

Across the Bands, Around the World

This issue's editorial is going to be somewhat like this issue itself — covering a variety of topics that are not necessarily related to each other, but each worthy of mention and discussion. It may not be A-Z in scope (we *do* make it to “Y”), but let's start with “A” anyway.

Antennas, Advocacy and the ARRL

After three decades of trying to assure that amateurs living in deed-restricted or homeowner-association controlled homes have the same rights as other hams to put up antennas and get on the air, the ARRL has found common ground with the trade group representing homeowners' associations that may finally allow some significant progress in this vitally important area.

As discussed in greater detail in our news column on page 3, several months of negotiations between League representatives and the Community Associations Institute (CAI) resulted in an agreement to change the language in the Amateur Radio Parity Act now pending before Congress from requiring “reasonable accommodation” of amateur radio operation to guaranteeing hams living under private land use regulations the right to put up “an effective outdoor antenna.” With this change, the CAI said it would drop its opposition to the bill, which should allow it to pass both houses of Congress as a “non-controversial” measure.

At this writing, the amendment had not been formally made nor had any further action on the bill been scheduled, so it is not yet a “done deal,” but hopefully it will be by the time you read this.

What impresses us is the apparent change of approach by the ARRL in dealing with long-standing issues, working to find a satisfactory compromise rather than “tilting at windmills” as was so often the case in the past. We don't know if this new approach is a result of the change of leadership at the League, but the timing suggests that it might be, along with new CEO Tom Gallagher, NY2RF's, extensive experience in the business and banking world prior to joining the ARRL staff. Business people tend to focus more on making things work and getting things done, even if you don't get exactly what you want; and if this change in focus in Newington is a result of Tom's influence, then more power to him. Credit also needs to go to Hudson Division Director Mike Liscenco, N2YBB, who has been “out front” on this issue for several years.

An ARRL member's \$49 a year in dues “buys” three broad “things” — a magazine (which most members see as their primary benefit); a professional staff in Newington to coordinate the organization's many programs and activities; and, most importantly in our book, *advocacy* ... promoting and defending the interests of amateur radio on state, federal, and international levels. Despite its flaws, no other organization in our hobby's history has been able to advocate for amateur radio as effectively as the ARRL. If it were not for the League's success in advocacy over the past 102 years, there likely would be no Amateur Radio Service and thus no need for magazines or staff members. So, after you renew your CQ subscription, try to budget another \$49 for ARRL dues and help protect our hobby's future.

On ... and Off ... the Air in India

Let's now take an F-layer hop from Connecticut and Washington, DC, halfway around the world to India,

where both encouraging and discouraging things are going on in relation to radio. On the encouraging side, a combination of ongoing ham radio help in emergencies and a concerted promotional effort by Indian hams and ham organizations is bearing fruit in terms of greater recognition of amateur radio's value by government officials and educators (see “Promoting Ham Radio to Youth in India” on page 17, and the “CQ World Wide” column on page 46). But at the same time, “Listening Post” editor Gerry Dexter reports (p. 42) that All India Radio — the country's shortwave voice for decades — is likely to “go dark” in the near future.

As we've pointed out here before, such moves (generally to save money) are shortsighted at best. While shortwave broadcasting may be very expensive on the transmitting end, it is very cheap on the receive side. For millions of people around the world, a shortwave receiver is much more affordable and accessible than high-speed internet service or satellite radio. In addition, radio waves don't stop at international borders, while some governments routinely block internet sites to which they don't want their citizens to have access (Yes, radio signals can be jammed, but only with moderate effectiveness). Satellite radio is harder to block out, but the selection of international broadcasts is limited and there is some programmer (or accountant) out there someplace deciding what listeners will be able to hear and when. Gerry's “leading logs” feature routinely lists opposition groups and revolutionary “voices” transmitting to their target areas via shortwave. If radio is so expensive, why don't these groups take their messages to the “free” internet? Because they understand that radio is far more effective at reaching large numbers of people.

Radio is the most accessible form of information dissemination on the planet and it is foolhardy for governments to limit access to their messages to those with the means to purchase high-speed internet or satellite subscriptions. Let's hope that message gets through to the bean-counters at broadcasting authorities around the world.

Yagis for Your Ears

We'd also like to highlight an article in this issue that is not directly connected to ham radio, but that we think will be of significant interest to a lot of our older readers. This month's “Learning Curve” column — on page 14 — is all about a type of directional hearing aid that not only can be focused in different directions, just like a Yagi antenna, but also can be fed directly with audio from an MP3 player, a DVD player ... or your ham rig! It's really an amazing technology that looks like it can help many of us with some degree of hearing loss continue to enjoy our primarily sound-based hobby for many years to come.

Hamfesting

It was great to see so many of you at Dayton in May. We thank you for your overwhelmingly encouraging comments and look forward to seeing more of you at the other hamfests we attend this year.

Enjoy your summer and do what you can to take your hamming outside with you. And don't forget the CQ World Wide VHF Contest on July 16th and 17th.

— 73, W2VU