

Sarnoff Predicts Weather Control And Delivery of the Mail by Radio

Control of the weather by man is a scientific possibility of the future, Brig. Gen. David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America, said last night in a speech at a testimonial dinner in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel commemorating his forty years of service to radio.

Other possibilities, General Sarnoff asserted, include delivery of mail by radio, portable communication sets that will enable one individual to communicate with another anywhere, transformation of deserts into gardens through diversion of ocean currents and nuclear energy, world-wide television and use of atomic energy to combat disease.

These developments, he said, are the alternative to devastation and destruction from atomic bombs and rocket-propagated disease germs if peace becomes the chosen course of man.

War, with the new weapons that

scientific ingenuity can devise, he declared, would bring an abrupt end to all progress. Discussing the matter with noted men of science at home and abroad, he asserted, had shown scant hope that an adequate defense can be provided against new weapons capable of mass destruction on a world-wide scale.

Besides General Sarnoff, speakers at the dinner included Owen D. Young, retired chairman of the board of General Electric, and Dr. Karl T. Compton, president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Lieut. Gen. James G. Harbord, chairman of the RCA board, was toastmaster.

General Sarnoff, who started his career as an office boy in the New York headquarters of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America, told an audience of industrialists, educators and scientists that the world has seen only

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the beginning of radio's possibilities.

"We are still pioneering in the dawn of the radio age," he asserted.

Freedom for Science Urged

"In America," he continued "radio has grown rapidly as a great public servant—not only because of freedom to speak and freedom to listen—but because of the freedom of science to advance. Science must be free. We can permit no restrictions to be placed upon the scientists' right to question, to experiment and to think.

"Because America has held liberty above all else, distinguished men of science have come here to live, to work and to seek new knowledge. The world has been the benefactor and science has moved forward.

"In war, science dares the impossible; it must continue to dare the impossible in peace if a fuller life is to permeate society."

Radio and electronics have reached the point of development where they can influence the course of war, Mr. Sarnoff said, citing the reported "ghost bombs" over Sweden and the flight of two pilotless Flying Fortresses from Hawaii to California under radio control from a mother ship.

"It is frightening to recall," he continued "that not a single V-2 rocket aimed at England during World War II was shot down."

Mr. Sarnoff told of visiting Sweden recently and said he is convinced that the "ghost bombs" are no myth but real missiles. He said he found Europe making progress economically and physically, but that on the political front there was instability and insecurity.

"I am of the belief," he added, "that no one wants war and that no war is imminent. If we can only get economics and politics into some kind of synchronization we can make some progress on the domestic front and on the foreign front, too."

Peace Cited as an Avenue

Scientists, Mr. Sarnoff said, are inherently men of peace, and under peace conditions they can turn their attention to the development of atomic power for industry and the conquest of disease.

"We would then," he continued "hear less of biological warfare and more of new triumphs over diseases that have plagued man across the centuries, destroying him in greater numbers than war itself.

"The warlike idea that warm ocean currents could be shifted by science to turn fertile lands into deserts might be reversed in peacetime to modify or divert these currents to influence climate so that deserts would become gardens. With the aid of nuclear power plants desert areas might be transformed into habitable and productive regions.

"There is even the possibility that one of man's greatest enigmas—the weather—may some day be controlled. One of our noted men of science recently told me that his

MARKING FORTY YEARS IN RADIO WORK



Brig. Gen. David Sarnoff (left), who was honored at an anniversary dinner in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel last night, talking with Bernard M. Baruch.

The New York Times

studies of the problem not only suggest this possibility but that experiments are actually under way that may lead to man's dominion over the elements.

"For example, man may learn how to deflect air movements with consequent changes in weather and he may discover how to neutralize a storm or detour it from its course.

"Automatic radio weather stations in remote places in the polar regions, in deserts, in jungles and on the seas can collect and broadcast weather data. Already radar spots a hurricane, peers into its vortex, plots its movement and photographs it from minute to minute.

"Radio-controlled and electronically equipped rockets will permit exploration of the upper atmosphere. Within minutes new electronic computing devices can analyze such information on a global basis.

"We may yet have rain or sunshine by pressing radio buttons. When that day comes, we shall need a World Weather Bureau in which global forecasting and control will have to be vested. Here is a poser for the isolationist and a poem for the internationalist."

Essaying to look ahead for forty years, General Sarnoff warned that forecasting the developments of science is almost an impossible task. International broadcasting, "undreamed of forty years ago," carries the lesson that in science reality surpasses prophecy, he noted.

"The most difficult problems for

mankind," he declared "are social and political rather than technical. Unfortunately in the social and political spheres our imagination covers a rather limited radius.

New Type of Leader Pictured

"Many men will risk their lives to solve a scientific problem; few will risk their comfort or security to solve a social or political problem. Therefore the most important problem of all is the selection of courageous, competent and wise leaders. That kind of leadership calls for more than mere exercise of authority; it calls for imagination, initiative, direction and guidance. People everywhere cry for such leadership. Upon it depends the future of democracy, the preservation of our freedom and the solidarity of peace.

"But if opportunity is to be turned to good purpose, this nation must be strong morally and physically, not alone for its security but also for the accomplishment of its task in helping to rehabilitate a world suffering from the vicious aftermath of war."

Dr. Compton said that the electron is the most versatile tool ever invented. Though politically we are still very far from achieving the idea of "One World," the radio and other electronic devices have done much to unite the world of thought and events and can provide a basic framework for making "One World" work, he asserted.

General Harbord read messages of congratulations to Mr. Sarnoff from President Truman, Secretary of War Patterson, Secretary of the

Navy Forrestal, Governor Dewey, Mayor O'Dwyer and Gen. Bedell Smith, American Ambassador to Russia.

Earlier yesterday Mr. Sarnoff received the "Man of Science" award of Science Illustrated magazine in ceremonies at his office in the RCA Building. In accepting a scroll that described him as "a man of science who built an industry on his faith in science," he predicted that the accomplishments of science in the next forty years would dwarf what has happened since he started to work in 1906.

Officials of RCA presented to him the wireless key that he used as an operator on April 14, 1912, when the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank. At that time Mr. Sarnoff was on duty at John Wanamaker's and he remained at his key for three days, reporting the names of the 706 survivors as they came in.