found it, he staged a kidnapping and went to the Gulf Coast. Immediately after the statement, Long’s guards pushed reporters aside, rushed Irby down the Roosevelt hotel’s freight elevator, and sped across the Orleans Parish lines. If the “New Orleans Ring Police” caught him, Irby said,

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<sup>108</sup> “Czarism and Terrorism In Louisiana,” *Times-Picayune*, 7 September 1930, 1; “Ransdell Meeting Is Told Defeat of Long Will Save State Political Revolution,” *Times-Picayune*, 7 September 1930, 16; Williams, *Huey Long*, 470-474.

“there is no telling what they will do.” No mention, however, was ever made of James Terrell, the other kidnap victim.

Long’s plan was successful. Either people would believe Irby was working with Long, that Irby had been working against Long but came to his senses, or that he was lying about corruption in the highway commission from the very beginning. Long’s skill in using radio had improved. At the beginning of the broadcast, he told those listening in to call up their neighbors and notify them – a technique he used increasingly as his radio appearances grew. Long’s convincing theatrics were something that only radio could convey. A *Times-Picayune* article describes the beginning of the broadcast: “The governor, after denouncing the New Orleans police and the newspapers and remarking two or three times that he was waiting for the newspaper reporters, suddenly responded: ‘Here is an old friend of mine that you have been hearing so much about. Sam Irby, come here. Mr. Irby.’” Long then announced that the reporters had arrived (they had been waiting outside his hotel door) and said: “Bring the reporters in. Come in, gentlemen.”<sup>109</sup>

Long realized the differences between radio and newspaper. Radio allowed him to address the citizens of the state directly. His staged performance was very convincing, especially to his followers. Any doubts they may have had were allayed by the broadcast. There was a reasonable explanation of the disappearance of Irby and, of course, Long, by producing Irby, proved over the radio that he was innocent of any wrongdoing. The daily newspapers of the state pointed out the inconsistencies in Irby’s story and called attention to the fact that James Terrell was still missing; they also questioned whether the man

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<sup>109</sup> “Terrell Missing As ‘Sam Irby’ Reads Radio Statement,” *Times-Picayune*, 8 September 1930, 1,5; Williams, Huey Long, 475-477.

reading the statement in Long's room was really Irby at all. Long had orchestrated a terrible civil rights violation, the papers said, and he should not become U.S. Senator.

Despite their staunch opposition to Long, on 9 September 1930, he won the election with a clear majority over Joseph Ransdell, a man he had helped win senate reelection six years earlier. In addition, Long supporters Paul Maloney and Joe Fernandez were elected to Congress and John Overton elected to the Senate (six months later). After the election, Irby – who had been whisked out of sight after the radio statement – and Terrell appeared before District Judge Borah, seeking to have the charges against Long dropped; Borah had no other choice but to do so. Just thirty-seven years old, Long was governor of Louisiana and a U.S. Senator. His control of the state a few months earlier had been in doubt; in September 1930, it was stronger than ever.<sup>110</sup>

The New Orleans Old Regulars, including Mayor Walmsley, were surprised at Long's overwhelming victory. They were faced with a decision: either they could fight Long and risk getting cut off completely from state funds, city improvements, and patronage; or they could capitulate and accept generous rewards for supporting the newly-elected senator. Walmsley's close circle of supporters and advisers, the business and banking leaders of the city – one of whom was Finance Commissioner A. Miles Pratt who had only nights before given a speech condemning Long over stations WWL and WDSU – convinced him it was in everyone's best interest for the Old Regulars to support Long.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Williams, Huey Long, 477-481; Hair, The Kingfish and His Realm, 202-205.

<sup>111</sup> Williams, Huey Long, 481-483; "Pratt Reviews Long's Outrages Against Orleans: Commissioner Talks Over Radio In Behalf Of Senator Ransdell," Times-Picayune, 8 September 1930.

Not only did the 1930 U.S. Senate elections make Long a winner, it marked the coming-of-age of Louisiana radio stations as well. Many of the state's bigger stations benefited from the race between Long and Ransdell. Father Abell's unpublished book on WWL suggests this: "The Ransdell-Huey P Long Campaign was principally responsible for the gratifying 'billing' done during the month of August. The total billing for the month amounted to \$2,080.75, a really exceptionally good month for WWL – the best in its history." While WWL and other Louisiana stations benefited from the elections at the onset of the depression, the newspapers were losing out. Nationally, radio advertising expenditures went up fifty percent from 1929 to 1930; expenditures for newspapers fell thirteen percent. New Orleans newspapers in August 1929 had 3.1 million agate lines of advertising; in August 1930, 2.6 million – a decrease of sixteen percent. The 1930 elections were the beginning of a rapid breakdown in New Orleans press-radio relations.<sup>112</sup>

The relationship between Long and Loyola University's WWL did not stop after his election to the Senate. In fact, realizing he would now have power on a national level and in order to win his favor, Loyola awarded Long with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in February 1931. WWL, which shared its channel with KWKH, wanted Long to exert his authority and convince the Federal Radio Commission to change the Shreveport station's frequency, giving WWL a clear-channel. Since 1924, W.K. Henderson had given Long considerable time over KWKH; however, their relationship was beginning to cool. Long had found a new and respected station – he rewarded it by continuing to buy

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<sup>112</sup> Father Orie Abell, "A Brief History of Radio Station WWL: 1902-1932," (Unpublished manuscript, Loyola University, 1937); Charnley, *News By Radio*, 10; "Newspaper Linage, 23 Chief Cities, 1926-1934," *Editor and Publisher*, 26 January 1935, 120-121.



airtime over WWL through 1931 and 1932. In addition, in late-1932, WWL's studios moved to the Roosevelt Hotel, where Long had a permanent room and resided while in New Orleans. The studio could not have been more accessible to him.<sup>113</sup>

At the same time that Long received his honorary degree and switched his loyalties from KWKH to WWL, the *States* entered into an agreement whereby it broadcast two fifteen-minute news segments over WWL. Because of the antagonistic relationship between the newspaper and senator, it was inevitable that one of the two parted ways with the university station. In fact, by July 1932, the *States* had discontinued its news segments; after September 1933, WWL distanced itself from Long as well.

Besides the *States*, the *Item* was another New Orleans newspaper that had an affiliation with a radio station. Unlike the *States*' relationship with WWL, however, the *Item* had an established relationship with WSMB dating back to 1925. The newspaper – thanks to publisher James Thomson and political editor Marshall Ballard – had a reputation for being the most vociferous opponent of the Long regime. In 1931; however, it was in the unenviable position of being the least profitable newspaper (save for its morning newspaper, the *Tribune*) in a city overwhelmed by the Great Depression. At the insistence of Thomson and over the strenuous objections by Marshall, the *Item* did an about-face. Late 1931, the *Item* declared its support for Long's handpicked successor, Oscar K. Allen, hoping its new position would help boost circulation. The rewards soon came when the *Louisiana Progress* was scrapped in favor of the *Item* – Long's new official newspaper. Louisiana state employees and New Orleans city employees subscribed to the *Item*, whether they wanted to or not, and had the subscriptions deducted

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<sup>113</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise In Radio*, 135-141; Williams, *Huey Long*, 489-491.

from their salaries. It was alleged that New Orleans policemen would pull over drivers and solicit subscriptions to the *Item* and *Tribune*. Thomson's plan temporarily increased profitability; however, after the *Item* broke with Long in spring 1933, its reputation, particularly in the eyes of the employees forced to subscribe, never fully recovered.<sup>114</sup>

The election of Long to the U.S. Senate and worsening depression in New Orleans forced many new, and somewhat odd, alliances: Long and the Old Regulars, Long and WWL, Long and the *Item*, the *States* and WWL. In June 1932, another odd alliance was formed – among the New Orleans newspapers. The arrangement was peculiar for several reasons: the *Item* (and *Tribune*) was pro-Long while the *States* and *Times-Picayune* were still bitterly opposed to him; after the *States* severed ties with WWL, the *Item* still provided news to WSMB; all four newspapers were involved in a circulation war.

There were also several reasons why the city's newspapers felt an obligation to start and sustain a radio log blackout. Certainly, the *States* and *Times-Picayune* felt obliged to attack radio stations that broadcast Long's tirades against the press. In addition, all four newspapers felt the impact of the depression, made much worse by the competition of the city's radio stations.

The alliances Long had formed since his senate election were important to his consolidation of power in the state. That it also afforded him the use and support of WWL and the *Item* was an unexpected bonus. When the animosity of the New Orleans press against radio stations led to a radio log blackout, Long likely considered it little more than a diversion. When the *Item* broke with Long in mid-1933, Long simply revived

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<sup>114</sup> Wilds, *Afternoon Story*, 234-237; Williams, *Huey Long*, 534-535.

his old newspaper, calling it the *American Progress* to reflect his national political ambitions.

The fact that a politician with state or national ambitions had his own newspaper was not unusual: in Mississippi, Theodore Bilbo had his *Free Lance*; in Oklahoma, William Murray had the *Blue Valley Farmer*; in Texas, James Ferguson owned the *Ferguson Forum*, and in Wisconsin, Senator Robert La Follette had *La Follette's Progressive*. In March 1933, however, Long took the unprecedented step of buying time from NBC to address the nation. Senators as well as state politicians had used radio before, but only addressed their local constituencies. By speaking over a national chain, Long was putting himself on a level with the president; a move that caught President Franklin Roosevelt's attention.

In fact, the content of Long's first national broadcast on 17 March 1933, while favorable to Roosevelt, was mostly favorable to Long himself. His brief, fact-heavy speech urged the people of the nation to let President Roosevelt know that they supported Senator Huey Long's bills for redistribution of wealth. Many listeners, expecting something different, were surprised at Long's well-planned, well-thought-out, and well-delivered broadcast.<sup>115</sup>

At the beginning of the Roosevelt administration, the relationship between the two politicians was amicable; they both benefited from the support of each other. Long knew; however, that in order to realize his ambition to become president, he had to break with Roosevelt. In his national broadcast on April 24, Long was openly critical of the

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<sup>115</sup> Williams, Huey Long, 455-456, 629-630.

Roosevelt administration. The president privately recognized Long as one of the two most dangerous men in America (the other was General Douglas MacArthur).<sup>116</sup>

Recognizing the powerful ally Long had in radio, the president attempted to limit its use by the senator. Amid the clear-channel battle between WWL and KWKH, Roosevelt informed the Democrats in the FRC that a decision in favor of a Long-aligned radio station would be detrimental to the administration and, consequently, their jobs. The FRC, after recommending WWL (recently increased to 10,000 watts) for clear-channel full-time, reversed its decision in September 1933 in favor of KWKH (also 10,000 watts). In response, WWL protested and initiated a “no politics” policy, not allowing any further political speeches or advertising. WWL was adamant that it was in no way dominated or allied with Long. In the end, WWL’s protestations worked, in part because Roosevelt, in light of KWKH owner’s anti-Catholic on-air remarks, did not want to give the impression of an anti-Catholic administration. Long, meanwhile, simply switched his radio usage from the powerful clear-channel WWL, to WDSU, which had a power of only 1,000 watts and no clear channel.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to losing the use of WWL, in itself not significant, Long suffered a number of setbacks and embarrassments around the same time. On 27 August 1933, Long was punched by an unknown assailant for an unknown reason in the bathroom of the Sands Point, Long Island, Bath Club. Rumors circulated as to the assailant and why he hit Long. Capitalizing on Long’s weaknesses and hoping to gain Roosevelt’s favor, the Old Regulars in New Orleans announced its break with the senator in September 1933. In

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 630-634.

<sup>117</sup> Pusateri, *Enterprise In Radio*, 144-150.

January 1934, the Old Regulars stole the New Orleans elections away from the Longites – with the election of Mayor Walmsley and his ticket – as well as gained patronage from the Roosevelt administration. Long’s Louisiana speaking tour to boost his popularity and gain support for his new tax bill had met with resistance and disappointment as well – booing, jeering, and/or threats of physical violence occurred almost everywhere. In addition, Long’s official newspaper, the *Item*, that had allied with him only a year-and-a-half before, turned against him once again. Many thought that Long’s political career was over.<sup>118</sup>

A side effect of the setback to his reputation and prestige soon was in evidence: Long made but one nationally broadcast speech over a radio chain between May 1933 and January 1935. In early 1934, Long decided it was time to begin national publicity for his ambitious and, it turns out, popular wealth redistribution societies. On 23 February 1934, Senator Long received half-an-hour of free broadcast time from NBC, using most of the time to familiarize the nation with his effort to redistribute the nation’s wealth and inform them of his Share Our Wealth Society. In so doing, he was putting pressure on the Roosevelt administration. Long’s speech begged the question: Was Roosevelt going to fulfill his campaign promise of helping those in need, or should the nation vote someone into the White House in 1936 that would?<sup>119</sup>

In Louisiana, despite having lost New Orleans to the Old Regulars, Long still managed to control the legislature. In May and June 1934, Long’s behind-the-scenes work in the Louisiana Legislature’s regular session – cajoling, threatening, or bribing –

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<sup>118</sup> Hair, *Kingfish and His Realm*, 257-265; Williams, *Huey Long*, 648-675.

<sup>119</sup> Ernest Gordon Bormann, “A Rhetorical Analysis of the National Radio Broadcasts of Senator Huey P. Long” (Ph.D. diss., Iowa State University, 1953), 53-58; Hair, *Kingfish and His Realm*, 269.

was responsible for his grip, now tighter than ever, on the state. In mid-1934, the Senate investigation into Louisiana Senator John Overton's election, essentially an investigation to attack Long, found nothing amiss. Despite prophecies from different political commentators, Long's career was not over and, indeed, he had not yet reached the height of his national popularity.

Senator Long's quest for control of his state did not stop with the Louisiana Legislature. In July 1934, he finally acted on his threat against the Louisiana newspapers that opposed him. Because of the urban dailies' opposition to Long's new state tax proposals, he instructed his followers to pass a bill in the legislative regular session that would tax newspapers with a weekly circulation of over 20,000. The press, of course, had seen it coming: Long had attempted to pass a similar law five years earlier with out success, and his national newspaper, the *American Progress*, had hinted at a newspaper tax almost since its inception in August 1933.<sup>120</sup>

Much of the Louisiana press denounced the tax, taking advantage of the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday to discuss freedom of the press. The *Item* editorialized that a two percent tax was just the beginning: "If newspapers can be taxed two percent of their gross earnings, they can be taxed ten, fifteen, or twenty-five percent of their gross earnings....they can be taxed entirely out of business." The *Times-Picayune* said that the "direct and venomous attack upon America's prized and traditional guaranty of freedom of the press has had no parallel or precedent anywhere nor at any time in this nation's history." Charles

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<sup>120</sup> Cortner, *The Kingfish and the Constitution*, 67-79.

Manship's *Morning Advocate* proclaimed that "the guarantee of a free press, written in the Constitution of the United States, and traditional in American life, is at an end."<sup>121</sup>

The original bill only targeted newspapers in Shreveport and New Orleans, since they were the most vociferous in their opposition to Long. In order for the bill to stand up in court, however, Long widened its scope to include all newspapers in Louisiana with a weekly circulation of over 20,000. In addition to taxing six newspapers in Shreveport and New Orleans, it now included seven others (totaling thirteen). Long admitted his real reason for the tax in a circular, placed on the desk of each member of the Legislature in the 1934 Regular Session, by Governor Oscar K. Allen and Senator Huey P. Long:

The lying newspapers are continuing a vicious campaign against giving the people a free right to vote. We managed to take care of that element here last week. A tax of 2% on what newspapers take in was placed upon them. That will help their lying some. Up to this time they have never paid any license to do business like everybody else does. It is a system that these big Louisiana newspapers tell a lie every time they make a dollar. This tax should be called a tax on lying, 2c a lie.

One paper among the thirteen, the *Lake Charles American Press*, was not particularly opposed to the Long regime. In fact, its articles and editorials were free of political opinion. Long expressed public sympathy, in a September 1934 speech in Calcasieu Parish, that he could not somehow save this neutral paper from the tax: "There was only one newspaper in the state that had not joined up with the gang opposing me and that was the *Lake Charles American Press*. Well, we tried to find a way to exempt the *Lake Charles American Press* from the advertising tax, but did not think we could do it, but we would have done it if we could."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81; *New Orleans Item*, 4 July 1934, 1; *Times-Picayune*, 4 July 1934, 6; *Morning Advocate*, 4 July 1934, 4.

<sup>122</sup> *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936), 42-43.

The targeted newspapers and their lawyers, at the request of Charles Manship, met in order to discuss an effective legal strategy. John Tucker was counsel for the north Louisiana newspapers, including Ewing newspapers (Colonel Robert Ewing died in mid-1931, leaving his sons in charge) *Shreveport Times*, *Monroe News-Star*, and *Monroe Morning World* (consisting of the Star-World Publishing Company and the Times Publishing Company), as well as the publisher of the *Shreveport Journal* (Journal Publishing Company). Counsel for the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (McCormick and Company) was S.G. Thornton; for the *Lafayette Daily Advertiser* (Lafayette Advertiser Gazette), J.J. Davidson; for the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* and *State-Times* (Capital City Press), Ben B. Taylor; for the *Lake Charles American Press* (American Press Company), Clement M. Moss; for the *Item* and *Tribune* (Item Company), Eberhard P. Deutsch; and for the *Times-Picayune* and *States* (Times-Picayune Publishing Company), Esmond Phelps. An able lawyer and influential leading member of the local and state bar, Phelps not only had a financial interest in the *Times-Picayune*, but was also fiercely opposed to Long. General counsel to the American Newspaper Publishers Association, Elisha Hanson, argued the case on behalf of the Louisiana newspapers in the Supreme Court as well.<sup>123</sup>

On 20 September 1934, the nine publishing companies filed a temporary restraining order prohibiting the Supervisor of Public Accounts, Alice Grosjean, from collecting the tax. In addition, they urged the creation of a three-judge court to hear arguments and consider issuing a permanent injunction against collection of the disputed

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<sup>123</sup> Cortner, *Kingfish and the Constitution*, 99-100; *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936), 1-3; Williams, *Huey Long*, 388; Louis B. Claverie, "History of Phelps Dunbar," (Unpublished Manuscript), 105, 125-126. Many thanks to Philip deV. Claverie, partner at Phelps Dunbar in New Orleans, for providing this interesting and unique history of the firm.



tax. The newspapers had several reasons for picking the three-judge court. First, custom dictated that the court would consist of three federal judges from the state in which the petition was filed, thus making the chances of a Long-influenced court highly unlikely. Second, decisions of the three-judge district courts were appealable directly to the U.S. Supreme Court, thus bypassing the normal route to the High Court through the U.S. courts of appeals. U.S. District Judge Wayne Borah, the same judge that issued a writ of habeas corpus to Long in the Irby-Terrell kidnapping incident, issued a temporary restraining order until a trial could be held.<sup>124</sup>

The name of the case as it went before the three-judge district court, *American Press Company v. Grosjean*, reflects several important ironies. The publisher of the *Lake Charles American Press*, American Press Company, became the lead plaintiff in the case simply because it was alphabetically first on the list of publishers involved in the suit; before the tax passed in 1934, the newspaper had never opposed Longism. In addition, Long had O.K. Allen appoint Grosjean to Supervisor of Public Accounts, after her interim appointment as Louisiana Secretary of State ended in May 1932, because she was a loyal follower. It is highly ironic that Grosjean became the appellant in an important and well-publicized Supreme Court case, considering she preferred her “politics from the sidelines,” and Long, after entering national politics as a senator, tried to limit press exposure to their relationship.<sup>125</sup>

On November 23, the three judges, Judge Rufus Foster of the U.S. Court of Appeals, and Judges Wayne Borah and Ben Dawkins of the district courts, convened in

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<sup>124</sup> *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936); Cortner, *Kingfish and the Constitution*, 112-116.

<sup>125</sup> Cortner, *Kingfish and the Constitution*, 113-114; Hair, *Kingfish and His Realm*, 232-233; Williams, *Huey Long*, 488-489.

New Orleans to hear the case. Although all seven lawyers were present, only Phelps and Deutsch argued before the court. After establishing that the federal court did indeed, have jurisdiction over the case, the newspapers began their argument against the tax. First, newspaper counsel argued that the tax – Act 23 of the 1934 Louisiana legislature regular session – denied the newspapers equal protection of the law. That is, of the approximately 163 publications in Louisiana selling advertising, 120 of which were weekly newspapers, only thirteen fell under the tax, thus violating the provisions of Section One of the Fourteenth Amendment. and the provisions of Section Eight of Article X of the 1921 Louisiana Constitution. The tax discriminated against certain media, including newspapers and moving pictures (movies were included in the tax as well), the lawyers for the newspapers said, because it exempted other advertising media, such as radio broadcast advertising, outdoor advertising, and street car card advertising.<sup>126</sup>

Special assistant to the Attorney General, New Orleans attorney and longtime friend of Long, Charles Rivet (State Attorney General Gaston Porterie was unable to attend because of his son's death), argued that there were substantial differences between the urban daily papers that fell under the tax and the rural weekly papers that did not. The state submitted affidavits from ten different weekly newspaper publishers, comparing the operations of a small rural weekly and a big urban daily. The smaller papers rarely received national advertising, whereas the big papers primarily carried advertising from national companies. In addition, many small weeklies operated on a shoestring budget and staff, with the owners themselves doing most of the work. Big dailies, in contrast,

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<sup>126</sup> Appellees' Brief, *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936), 1-3, 20-25.

had large staffs and drew from tremendous resources. The differences between the two were fundamental and, as such, the tax was justifiable, state counsel argued.<sup>127</sup>

The newspaper counsel also argued, at the insistence of Eberhard Deutsch, that the tax was an abridgement of the freedom of the press for several reasons. First, “The constitutional guaranties against abridgement of freedom of the press were intended to prohibit every form of abridgement conceivable in the minds of hostile legislatures.” Second, “The power to tax the press is the power to destroy it – such power cannot be exercised by a legislature in violation of the constitutional prohibitions.” Third, “The power to license the press is the power to regulate it, or to destroy it. Such power abridges the constitutional guaranties of a free press.” Fourth, “The attempt by the legislature to levy a tax solely by reference to the volume of circulation abridges the freedom of the press.” Essentially, Deutsch argued that taxation was used to suppress free speech as early as the reign of King Henry VIII (1509-1547). By taxing the thirteen newspapers – all but one had voiced opposition to Longism – the Long-dominated legislature was attempting to control the newspapers and punish those that did not conform to his wishes. In defense, the state counsel argued:

It is not essential to liberty of speech and freedom of the press, as constitutionally understood, that profit be derived from the exercise of these rights. Nor was it ever contemplated that the constitutional guarantee should extend to charging for and selling advertising...In fact, the constitutional guarantee is limited to the right of the citizen to speak and publish his views, subject to punishment for the abuse of that privilege. Liberty of speech and of the press is not an absolute right.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Brief for Appellant, 47-59; *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936), 61-91.

<sup>128</sup> Appellees’ Brief, 25-36; Brief for Appellant, 41-47.

Four months after hearing the case, on 22 May 1935, the court announced its decision in an opinion by Judge Borah. Borah affirmed the plaintiffs belief that the federal court had jurisdiction, dismissing the state's objections without explication. As to the plaintiffs claims of discrimination, Borah said:

We think that Act 23 of 1934 not only violates the Constitution of this State, but that it is also violative of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States in that it does not represent a legitimate exertion of the power of classification, is purely arbitrary and denies the equal protection of the laws to those against whom it discriminates...If the State, upon the same classification which it is seeking to uphold, had reversed the process and taxed the country journals and exempted the metropolitan newspapers the inequality probably would be readily conceded, but the constitutional infirmity, though more strikingly apparent, would have been the same.

The most important argument advanced by the newspapers, that the tax was an abridgement to the freedom of the press, was largely ignored. Borah's opinion simply acknowledged that the newspapers had attacked the tax on those grounds. The court's opinion, while a judgment against the tax, was not wholly a victory for the newspapers. Because the court ruled in favor of the newspapers based solely on the discrimination argument, the state legislature could change the tax to conform to the constitution. It might be possible for the legislature to lawfully pass a tax against all Louisiana publications. The court's disregard of the freedom of the press issue, although assuredly calculated, meant that the Louisiana newspapers' battle over the tax was not over. On April 8, the court issued a permanent injunction against the State Supervisor of Public Accounts prohibiting collection of the tax.<sup>129</sup>

Despite criticism from the national press for his "tax on lying" passed in July 1934, Long's popularity continued to grow. Since his February 1934 national broadcast

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<sup>129</sup> *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936), 93-99; Cortner, Kingfish and the Constitution, 141-145.

over NBC, his Share Our Wealth (SOW) Clubs grew rapidly. Not until the beginning of 1935, though, did his national popularity surge. By April 1935, Long received an average of 60,000 letters a week and claimed to have had at least 4.5 million members in 27,431 clubs; all this thanks in substantial part to radio. Radio not only gave him free publicity for his Share Our Wealth Clubs, but also for himself, an invaluable and powerful tool for a senator with presidential aspirations. The medium was effective because, by 1935, it was both universal and affordable. The price of radios had dropped enough so that even most poor families, Long's target audience, could afford to buy or make one.<sup>130</sup>

In the first seven months of 1935, Long made eight nationally broadcast speeches – an exceptional feat. Other senators at the time were lucky to have an hour a year; Long was able to make three in a matter of two weeks. That he did not pay for even one of those eight broadcasts made it even more exceptional. How did Long, who suffered several setbacks in 1933 and who, from May 1933 to December 1934, made only one national broadcast, turn his political career around, start a nationally-run club with millions of members, and make eight national broadcasts in seven months? One reason is that Long was popular. He had been a popular drawing card in the Senate, often attracting hundreds of visitors to observe his unorthodox speeches, featuring Louisiana anecdotes and Bible verses, all while nervously pacing about. Huey Long was news. People wanted to hear him, so the networks, in particular NBC, obliged. Long was able to get so much time in part because the networks had considerable unsponsored air-time. The networks often allowed senators or the president to speak as a public service, helping the networks to fulfill their FCC obligation to the “public interest, convenience, and necessity.”

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<sup>130</sup> Williams, Huey Long, 700-701.

The networks also allowed Long unprecedented amounts of air-time to allay fears that radio was censored. What better way to prove the freedom of the airwaves than to give a radical senator, one that publicly opposed the Roosevelt administration, time on the air? Radio executives not only had to worry about the broadcast reform movement, including church groups, labor unions, academia, and members of the press, but also politicians. The networks also gave Long nearly as much time as he wanted because they did not want him to raise the issue of radio censorship in the Senate. Long's license tax on the press in Louisiana gave the networks even more of an incentive – after all, freedom of the press was the American way. If Long were able to attack the Louisiana press so openly, what might he do to the radio industry?<sup>131</sup>

Radio networks had the means to defend themselves if necessary. Individual Louisiana radio stations, however, were in a more vulnerable position. Between his February 1934 national broadcast and his assassination in September 1935, Long spoke more frequently on stations throughout Louisiana. Whereas his time was somewhat limited on a national broadcast, usually around an hour or less, his local radio broadcasts sometimes lasted for hours at a time – one of his broadcasts allegedly went on for five hours. Long never had to force local radio stations to give him time (although he certainly was known to buy time on the air, the majority of air-time he used was given to him) because most readily acknowledged the favorable impact his speeches had on their listenership. Most stations Long used for his speeches profited from them, including WWL, KWKH, and WDSU. Long profited from the broadcasts as well. They gave him a chance to speak to thousands of people about topics he thought were important. In

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<sup>131</sup> Bormann, "Radio Broadcasts of Huey Long," 60-64.

addition, radio allowed Long to bypass the opposition press. This became invaluable once his “tax on lying” turned the press-Long relationship from bad to irreconcilable. Long demonstrated radio’s ability to bypass the press many times. One instance was Long’s urging, on several occasions over KWKH in September 1931, for other southern states to adopt Louisiana’s no-cotton plan. Another instance occurred in September 1934 when Long conducted a hearing on charges of graft in the New Orleans police department and city government; the public and press were barred from entering but the entire inquiry was broadcast on WDSU.<sup>132</sup>

Not only was Long’s popularity at its height in 1935, but also his power. Since the summer of the year before, he had slowly intensified control over his political machine in Louisiana. Much of the local and state jobs, legislation, taxes, school boards, police and fire departments, and distribution of federal funds were controlled by Long. Those opposed to him grew increasingly desperate. In East Baton Rouge Parish, an anti-Long club, known as the Square Deal Association, openly talked of armed revolt and assassination. Martial law was declared when one hundred armed Square Dealers gathered at the Baton Rouge airport. They quickly surrendered under tear gas assault from five hundred Louisiana National Guardsmen. In April 1935, before the Louisiana legislature passed a bill that put the task of counting votes in the hands of Long, legislator Mason Spencer prophesied that “if you ride this thing through, you will travel with the white horse of death.” Spencer’s prophesy turned out to be correct. On the evening of 5 September 1935, Long made a three-hour speech over WDSU, attacking the Roosevelt

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-103; “Long Bars Press, Public At Hearing, Testimony On Vice Heard By Probers,” *New Orleans States*, 1 September 1934; “City Probe Opens Today; Press, Public Reported Barred,” *Times-Picayune*, 1 September 1934; “Long Urges Cotton Plan Over Radio,” *Morning Advocate*, 3 September 1934.

administration and the New Deal. Only three days later, on the evening of September 8, Dr. Carl Weiss, Jr., shot Long in the marble-floored corridor of the state capitol. As Long ran down the corridor, his bodyguards shot numerous rounds into Weiss' body. The assassin's funeral, "the largest of any assassin in American history," was held the next day while Long lingered at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital. He died on September 10. Long's funeral two days later was, appropriately, the most lavish possible.<sup>133</sup>

The untimely death of Louisiana's most powerful and controversial public figure was the fault of the Louisiana opposition press, the *American Progress* asserted. Those newspapers opposed to Long were responsible for his assassination because they convinced Dr. Weiss that Long was a dictator and tyrant. "Of all the forces that conspired, incited, and urged the removal of Huey P. Long from politics in Louisiana there is none whose hands are so stained with his blood as the daily newspapers of Louisiana," the *American Progress* editorialized.<sup>134</sup>

Despite the death of Long, his machine and the laws that went with it lived on. In January 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments for *Grosjean v. American Press Co.* This was the court of last resort for Long's bill, and although he was not alive, the regime he had put in place was still in charge and the newspapers were still very much opposed to the tax. The same strategy and arguments, essentially, were repeated as had been presented to the three-judge court. The newspapers argued that the tax discriminated against thirteen of a total 163 advertising publications in Louisiana. It also abridged the

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<sup>133</sup> Cortner, *Kingfish and the Constitution*, 150-156; Hair, *Kingfish and His Realm*, 314-326.

<sup>134</sup> *American Progress*, 24 October 1935, 3.



freedom of the press and was intended for use by the Long-regime as a club to beat the newspapers into submission.

The unanimous opinion of the court was delivered by Justice George Sutherland on 10 February 1936 in favor of the appellees. Sutherland wrote:

The tax here involved is bad not because it takes money from the pockets of the appellees. If that were all, a wholly different question would be presented. It is bad because, in the light of its history and of its present setting, it is seen to be a deliberate and calculated device in the guise of a tax to limit the circulation of information to which the public is entitled in virtue of the constitutional guaranties. A free press stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people. To allow it to be fettered is to fetter ourselves.

The court declared that the tax was unconstitutional under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as a form of prior restraint that abridged freedom of the press.

Having decided on the basis of due process, Sutherland did not feel it necessary to consider how the tax violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>135</sup>

*Grosjean v. American Press Co.* is a landmark case for several reasons. First, the license tax the newspapers had opposed was the only piece of Long legislation to go to the Supreme Court. When the court rules nine to zero, the decision is not likely to be revisited. Second, the court went beyond the narrow conception of freedom of the press as something only protected from prior restraint. Any law that attempts to limit or control the content of a newspaper is an abridgement of the freedom of the press. It is ironic that the very amendment which Louisiana so opposed during its days of Reconstruction after the Civil War – the Fourteenth Amendment – was the very amendment that protected its press in 1936 from political domination.

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<sup>135</sup> *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, 297 U.S. 233 (1936).

From *Grosjean v. American Press Co.*, we can conclude several things. First, despite the differing interpretations of T. Harry Williams' Huey Long and Alan Brinkley's Voices of Protest, as to why Long had no ambitions of becoming a dictator, *Grosjean* suggests that Long, by 1934, did intend to destroy freedom of the press. Although Long did speak for many dispossessed, his machine resembled a dictatorship, including what he had hoped to be a controlled press. Any balanced appraisal of Long must necessarily include *Grosjean*. Second, the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court against the newspaper tax suggests what might have happened had Long tried to take his strong-arm tactics to the national level.

The political career of Huey P. Long necessarily incorporated two mass mediums of communication – radio and newspaper. His rise to power, incidentally, coincided with the advent of the new medium and its subsequent clash with the older, established medium. Long was in a favorable position, both as Governor of Louisiana and then Senator, to use both to his advantage. An effective political leader in his time could do no less. *Grosjean v. American Press Co.* was not merely a fight against a tax, nor was it a fight of good versus bad. For the newspapers, it represented an attack on a fundamental right – freedom of speech and freedom of the press. For Long, it represented his political ambition and his fight for power that he equated, in some way, with the fight of the dispossessed against the rich. By the time of the *Grosjean* decision, the press-radio war was essentially over, Huey Long was dead, and the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that no state could use its power to tax to censor the frank expression of ideas.

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### Expert Tells Readers Of States How To Build Radio Receiver

**Detailed Instructions Given As To Material Needs**

**BY FRANK J. CARROLL**

The first step in building a radio receiver is to select the material. It is essential to have a good quality of material for the coils and the tuning fork. The material for the coils should be a good quality of wire, and the material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel. The material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel, and the material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel.

It is also essential to have a good quality of material for the tuning fork. The material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel, and the material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel.

It is also essential to have a good quality of material for the tuning fork. The material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel, and the material for the tuning fork should be a good quality of steel.

Fig 1  
TUNING FORK

Fig 2  
COIL

Fig 3  
TUNING FORK

Fig 4  
COMPLETE WIRING DIAGRAM OF THE SET DESCRIBED IN THIS ARTICLE

Fig 6  
SUGGESTED WAY TO INSTALL COMPLETELY WIRING SET

### ALABAMA TO HAVE CHART RADIO SETS

ALABAMA TO HAVE CHART RADIO SETS

ALABAMA TO HAVE CHART RADIO SETS

### States Radio News

Edited by Hubert de Ben

States Radio News

Edited by Hubert de Ben

### IN NO. O. MUSIC CIRCLES

IN NO. O. MUSIC CIRCLES

IN NO. O. MUSIC CIRCLES

### A Matter of Economy

THE MARTINIQUE

IS GOOD TO APPROXIMATE REDUCE SKIN

THE MARTINIQUE

### The Marvel of the Radio

Made Possible for You

Rose Radio Supply Co.

Illustration 1: Typical instructions and diagram for building a radio receiving set in the States. The Rose Radio Supply Company advertisement is prominently displayed in the lower right (New Orleans States, 7 May 1922).

ALL of the Radio News, both local and international, is to be found each day in The ITEM and TRIBUNE.

# The Item-Tribune

SPECIAL service section published in both breakfasting station WSMB and wishing them every success.

NEW ORLEANS, LA., APRIL 19, 1925

## CITY WELCOMES BROADCASTER WSMB

### BENEFITS COME FROM STATION

By Orleans in General to Feel Effect of WSMB

### DEMINES PROFITS WITH ADVERTISEMENTS

Owned and Broadcasted Will Advise City to All

### BY THE RADIO POSITION

They are the station of radio... the station of radio... the station of radio...

### FROM NOTHING TO ENORMOUS

Broadcasting Started At Pivotal Three Years Ago

It looks now that they have been... broadcasting has been started...

### YOUTH BETTER THAN DAD HERE

Thirteen-Year-Old Son Advances Father's Radio

NEW YORK, April 19.—A youth... thirteen-year-old son...

### WANT HAVE CARDS FOR VISITING WSMB

Special Hours to Be Set for the Station's Visitors

### VERY THIRD HOME THERE HAS A RADIO

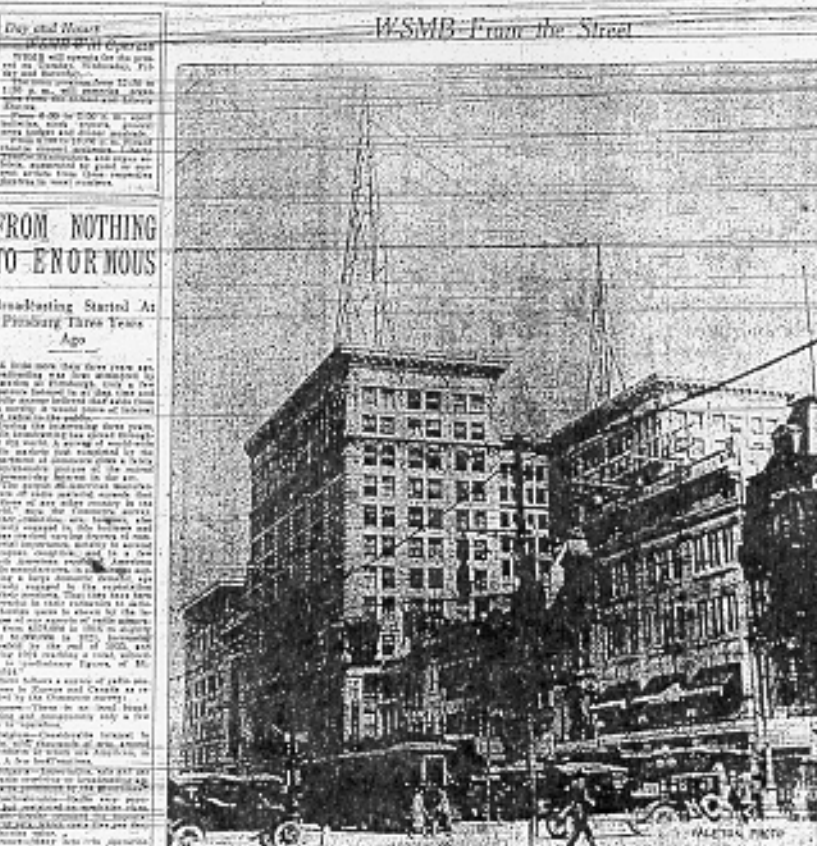
In Division the number of radio... very third home...

### RELAXAS SUPER SOAP IS SOLUTION

What Official Says New Soap... Relaxas Super Soap...

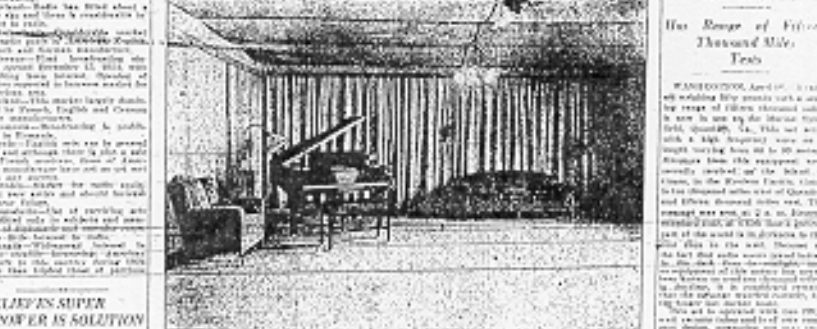
### WASH. Official Says New Soap

WASH. Official Says New Soap... Wash. Official Says...



View across the bridge with towers from the corner of Canal at Common street, and back from the Maison Blanche building at Canal and Iberville. There towers are pointed a silver color and will open light on their lights are placed on their roof at night.

### Radio Station WSMB Studio



This was the very first control room of the station. The studio has since expanded to fill the entire floor of the station. The equipment shown here is the original equipment used in the first broadcasts.

### SOUTH'S GREATEST STATION WILL BROADCAST INAUGURAL PROGRAM TUESDAY AT 9 P. M.

Such Entertainment Arranged for Opening of WSMB

### PLANT DEDICATED TO NEW ORLEANS

Southern-Nation Band Make Gift to the City

### YOUTH BETTER THAN DAD HERE

Thirteen-Year-Old Son Advances Father's Radio

### WANT HAVE CARDS FOR VISITING WSMB

### VERY THIRD HOME THERE HAS A RADIO

### RELAXAS SUPER SOAP IS SOLUTION

### WASH. Official Says New Soap

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### WASH. Official Says New Soap

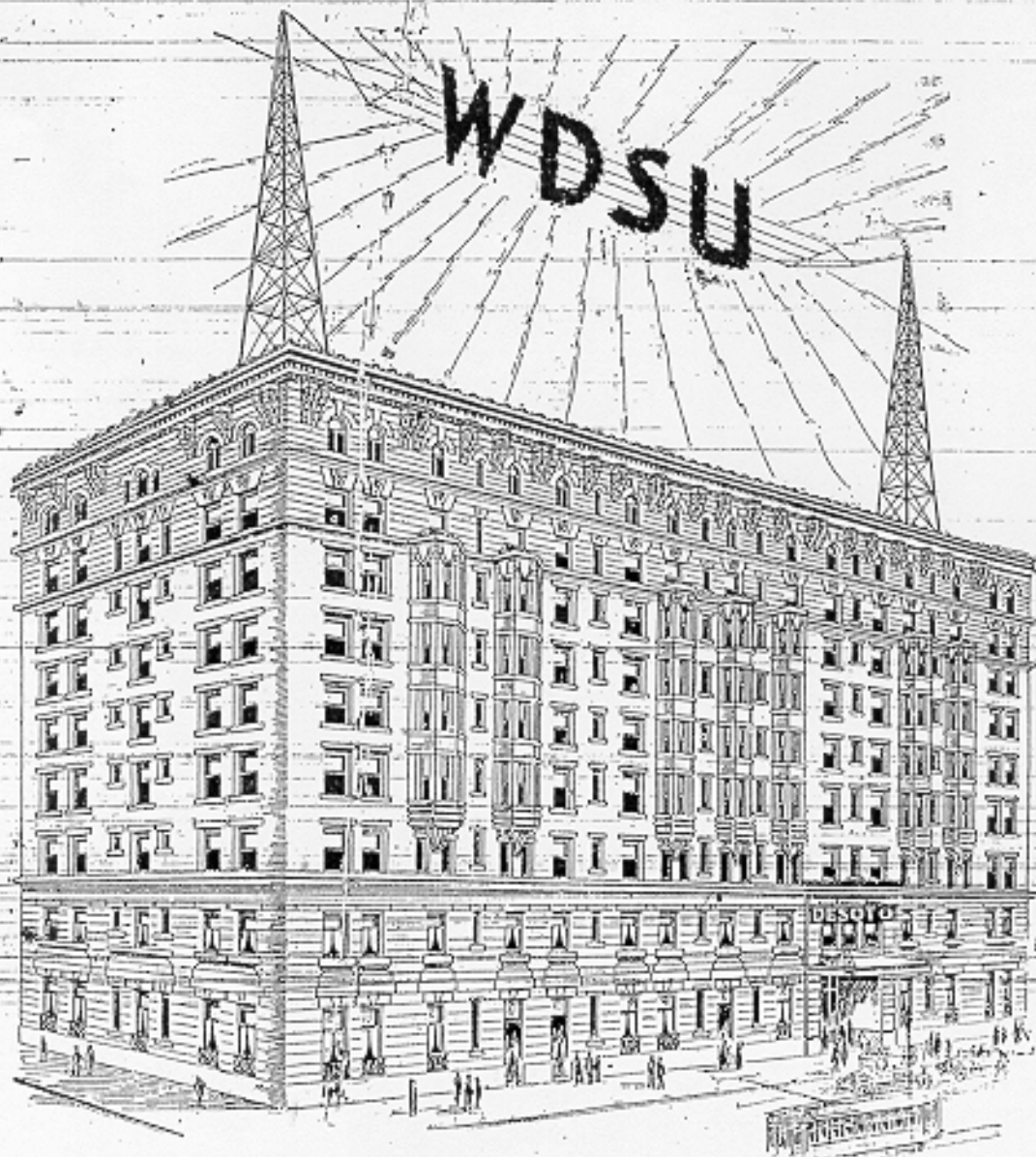
### RELAXAS SUPER SOAP IS SOLUTION

### WASH. Official Says New Soap

Illustration 2: An Item-Tribune edition dedicated to the opening of the most powerful station in New Orleans, WSMB. The radio towers atop the Maison Blanche building on Canal Street suggest the station's low power and the radio industry's infancy (Item-Tribune, 19 April 1925, Souvenir Edition). Note the tip to the left of the masthead: "All of the radio news, both local and international, is to be found each day in the Item and Tribune."

# FORMAL OPENING NUMBER

*New Orleans' Largest Radio Station*



*New Orleans' Largest  
Radio Station*

W — D — De Soto — S — States — U — Uhalt

*New Orleans' Largest  
Radio Station*

This high-powered station hopes to bring about a new era in broadcasting throughout this section of the country. WDSU is dedicated to the radio public in the hope of bringing more and better features during daylight hours and Sundays as well as other days—Baseball games, prize fights, football and special features that have heretofore been denied the

public will be broadcast. For three years the radio listeners of New Orleans and surrounding territory have clamored for "chain" features. No "chain" stations in Louisiana or Mississippi—a deplorable condition, and WDSU is going to do its utmost to provide them, and hopes, in the very near future, to "bring Broadway to Canal street."

Illustration 3: An "Opening Section" of the *States* dedicated to "New Orleans' Largest Radio Station." WDSU's initial power of but 250 watts assured limited reception at best. Note the broadcast towers atop the DeSoto Hotel (*New Orleans States*, 6 July 1928, Opening Section).



# CONGRATULATIONS

# WDSU

DE SOTO--STATES--UHALT

New Orleans' Newest and Largest Radio Station

FROM—

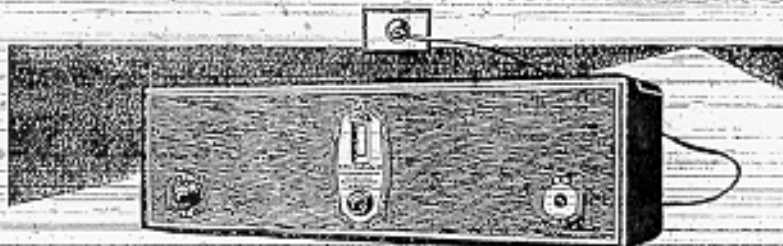
## RCA DEALERS OF

Louisiana and Mississippi

We appreciate your efforts to give us more and better programs, and we hope that you will soon be on the famous New York "Chain"—bringing Broadway to Canal Street.

### The new RADIOLA 18

BRINGS IN ALL STATIONS WITH PERFECT, NATURAL AND LIFE-LIKE RECEPTION



RCA Radiola 18 is the latest addition to the radio family. It is a complete radio with a built-in speaker and a built-in amplifier. It is the most complete radio ever made.

Nothing can so adequately fill empty hours and long evenings with real pleasure and entertainment—or so completely satisfy every member of the family and bring both lasting enjoyment as the Radiola 18.

With the opening of the WDSU, New Orleans' newest and largest broadcasting station, there will always be something entertaining in the air, something new, something unexpected, something exciting. Baseball games, prize fights and special features that have heretofore been denied the public, will now be broadcast by WDSU.

You will be proud to own the new Radiola 18, a finely designed and built instrument. A product of the Research Laboratories of RCA, General Electric and Westinghouse.

Simplified operation from your electric light current. Just plug it in, and a twist of the electrically-lighted dial instantly picks out your favorite stations on the air.

SEE OUR NEAREST DEALER FOR DEMONSTRATION

RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA



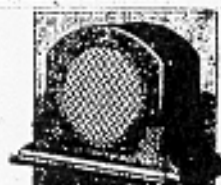
NEW YORK, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO

Buy With Confidence

Where You See This Sign

## General Electric Supply Corp.

WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS



The famous RCA Loudspeaker, 100-A, \$25.00.

Specialty designed to get the finest performance from Radiolas.

Now a very modernized and improved model of the Radiola 18, with a simplified and perfect of Radiola that appears from your electric light circuit.

Ask the RCA Authorized Dealer about the RCA Time Payment Plan.

Illustration 4: As a newspaper affiliated with New Orleans radio station WDSU, the *States* enjoyed business from radio advertisers. This RCA ad is typical of what could be expected from an affiliation with a radio station (*New Orleans States*, 6 July 1928, 6).

## Vita

Brian Collins was born in Metairie, Louisiana, on 9 July 1977. He received his bachelor of arts degree in mass communication, with a concentration in journalism, from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, in 2000.