

How to Count Countries Worked: A New DX Scoring System

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This piece has been started half a dozen times in the past five years. It has been the subject of more cerebration and contemplation and tabulation and plain downright misery than one cares to recall. It is presented now - in a form far from what we should like it to be - only to silence the insistent demand that has come down through the years. "How about a list of countries of the world?" "How do I count countries worked?" "Are Tasmania and Australia separate countries?"-and a hundred variations of this latter. With the world WACing at a terrific rate these days, faster by far than ever before, the number of countries worked is increasingly becoming the criterion of excellence among outstanding DX stations.

How, then, do we count countries worked? The simplest way, of course, is to check against a standard list of countries of the world. Well, back in 1932 we began the preparation of such a list. We laid down fairly definite rules as to what constituted a country, and proceeded to tabulate the countries of the world. When we had reached several hundred, with the end not yet in sight, we hollered, "Whoa!" and decided that there must be some other better method. We knew that there were not more than 150 countries in which amateurs had ever been worked; it might be possible to list only them. But we had no assurance that amateurs would not encamp in some of the many remaining countries and thus render our list obsolete. An even more pertinent disadvantage was that it seemed impossible to even list all the countries in which amateurs had been worked to date; new countries were always popping out, astonishingly, like jack-in-the-boxes. Able cooperation was enlisted - Eric W. Trebilcock of Moonta, South Australia, Arthur W. Braaten, W2BSR, O.M. Carter, W9ADN, and others sent us lists they had prepared. We got lists of countries actually worked from such outstanding stations as W8BKP and WITW-W1CMX-W1BUX and others. But it seemed no list was ever complete; even if brought up to date for a moment, it rapidly became obsolescent. And amateurs were still clamoring for a list of countries of the world!

The next attempt occurred in 1934, in an endeavor to rationalize and unify action on WAC applications by member-societies of the I.A.R.U. A tentative list of some 150 countries, limited strictly to continental mainland boundaries, was prepared and submitted to the member-societies. Even this list, restricted as it was, was not satisfactory; indeed, we almost immediately decided that the only satisfactory solution of this particular problem was a map of the world showing continental boundaries, which was prepared, approved by the membership, and published on page 41 of the November, 1934, issue of *QST*.

But this still left the problem of counting countries worked. Now, we could publish a list of all the "countries" of the world, but to be useful it would occupy seven or eight pages in *QST*, pages which are vitally needed for other material, and even then its utility would never reach a very high percentage. And the probable wear and tear on that COPY of *QST* is enough to make one shudder!

The better plan, it seems to us, is simply to give the general rule we follow in deciding whether a country is a "country," together with some pertinent examples, in order that each amateur will have enough

information concerning standard practice to be able to prepare his own list of countries worked and have it uniform with other lists.

The basic rule is simple and direct: *Each discrete geographical or political entity is considered to be a country.* A few moments' consideration will serve to show that this is the only workable rule.

It is obviously incorrect to count prefixes alone (except for such purposes as the International DX tests where, paradoxically, confusion means simplification) because many places having the same prefix are quite widely separated geographically. In addition, confusion develops when a country changes its amateur prefix, with the result that an amateur might claim two countries worked whereas only one is proper.

It is obviously incorrect to accept either geographical or political divisions alone, as immediately the most glaring inconsistencies appear. The only general solution that comes anywhere near to solving the problem seems to be to reduce the definition of "country" to the smallest common denominator - a single unit in the world's geographical and political proportions. This has the added advantage - from the ham viewpoint - of creating a long list, offering the widest possible realm of achievement; and who will fail to find that an attractive feature?

To illustrate how this rule works out, a few general problems which have been raised in correspondence will be cited: Alaska and the United States are separate because of the geographical division, just as Mexico and the United States are separate because of the political boundary.

Tasmania and Australia are separate because of the geographical division. ZS, ZT, and ZU are counted as one country, because there is no geographical and political distinction; ZE, on the other hand, is a separate country. Scotland and England are individual countries, as are the Irelands. Sumatra, Java and Borneo are separate, as are Celebes and New Guinea. Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are each separate.

The Federated Malay States are one country, having a common government and being geographically connected.

Some distinction between *islands* and *island groups* is necessitated. Island groups, constituted by several islands commonly grouped under one name and under the same political control such as the Hawaiian Islands, the Tonga or Friendly Islands, the Sandwich group, etc., are regarded as one country. Where these groups are under different governmental control, they are subdivided into as many countries as there are governments. Individual islands, such as Bounty Island, Trinidad, Ascension Island, Amsterdam Island, etc., are regarded as separate countries. The principal place where this differentiation is likely to cause trouble is among the Pacific Islands, but even here the rule is found to apply remarkably well.

The few examples given will be found to illustrate the working of the method quite effectively. If any questionable points arise, A.R.R.L. headquarters will be glad to offer a ruling.

PROPOSED DX SCORING PLAN

Now we come to a somewhat different, although an allied, subject, broached by N. M. Patterson, W4EG. He is perturbed, and it seems many DX men agree with him, over that fact that under the countries-worked plan one VK QSO from America counts for as much as working all eight VK districts. Similarly, the European ham with one lone W QSO gets as much credit as another who has worked all nine call areas. "That there is a whale of a difference you will readily see," he writes through Director Caveness.

In view of this situation, W4EG proposes that there be created a "rule for counting DX, to be known as the DX *Score*." This score will be computed by taking the number of districts worked in each country, and adding it all up into a grand total. For example, we'll suppose that W8BKP, who had when last reported worked 123 countries, counts nine W call areas, eight VK districts, six Spanish districts, etc. On the basis of adding the figures for these countries alone, the score would be 143; probably the grand total would be well over two hundred.

This seems to us to be an entirely rational suggestion, far more *so* than many that have been perpetrated. For ten years or so it has been impossible to work any *farther*, in terms of terrestrial miles; the only room for expansion is to work as many *places* as possible. The first recognition of this fact resulted in the inauguration of the WAC certificate. Totaling the number of countries worked followed naturally. This new proposal, expanding and improving the countries-worked idea, seems to be a logical next step. Indeed, following along this line of thought, one foresees the time when DX will be counted in cities worked, or stations per square mile, or something even more fantastic!

But for the present the DX Score idea looks pretty hot. It has the major beauty of simplicity. Just total up the districts worked, and there you are! We expect it won't be long before a lot of QSL cards will bear the legend, "Continents worked: 6; countries worked: 66; DX score: 92."

What do you say, old man?