

RSGB Disdainful of Class B Licences

Let me say at the outset that magazines are made from paper and have no opinions of their own. Although I am editor of Ham Radio Today, I offer these comments as an individual. I also offer the right of reply.

I understand that there is a proposal before the VHF Committee that Class B licencees should be allowed to practice and use CW on 432MHz and above with identification on phone. I believe that the Committee has accepted the proposal which will be recommended to the Home Office for underwriting in the licence conditions.

The proposal seems like success for the Class B holders who have been clamouring for the right to use CW on their own bands for years. However, as victories go, it is decidedly Pyrrhic. The vast majority of Class B licence holders, particularly the newcomers who have the greatest need for CW self training, are equipped for 144MHz only. Put another way, only some ten per cent of those for whom the concession was intended are equipped to operate on 70cm. The remainder will have to fork out very deeply for new equipment. Good for the amateur radio dealers, good for 70cm as a spur to use it but grossly unfair on the majority of Class B amateurs who wish to practice CW over the air.

Insane

It is completely insane that a proscription on CW for the 'B's exists at all. Licence conditions are there to protect other wireless telegraphy users against technical incompetence, guard the British Telecom message carrying monopoly (now breached in several areas I am pleased to report) while the various Wireless Telegraphy Acts provide remedies against transgressors.

I used to think that the RSGB was a benign, if rather fuddy-duddy group of old men which had the best interests of the amateur radio movement at heart. I felt that it served its members reasonably as the official body for amateur radio in this country in its representations to the Home Office. I don't think that way any more.

In my opinion it is quite disgraceful that the RSGB should seek to keep Class B amateurs off the CW end of 144MHz. There could be exceptions to this corollary. For instance, if the bandwidth of a particular mode were excessive. With

any argument relating to CW, this surely does not apply.

Having dismissed technical arguments to support the RSGB's curious stance, you must look for other motives. The only one that I can think of — and I sincerely hope that I am proved wrong — is that it wishes to keep CW operating on two metres as an exclusively Class A preserve. There can be no moral justification for this. Above all others, this band is more closely associated with Class B operation than any other. Apart from the fact that Class A amateurs can operate CW without giving their callsign in phone, there should be no other advantage enjoyed by the sector on 144MHz and above.

Not Representative

One has to assume that the VHF committee of the RSGB with its heavy preponderance of Class A members is promoting self interest in keeping the CW end of 2m clear of Class 'B's. After all, around 70 per cent of 'A's run 2m gear. This assumption about the RSGB's motives (and attitudes) towards the 'B's is given substance as a result of leakages from closed Committee proceedings. One of these reports a two letter callsign member as saying that: "Class Bs will only be allowed to use CW on two metres over my dead body".

Every Sunday you hear the RSGB news broadcasts as saying that "the Society represents the interests of the amateur radio movement in the UK". Well, if this is the case, I no longer wish it to represent mine until it reflects amateur radio as a whole. I would need to see far greater numbers of Class B officers and committee members before I agree to let it make decisions on my behalf.

As a case in point, I understand that the RSGB has been given the job (by the Home Office) of distributing and handling applications for Six Metre experimental licences. With a limited number of these available and an ability to look after its own, the RSGB has now taken on the job of a Government department. The Home Office is clearly abdicating its responsibilities in the matter as the licencing authority in the UK. It alone should control the issuing of licences, the writing of conditions, the apprehension of villains, etc.

Once again I should point out that these opinions are my own and do not reflect the magazine, or its contributors, as a whole.

G4JST