

Results of Geneva 1959 I.T.U. Conference

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AS you know, I had planned to write this story in the fullest possible detail, and to report in person to every Division of the Institute on my return from Geneva. It is therefore a bitter disappointment to find that my health is not good enough to do this. However, I have already had several long talks with the Federal President, Max Hull, who now has a large quantity of Conference documents, including verbatim accounts of many important meetings, from which the case history of every Amateur band can be assembled for future reference.

This general survey will, I hope, assist the Amateurs of Australia to obtain a quick picture of what happened, and what I think we must do to get ready for the future.

Geneva 1959 is now only a memory. For better or for worse, the radio scene for the next few years has been re-defined, and the final agreement signed

would have seen how Amateur problems, important though they are to us, are only a small part of the incredibly complicated pattern of modern communication.

He would have seen, too, the stubborn and altogether admirable fight put up by all those interested in Amateur Radio in the face of this opposition, a fight in which every band has been retained, in most cases intact, and a final result obtained appreciably better than most of us hoped for.

I have already told you of the enormous dimensions of the conference, with its 1,000 odd delegates, committees to the tune of about 100, and millions of foolscap sheets which made up the daily working documents. I have also outlined the committee and working group structure by which the mass of proposals was processed and decided upon.

wrangles about the 7 Mc. band and its impact on broadcasting. Many powerful and even impassioned speeches were made in their defence, and I for one could not have wished for better treatment of our case.

Secondly, the quality and quantity of Amateur representation was better at Geneva than at any previous conference. Apart from myself, A. L. Budlong and John Huntoon of the A.R.R.L., were attached to the U.S. delegation as Amateur representatives, and Len Newnham for some weeks to the U.K. delegation. There were also five I.A.R.U. representatives from Region I countries, led by John Clarricoats (G6CL), who were present from time to time, and they did some useful work, particularly in sorting out some of the problems peculiar to that Region.

But best of all there were capable delegates from many countries such as U.K., U.S.A., New Zealand, Argentine,



The Batiment Electoral, Geneva, location of the I.T.U. Conference.



Alex Reid, VE2BE (left), A.R.R.L. Director for Canada, chatting to John Clarricoats, G6CL (right).

on December 21. The full document is now being printed and should be available for distribution quite soon.

Its pages of tables and regulations will clearly reveal how much work went into their preparation, but can tell nothing of the drama, the dangers, the tension, and the hours of frustration and achievement through which we lived during the long weeks of the conference.

MOMENTOUS CONFERENCE

Without doubt this was the most momentous conference of them all, one which grappled with the virtually insoluble problems and mistakes of the past, and attempted to deal with even more sweeping demand which we know the future will bring.

I only wish every Amateur could have been present at least part of the time. He would have learned about the enormous pressures on frequency space which have literally made portions of the spectrum unworkable; he

My stay at the conference was from the commencement on August 17 until November 19, the longest stay of any purely Amateur delegate with the exception of A. L. Budlong, General Manager of the A.R.R.L., who remained for a week or two after I left. By the time I caught the plane for home, all our problems had been dealt with, and were being confirmed at the Plenary level.

Some minor changes took place here, all in our favor, and all the result of ground-work already done.

AMATEURS RECEIVED AN EXCELLENT HEARING

Firstly, let me say that the Amateurs received an excellent hearing at every level of the conference and a very fair hearing at that. Even where criticism and opposition were hottest, every point was fully debated and fully considered. Many long and important meetings were devoted to nothing else, particularly the series of Committee 4

Canada, Brazil, South Africa and some others who, being the actual spokesmen at meetings, fired the real bullets when the debates began.

Naturally we got together on every possible occasion to discuss the position and this team work was quite a vital factor in getting things done.

In these circumstances, the importance of a Region III representative being present cannot be over-emphasised.

BAND ALLOCATIONS

At this stage it might be appropriate to run through the bands to see how we fared. I'm afraid this will involve some duplication of earlier reports, but I will give the picture in general without including all the odd footnotes involved. Later on, when the Geneva Regulations are available, no doubt "Amateur Radio" will print extracts from the tables in full.

To help matters, I can say that in Region II, there were no changes of any importance to the old band alloca-

tions. This was due undoubtedly to the preliminary work carried out by the U.S.A. in lining up all the countries in North and South America so that any disagreements existing between them would not appear in the tables.

By their numbers, organisation, excellent liaison with the F.C.C. and commercial friends, the American Amateurs exert a powerful influence, so much so that their delegation was persuaded to flatly oppose each and every proposition to change the status quo, and to be supported almost universally in Region II. This solidarity overflowed to the advantage of Amateurs in both Regions I. and III., and to me was an object lesson in how to organise.

I shall not, therefore, mention Region II. in what follows.

1.8-2 Mc.

There was no problem here from our point of view. The status quo remains, and we share with Fixed, Mobile and Radionavigation. The P.M.G. has not given us a general allocation here, but in view of our other losses, maybe we can persuade them to find a suitable spot.

In Region I. there was a fine old discussion for and against Amateur operation, some Europeans being bitterly opposed, while others who had not previously allowed Amateurs now wished to include them. U.K. was a strong supporter here. Finally, a maximum section of 200 Kc., with a power of 10 watts, was allowed by footnote in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Germany, Rhodesia and Nyasaland, United Kingdom, Switzerland, South Africa and South West Africa. European countries must co-operate to avoid interference with other services.

3.5-3.9 Mc.

This band is allocated generally to Region III., shared with Fixed and Mobile, but by footnote Australia has restricted Amateurs to 3.5-3.7 Mc. exclusive, the remainder being given to the other services. India has an even more drastic footnote limiting Amateurs to 3.89-3.9 Mc. From our viewpoint, this limitation comes from the P.M.G. and is in line with Australia's original proposal. Frankly, I find difficulty in appreciating the need for this footnote, because being a shared band, local administrations have authority to split it up in any way they choose, without further reference to the frequency table. In fact they have already done so.

But appearance in the table means that they cannot reduce our band any further.

7.1-7.3 Mc.

Regions I. and III. have lost the use of the shared portion between 7.1 and 7.15 Mc., which becomes exclusively broadcast. But there is a rider that broadcast stations must vacate the exclusive Amateur portion between 7 and 7.1 Mc. Frankly this isn't worth much, because several countries now poaching there announced quite openly that they won't move until given clear channels, of which there are none.

To test the practicability of this rider, the Americans proposed that Amateurs should continue with the present allocation until the International Frequency Regulations Board (I.F.R.B.) declared that the poachers had moved out. After a vigorous debate, the proposal was defeated by only two votes.

Australia was the only English speaking country which voted against it.

But in all fairness, it wouldn't have done much good if carried, for the determination of countries such as Pakistan to stay put would have merely meant reversion indefinitely to the status quo.

And as so many countries have obviously been told to get that 50 Kc. or else, they were happy to go along with the pious hope of clearing the Amateur band, but were not prepared to wait until the hope became reality.

As I have already said, the standard and bitterness of the debates on this matter, the special committees set up to handle it, and the good old duck-shovelling that went on, convinced me that high political hands were at work, far beyond any capabilities of mine to influence.

The relative documents even refer to the undesirability of Amateurs sharing bands with broadcasting, which put the death-blow to my initial efforts to get daylight sharing.

But our case for the latter is so good that I for one wouldn't stop trying.

A hard pill to swallow was the general agreement on an engineering level that bad band management, jamming, and duplicated services were largely to blame for the congestion on the broadcast bands. Unfortunately, national prestige is so wrapped up in having mighty voices on the air (and who listens?) that even the smallest and newest countries are spending more than they can afford to join the chorus. No one will give way, and so the mess continues.

The Amateur hadn't got a chance except in Region II. where broadcast demands apparently are more modest.

Incidentally, the leader of the New Zealand Delegation made a particularly good speech in defence of this band in which he paid a glowing tribute to the value of his own and other Amateurs and their work for the community. It was a highlight of the discussion.

14-14.350 Mc.

The thing which saved this band was the refusal of the U.S.A. to agree to any curtailment. Both the fixed ser-

vices and broadcasting would have liked a slice of it, and both made moves to get it.

But both were prevented from coming into an open meeting where they might have gained some support, and perhaps secured some regional arrangements, however impractical.

I was, therefore, particularly pleased that Australia was persuaded not to press her proposal to cut the band by 100 Kc.

This left India's even more drastic proposal to cut 150 Kc. off the high end for broadcasting out on a limb, and it got no further.

But fundamentally, no one was enthusiastic about pushing a lone hand against powerful American Amateurs who are audible somewhere or other all around the clock.

And while this position remains, I don't think they ever will.

21-21.45 and 26.96-27.23 Mc.

The 21 Mc. band was conned from many angles and quite a few suggestions were made for slicing it for various reasons, but none of them made the grade. When I left Geneva there was still a suggestion, unsettled, to allocate 5 Kc. at 21 Mc. for space research, but apparently it was abandoned for I see no mention of it in latest advice. So this band continues unaltered.

The 27 Mc. band is available in Regions I. and III., shared with industrial, scientific and medical services, and we can use it if we wish.

28-29.7 Mc.

This was a most hotly contested band. At least three special group meetings were devoted to fighting off proposals from the meteorological aid people, who wanted half a megacycle for their old-fashioned radio-sondes, and from France and Japan, in particular, who wanted slices in which to operate fixed and mobile services. To me our success here was the best example of organised Amateur resistance, in which our own Australian delegation played no small part.

When I left Geneva, the met. aids had been successfully countered, but there were two proposed footnotes to allow fixed and mobiles in Europe and Japan to use part of the high end.

Apparently the battle against these was joined once more in the Plenary session, for the footnotes do not appear in the table, as I have it now, and the band is therefore unchanged.

It is probable that fixed and mobile services will operate under Section 88 of the Regulations, which means that they do so at their own insistence and without any protection against interference, particularly as I think Japan has been operating with low power for river boats for some time. They are not likely to be a serious worry to us.

56-58 and 146-150 Mc.

These bands have been re-aligned in Australia to fit in with our t.v. assignments, and two megacycles have been taken from the lower band. This is unfortunate, but as we have never used the full four megacycles in the past, it is not surprising that the authorities should think we didn't need it. Should it be decided not to proceed with the suggested Band I for t.v., it could be



Some Amateurs present at I.T.U. Conference. Left to right: Steve Chisholm, VE3ATU; John Moyle, VK2JU; John Huntoon, W1LVQ; John Clarricoats, G8CL; Wayne Green, W2NSD; Don Vaughan, ZL2VA; Arthur Milne, G2MI; and Adolf Dominikus, OELAD.

that we would get our old 50-54 Mc. assignment back again, which would be fine. At the moment we can only hope.

As both bands are out of step with world-wide assignments, they are covered by special footnotes to the table.

420-450 Mc.

This has been a shared band for Amateurs although we have never had a firm allocation. Our original proposals omitted Amateur altogether, and one of my tasks was to remedy this if I could.

This was eventually made possible because of the introduction of a new Radiolocation type of service, the sponsors of which had no objection to sharing with Amateurs when the service itself should be established.

This band now is fully occupied with Fixed and Aeronautical services, but in the next few years changes are likely to occur which could make it possible for us to use it. At any rate, we are back in the table, and some day we might well be very glad that we are.

1215-1300, 2300-2450, 3300-3500, 5650-5850, 10,000-10,500, 21,000-22,000 Mc.

These bands follow the general pattern of the highest frequencies in the table, except that they have been extended beyond the old limits and are all annotated as shared with Radiolocation in Region III. In all cases, the latter has priority.

The band 3300-3500 Mc. is another from which Amateurs in Australia had originally been excluded, but it was found possible to change thinking on this point.

MORSE CODE

A point of interest is that the lower frequency limit for which the Morse Code is required has been raised to 144 Mc. Australia had proposed this to be 50 Mc., and was supported by Argentina. Both the U.K. and U.S.A. initially opposed this and just before I left Geneva had compromised at 250 Mc., (not a very practical figure) and no arguments of mine could shift them. However, they must have had second thoughts, for at a subsequent Plenary meeting, they agreed to 144 Mc.

Our delegate fought hard on this proposal, but in any case it will not be allowed to affect the terms of our limited licence. It just brings the figures so much closer.

LESSONS LEARNED

Geneva taught me several new lessons and underlined many old ones.

Fundamentally, these conferences are meetings of national delegations, each of which has a vote. It follows, therefore, that the first aim is to convince each delegation that the claims of the Amateurs are as strong as those for any other service and thus to secure votes for them.

It is far too late to initiate action at the conference itself, by which time most decisions have been made up to this level.

It follows, too, that the Amateurs should work on a long-term basis to establish good will and a high priority at home, and on a short-term basis to see that they always have a representative as a member of the delegation to

press home the Amateur position and improve it if he can.

A team of such Amateur representatives can wield a powerful influence, even if it does not include a member from every country, which would be too much to ask.

We fell down because our preliminary work over the years was not good enough, and we were obliged to take drastic action at a late hour. It is true that the inexplicable attitude of the P.M.G. in several matters did not help, but the fact remains that the members of F.A.S.C., who prepared our brief, did not understand the Amateur position, and were thus unduly influenced by the P.M.G. representatives and their assessment of our proposals.

At Geneva I am quite sure that I managed to effect a big change in this, and ultimately found our delegates most helpful in all matters which did not contradict the Australian brief.

society. In Region II, the prestige and influence of the A.R.R.L. renders it unnecessary, and in any case the A.R.R.L. officers (also federal officers of the I.A.R.U.) cannot perform both jobs at the conference. Region III. is so dispersed that no real I.A.R.U. representation is practicable.

It is frequently helpful to have an I.A.R.U. representative who can speak more freely than an Amateur attached to a delegation, but in the present circumstances it is only natural that the I.A.R.U. representatives, all from Region I., are strongly pre-occupied with their own problems. It is hard to visualise any practical method by which the I.A.R.U. could finance and support a really representative organisation covering the world.

Nevertheless, the I.A.R.U. team worked hard and I do not mean to belittle their efforts by these general comments.



Delegates in attendance at the Plenary Session.

Many of them did good work for us in defending our bands when they were under attack.

Had this attitude prevailed during the initial F.A.S.C. meetings, we may have started out more favorably.

The countries which really carried the fight for Amateurs were those such as the U.K. and U.S.A. in which Amateur organisation is well developed and relations with the authorities and others are good.

In countries where ordinarily the reverse is the case, dangerous weak spots were apparent.

I.A.R.U. Ineffective Body

The I.A.R.U. is not a very effective body at such a conference.

In the first place, there is no national co-operation except in Region I., in which the R.S.G.B. is the dominant

Our Own Outlook

Closer to home, we have two major reforms to make.

Firstly, we must obtain a much greater sense of Federal responsibility from the ordinary Amateur and from the Divisions. At the moment, this sense is at its lowest ebb and has been for years.

Coming straight from Geneva, where our very future was being battled for, I was astounded and discouraged to find that Divisions had voted against holding a Convention this year. At the very time when our future and past organisation is of primary importance, the Federal Council was not to meet, apparently because it couldn't think of anything important enough to discuss.

We must find Councillors and Divisional leaders who have much wider

vision than this. All our excellent, and often elaborate, Divisional set-ups will be of little use if we haven't the bands to use them.

Secondly, we must evolve a Federal set-up which will work, which will attract Councillors of high standing and experience who can tackle the job of improving our own standing and priority in the communications world.

At present the Federal Council isn't doing its job, and the Federal Executive has become exhausted trying to cope with an almost impossible situation.

I am not intending here to supply a set of answers to this matter, which is an ideal item for a Convention if ever there was one. But I do say that unless we are prepared to solve the problem, and to spend money doing it, we can't blame F.A.S.C. or anyone else if they overlook Amateur claims because we are inadequately organised to handle them.

To my mind it is an urgent and critical situation.

I must conclude my report at this point. I suppose we must always regard a conference involving losses as a failure, but I believe that, in the circumstances, we have a great deal to be thankful for. At least I did the best I could to help bring this about. **I believe that every Amateur who tacks his licence to the wall must shoulder an inescapable responsibility to his fellow Amateurs and to the Amateurs of the future. If he fails them, they must suffer and may even cease to be.** Please think about this, for it is the key to everything that I have written here.