Free Radio is a Blessing

Address

By REAR ADMIRAL CHARLES R. JEFFS, US NAVY (RET.)
US State Commissioner for Bremen

Once again we gather to celebrate another milestone in the brief but outstanding career of Radio Bremen. It is now almost one year since many of us here met at the dedication of the new studio which was financially made possible through the combined efforts of the Bremen population and a substantial gift from the American people to the people of Bremen. These efforts and gifts were made in the interest of free and independent dissemination of news, information and entertainment in the public service. A further result of these contributions we see here before us today—the new, more powerful medium wave transmitter that will increase Radio Bremen’s area of coverage greatly.

Radio Bremen has come a long way in its unique position as a newly created independent station entirely built since the end of the war. In late 1945 the first American who arrived in Bremen to set up a German radio station, found no studios, equipment or personnel on hand. From a villa of improvised studios and a 1,000-watt US Army mobile transmitter, Radio Bremen has grown to become an impressive monument dedicated to free and independent broadcasting.

Radio Bremen primarily owes its independent existence to its efforts in becoming a true community station. The emphasis at Radio Bremen, as all its listeners know, has always been closely tied with the needs and interest of the Bremen community. The wisdom of this policy has been amply confirmed by the attachment that the population of the state of Bremen expresses for its own station and also by the enthusiastic support for the station in surrounding areas.

I sometimes wonder if we people in the free world fully realize the privilege we have in receiving the objective public services of a free and independent radio station such as Radio Bremen.

As a frequent reminder of this blessing, this impressive antenna tower might well serve all of us not only as a symbol of free speech in the state of Bremen but also as a challenge to us, that as citizens of democratic republics, we are individually entrusted with the preservation of this sacred right. Rising forth in a field not many miles from a land where free radio stations no longer exist, this steel monument should be a constant reminder to all of us that privileges as free citizens will not long endure in a land where the right of a man to say what he thinks is denied him.

We are all familiar with the fundamental concept that within an area of free and responsible government the unmolested flow of truthful information and varied opinions to the citizenry must be paramount. When this is the case, an informational media, as a public trust, performs a public service. In turn the recipients discharge their duty as good and useful citizens, by taking the initiative in absorbing this information, carefully arriving at a conclusion and taking the necessary action.

Freedom cannot exist if independence is surrendered or reciprocal responsibilities of information media and citizenry are supplanted by irresponsibility or authoritarianism on the part of the media, apathy or fear on the part of the populace.

Radio Bremen in the past has shouldered its responsibilities through many public service features such as nonpartisan political commentaries, schools of the air, trade union programs, employer association broadcasts, forum programs, etc. Bremen citizens have responded with active interest and support. This is a healthy sign at a time when political extremism still looms on the German horizon. May Radio Bremen continue in this spirit of endeavor toward enhancing Bremen’s rightful place in the world family of free communities.

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Main tower of Radio Bremen’s new directional antenna for the station’s medium wave transmitter was dedicated Oct. 15 at a ceremony at which Admiral Jeffs delivered the address published here. (PRB OLC Bremen photo by Schmidt)