

# [The Wireless Joker]

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The Editor is in receipt of several communications from the government and commercial wireless stations, all of whom file complaints against wireless amateurs, who annoy the large stations throughout the country.

By publishing the call letters and names of the wireless stations in the U.S., we simply wished to keep our readers informed, so that when any of them “caught” a message they would be in a position to know from whence the message was dispatched.

MODERN ELECTRICS being the leading wireless telegraph magazine, naturally was appealed to by the large stations. It seems that a number of experimenters are in the habit of calling up government and commercial stations, thus interfering with regular work and annoying them a great deal. Usually the large stations do not know the location of the sender and they are thus quite powerless to stop the mischief.<sup>1</sup>

This state of affairs can naturally not go on, and we most earnestly request all those who are in the habit of calling up the large stations to refrain in future from doing so.

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<sup>1</sup>A user skimming the airwaves in 1908 would have found a cacophony of code flashing in multiple directions, including: government stations sending out time signals; maritime communications going ship to ship and ship to shore with information like weather conditions, iceberg reports, and ship position and speed; personal “Marconigrams” or “Aerograms” sent from or to these ships; experimenters sending messages across the street or (realistically, the most at that time) across town; and commercial stations conducting experiments and sending messages for paying clients. In addition, there was no standard for wireless communication at the time, which meant that one user might have identified himself by name while another might have made up a call sign, which weren’t standardized until 1927.

We say this in behalf of all those interested in the wireless art, as several large companies are now endeavoring to have a law passed licensing all wireless stations in the U.S. This, of course, would be the end of the amateur and experimental wireless stations, as under the new law heavy licenses would be imposed.

In view that the art as yet is in its infancy, such a law would be deplorable, from the standpoint of the amateur, and the Editor earnestly hopes that the mischief will come to a speedy end.

Nobody cares how many messages the amateur catches, as long as he keeps in the dark and does not “talk back.”

While we talk of wireless mischief making, we must mention the wireless “joker” (?). This pest located in New York, Chicago or anywhere will send a plausible message, calling up an ocean liner, stating that the machinery of the ship is damaged, or some other plausible yarn. He signs off, giving the name of a large ocean boat, and does of course not forget to state position of his ship which—in the message—is about 2,000 miles from land.

Of course the result is that some stations in the vicinity of the “joker’s” one, catch the message and next day the owners go bragging about that they were able by means of a “new connection” to hear such and such boat 2,000 or 3,000 miles away, far out in the ocean. Naturally this nonsense only serves to mislead others, as it cannot but create wrong impressions in the minds of students who do not receive messages from more than 100 miles away and who perhaps are trying hard to improve or invent new instruments, etc.

We earnestly hope that those in the habit of sending these “fake” messages will see the harm they are doing and that they will turn their efforts to more fruitful directions.