

THE HISTORY OF BROADCASTING  
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

VOLUME IV

# SOUND AND VISION

BY

ASA BRIGGS

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THE HISTORY OF BROADCASTING  
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM  
VOLUME IV

SOUND AND VISION



## PREFACE

THIS fourth volume of the *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* could not have been written without the fullest co-operation of a large number of people. Voluminous though the BBC Archives are, they leave big gaps, and 'oral history', now a rapidly developing branch of historical scholarship, has been an increasingly important element in the approach. The record I present and the conclusions I have reached are, however, entirely my own.

I have tried, while exploring all the available primary sources, to relate the history of broadcasting to the history of British society during the period. The relationship is not one of foreground to background. Broadcasting registered, though incompletely, what was happening, and through its structures and policies—and the conflicts which it engendered—it was also a revealing expression of economic, social, and cultural forces. Politics, moreover, can seldom be left out of the story as told in this volume, even though the Second World War was over and the Ministry of Information in consequence was quickly disbanded.

It is impossible to thank everyone from past and present BBC staff who has provided me with information and ideas. There are too many of them to count. Among those who offered me that generous help were Arthur Barker, the late Sir Gerald Beadle, C. H. Beale, D. C. Birkinshaw, Peter Dimmock, John Green, Sir Hugh Greene, Archdeacon F. H. House, Spike Hughes, J. A. C. Knott, Cecil Madden (whose collection of photographs is an invaluable source in itself), C. J. Mahoney, R. D'A. Marriott, C. F. G. Max-Muller, John Morris, the late Sir Basil Nicolls, Richmond Postgate, Eric Robertson, Michael Standing, and Eric Warr. Singly or in bigger groups I met and talked, sometimes at length, with Rex Alston, J. H. Arkell, Ian Atkins, Michael Balkwill, Michael Barry, Stephen Bonarjee, the late J. G. L. Francis, Ronald Lewin, Robert McKenzie, Sir Francis McLean, Royston Morley, P. H. Newby, Leslie Page, Edward Pawley, author of the valuable study *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972*, Martin Pulling, E. R. Thompson, the late Ronald Waldman, and the late Hon. R. T. B. Wynn.

I owe a very special debt of gratitude to Lord Orr-Ewing, who generously placed at my disposal a unique collection of documents in his own possession, to Christopher Mayhew for letting me see a file of letters relating to the National Television Council and its Minute Book, and to Lady Barnes for letting me use the interesting and informative papers of her late husband, Sir George Barnes. I also consulted the Simon Papers at Manchester (with the friendly help of the Librarian of the Manchester Public Library); the (disappointing) Beveridge Papers in the Library of the London School of Economics; the Reith Diary, which remains a valuable historical source even for this period, and which I was able to read in full thanks to Lord Reith's continuing kindness; and, with the help of Bernard Sendall, papers in the Archive of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. I also discussed with Dr. Bernard Donoghue the lack of relevant Herbert Morrison papers. At different times, too, I talked and corresponded with Norman Collins, who provided much invaluable information, the late Lord Hailes, Leonard Marsland Gander, knowledgeable and independent-minded *doyen* of radio correspondents, the late Mary Stocks, Baroness Jackson of Lodsworth, the youngest of BBC Governors when she was appointed, the late Sir Michael Balcon, and David Butler.

The two distinguished Director-Generals of the period covered in this book, Sir William Haley and Sir Ian Jacob, have freely placed all their unique knowledge at my disposal. Sir William Haley has been unsparing in the time and care which he has given me, and both he and Sir Ian Jacob sent me detailed comments on the original draft manuscript. So also, for the whole or for parts, did Sir Harold Bishop, Harman Grisewood, Maurice Farquharson, S. J. de Lotbinière, Robert McKenzie, Leonard Miall, E. C. Robbins, R. J. E. Silvey, Sir Lindsay Wellington, Sir Huw Wheldon, and S. G. Williams. None of them, of course, is responsible for my analysis or conclusions.

There are, however, a few others who have worked so closely with me at every stage that there would have been no fourth volume of this *History* without them. Certainly without Denis Wolferstan, colleague and friend, and Mary Jay, who dealt wisely with every correspondent and patiently with every draft,

however untidy, I would never have been able to combine research and writing with my duties as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex. That University provided a lively and congenial base for this study, and I am grateful to successive Librarians there and their staff, to the Librarian of the BBC and the Library staff, to Mary Hodgson and Jacqueline Kavanagh, who have directed the Written Archives Centre and to their magnificent staffs, as well as to the staff of the Photograph Library, the Radio Times Hulton Picture Library, and the Sound Archive. I am also deeply grateful to David Lee for compiling the index, to my secretary, Pat Spencer, and to my typists—among them Betty Kitcat, Heather Laughton, Evelyn Hughes, and Barbara Gray.

Two friends have read the proofs diligently and with scrupulous detachment—Dr. Bryan Wilson of All Souls College, Oxford, and Professor Barry Supple of Sussex University—and within the BBC itself Tom Morgan and David Webster have helped to see the book through the press. In the Press itself, Ena Sheen now knows everything about the problems of publishing *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*: it has been reassuring to know that she has been there from the distant days of Volume I. I was also able to draw upon the invaluable support of the late Alan William Rees and his great knowledge of Regional broadcasting: his early death was a great loss to broadcasting as well as to broadcasting history. My Marconi Medal Award enabled me—with the encouragement both of Marconi's daughter, Mrs. Braga, and Professor Walter Roberts—to study related or parallel American material. There is still need to compare in depth British experience with that of other countries: British broadcasting is part of a bigger, still largely unwritten, story.

ASA BRIGGS

*Worcester College, Oxford, 1978*





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# I

## INTRODUCTION: RADIOVISION

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Every Zeitgeist takes on a certain narrowness of outlook, which is obvious enough to other generations; and the chaotic present is probably an exceptionally bad time for making formulas.

*BBC Year Book, 1946*

In all discussions on programmes the difficulty is not to see the wood for the trees but to see the trees for the leaves. . . . It may be said that broadcasting is predominantly an accumulation of details. But behind them and arising out of them a good deal of thinking is generally going on.

SIR IAN JACOB to the Board of Governors, 27 June 1951

*Television?* The word is half Latin and half Greek. No good can come of it.

Attributed to C. P. SCOTT, Editor of the *Manchester Guardian*

I often wonder if those who decry television are simply objecting to change. Of course, television like radio will alter habits and it may alter them in a different way, but it cannot of itself stifle the imagination of a whole people; it cannot in a generation make us all materially minded. . . . Imagination has survived longer persecutions than television is likely to give it.

GEORGE BARNES, Address to the British Council of Churches,  
29 September 1952





## I. Introduction: 'Radiovision'

THIS volume deals with ten years of British broadcasting. It tells the story, a very well-documented story, in enough detail to make it possible to relate broadcasting history to general history. The title, *Sound and Vision*, almost chose itself. In a period of less than ten years after the end of the Second World War television firmly established itself in Britain, more firmly than in any country in the world except the United States; and although there were still far more listeners than viewers in 1955, there were few people who doubted that television would soon become the dominating medium. The new service was already available for 92 per cent of the population, and there were already four-and-a-half million combined sound and television licences.

The basic weekly programme consisted of thirty-five hours of television each week. 'Its full effects remain to be seen,' the BBC's Board of Governors stated in their Annual Report for 1955, 'but it is clear that television is opening up a new prospect of enjoyment and interest for almost everybody.' 'The Governors feel', they went on, 'that they have a trust of far-reaching importance to ensure, in so far as the BBC's service is concerned, that this new window on the world is opened to the best advantage.'<sup>1</sup>

The reference by the Governors to 'the BBC's service' implied, of course, that there was another television service for which they were not responsible; and although *Sound and Vision* concentrates on two 'media' and their changing relationship with each other (and with other media), it deals also with the emergence of an alternative television service to that provided by the BBC. 'The End of the Monopoly' would have been an alternative title for this volume; the one, indeed, which might have been chosen in 1955 itself, when the first 'television wars', as A. J. P. Taylor has called them,<sup>2</sup> had ended. The last chapter

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 9533 (1955). *Annual Report and Accounts of the British Broadcasting Corporation*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, 'The Television Wars', in the *New Statesman*, 21 July 1961.

of this volume describes the first night of 'independent television' on 22 September 1955.

We can see in retrospect, as some people saw at the time, that the (Independent) Television Act of July 1954 was 'full of compromises' and that it satisfied 'neither its opponents nor its supporters'.<sup>1</sup> It represented, however, a 'national' solution to a sharp, at times bitter, conflict of separate interests and, as a legislative outcome, it permitted, even demanded, considerable scope for future adaptation on the part both of the BBC and the new Authority. In the long run, it created not so much a fully competitive system on American lines as a dual system, part free, part controlled, within the same framework of public regulation.

It is easier to identify the key dates in the successful attack on the monopoly—many of them dates which on the surface at least had little to do with broadcasting as such—than it is to identify key dates in the social and cultural switch from sound to vision. It is clear, however, that one reason why the monopoly was broken in 1954 was that a few people had come to the conclusion that television was a 'medium of the future' which need not be linked to sound broadcasting. They saw in it a potential for profit and power which encouraged them to struggle against any continuation of the institutional *status quo*.

In June 1946, when the BBC's first post-war television service resumed for its limited audience in the London area, Sir William Haley, the BBC's first post-war Director-General, called television 'the natural extension of sound',<sup>2</sup> and this remained for some years the orthodox way of looking at its role. There had once been pictures without sound—in the cinema—and there were now to be pictures with sound—in the home. The home was a place, Haley believed, where the BBC had a 'trust' to deliver something more than entertainment. It was 'the intimacy and immediacy' of television which made it quite different from

<sup>1</sup> *The Statist*, 6 Aug. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 325. 'Television Policy: Note by the BBC', 14 Nov. 1947. A correspondent to the *Radio Times* had written in one of its early issues (19 Oct. 1923) that 'within ten years "television" will be as far advanced as wireless telephony is today', and Haley himself in an address to the Radio Wholesalers' Federation (18 May 1949) pointed out that 'the span of a comparatively young man's life has carried us from the cat's whisker to the cathode ray tube'. See also his article in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IV, no. 3, Autumn 1947.

film in the cinema;<sup>1</sup> and just as the BBC had offered 'balanced fare' for the home in its sound broadcasting, so it should continue to offer balanced fare in an age of television. In this connection Haley had an unlikely ally in Orson Welles, who introduced a British Council television programme in September 1955 with the words, 'If the home is to become a non-stop movie house, God help the home.'<sup>2</sup>

Haley's Senior Controller, Basil Nicolls, who had begun working for the BBC even before it became a Corporation in 1927, wrote judiciously in January 1946 that while it was 'important that the general enthusiasm for television should not be allowed to have an adverse effect on sound', conversely 'television should not be hampered by undue interference in its early stages'.<sup>3</sup> Nicolls was a classicist by upbringing, and this was a kind of classical balance which, not surprisingly, was never easy to maintain between 1945 and 1955. The 'television wars' were fought on the issue of the break-up of the BBC's monopoly, but they were preceded by struggles within the BBC itself. It is now possible to document the different stages in the story. Maurice Gorham, the BBC's first post-war Head of the Television Service, saw 'visual broadcasting' as 'a step back towards reality rather than one away from it',<sup>4</sup> but he found it impossible to secure either adequate resources to develop 'visual broadcasting' or an adequate measure of control, as he saw it, over television output. Nor did his successor, Norman Collins, whose resignation from the BBC in October 1950, when he was not made first Director of Television, was certainly a key date in the story told in this volume.<sup>5</sup> Val Gielgud, Head of BBC Drama, was not alone in thinking that 'the tradition which came to be established of an automatic mutual hostility between

<sup>1</sup> R. Bennett, *Enjoying Radio and Television* (1954), p. 137. The chapter is entitled 'Only Television Can Do It'; cf. M. G. Scroggie, *Television* (1946 edn.), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Reginald Pound in *The Listener*, 29 Sept. 1955. He also quoted the Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 'We thank Thee, O Lord, for Television'. Haley continued to insist (see his Clayton Memorial Lecture, 1954) that television should not be 'just another cinema; a kind of chain-belt Music Hall; nor a perpetual opera house'.

<sup>3</sup> \*E. E. Nicolls to R. J. F. Howgill, Acting Controller, Entertainment, 2 Jan. 1946. [An \* in front of a footnote means that the letter or document is among the BBC's Records.]

<sup>4</sup> M. Gorham, *Television, Medium of the Future* (1949), p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> See below, pp. 452-6.

Broadcasting House and BBC Television did much to bedevil the efforts of the practical exponents of both media'.<sup>1</sup>

George Barnes, who was chosen by Haley as first Director of Television, a job he never greatly relished, believed very strongly in 'balancing' sound and television: indeed, his experience as Director of the Spoken Word, the most grandiloquent of all BBC titles, predisposed him to think more naturally in terms of words rather than pictures. He told a UNESCO seminar held in the Council Chamber in Broadcasting House in July 1954 that while television was 'actuality' and was 'at ease when reproducing things as they happen', 'ideas mattered more than events'. 'Can television be a medium for the communication of ideas?' he asked, and before answering yes, as he had to do, he went on donnishly, 'When I look at the paraphernalia of a studio and quail before the intrusion of the engineer into every detail of a performance, I often feel despair.'<sup>2</sup>

Haley's concern went deeper, however. He admired the work of the television engineer and had written eloquently during the war of television striding out 'one day . . . not only across countries and states . . . but across oceans'.<sup>3</sup> Yet he wanted the control of British television broadcasting output to remain in the same hands as the control of sound broadcasting output. On its own, he came to feel, television would encourage passivity and present a surfeit of entertainment programmes. It should be kept in check. 'Television establishment', he wrote in 1945, 'combines programme direction with output; therefore parallel to Regional status.'<sup>4</sup> Although immediate responsibility for programming might lie in Alexandra Palace, as it did in 1936 when the first regular television programmes in the world were presented day-by-day to a small but keen audience in London and the Home Counties, basic BBC policy should continue to be framed in Broadcasting House. Even when television programmes were extended to the provinces—and he and his colleagues believed

<sup>1</sup> V. Gielgud, 'Could there be a swing-back from Television?' in *Contemporary Review*, Dec. 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Barnes Papers: Draft Speech to UNESCO Seminar, 5 July 1954. Yet there are many extremely perceptive drafts of lectures by Barnes on different aspects of the medium.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in J. Swift, *Adventure in Vision* (1950), p. 119. See also A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 722 ff.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by W. J. Haley, 'Relations between Television and Sound Broadcasting', 10 Dec. 1945.

that in an age of 'fair shares for all' this should be 'as soon as was practicable'<sup>1</sup>—the programme-makers should continue to seek 'experienced guidance' from Output Controllers in the Sound establishment.

It was all too easy at first to think of television programmes simply as programmes in which vision had been added to sound, 'illustrated programmes', perhaps even 'simultaneous programmes' on Sound and Television. Many such programmes, indeed, including one of the best-known of all war-time sound programmes, *ITMA*,<sup>2</sup> were produced between 1945 and 1950. 'Since television is an integral part of the broadcasting service and not something fundamentally different from sound broadcasting,' the Head of Programme Contracts wrote, when *ITMA* was being produced in August 1946, 'the televising of this programme at the same time as the normal sound broadcast should be regarded not as a television outside broadcast but as a simultaneous broadcast taken by the Television Service.'<sup>3</sup>

The trade unions, led by Equity, were not alone in objecting to such rulings and in 'fighting for an absolutely complete cleavage between television and all other forms of broadcasting'.<sup>4</sup> Yet several 'shared shows' continued to be produced during the early television era.<sup>5</sup> In retrospect, this era stands out as what one of the most perceptive of broadcasting critics, T. C. Worsley, called 'the era of radiovision'.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1950s, however, as Worsley pointed out, television was beginning to resent its radio ancestry. At a BBC dinner held in May 1950 it was argued strongly that 'television as a medium can satisfy in a way that sound can only stimulate'. 'The development of television', one speaker put it, 'was such a complicated affair that it should not be undertaken by an organization formed to develop sound broadcasting unless the

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Information Memorandum, 'Extension of the Television Service to the Provinces', 31 Jan. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 711-12.

<sup>3</sup> \*W. L. Streecon, Head of Programme Contracts, to Variety Booking Manager, 30 Aug. 1946. Before the war, six or seven television studio productions from Alexandra Palace had been broadcast simultaneously on Sound. The first of them on 6 April 1937 had the same title as this book, *Sound and Vision*.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Streecon, 7 Nov. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Gorham to Nicolls, 16 June 1947: 'I am glad to say that prospects of more sharing of programmes between television and sound are improving.'

<sup>6</sup> T. C. Worsley, 'The End of an Era' in the *Financial Times*, 23 Dec. 1965.

dissimilarities were seen to be more important than the similarities.<sup>1</sup> This was a most important statement. More important still, however, was the fact that television was also making bigger and bigger claims on BBC broadcasting as a whole—and its finances. The annual accounts of the Corporation provide the best indications of the financial transformation, for the share of television in total BBC expenditure increased from less than a tenth in the financial year 1947/8 to over a third in the year 1954/5:

RELATIVE BBC EXPENDITURES ON SOUND AND TELEVISION  
(Year ending 31 March)

	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Television</i>
	£	£
1948	6,556,293	716,666
1949	7,073,883	906,685
1950	7,498,788	1,172,714
1951	7,860,883	1,718,578
1952	8,750,945	2,329,159
1953	8,682,815	3,401,042
1954	9,387,166	3,991,439
1955	10,018,779	5,043,908

During the same period, of course, the proportion of total BBC income derived from combined sound and television fees increased enormously. In 1955/6 income from sound licences, which had reached a peak figure of over £11 million in 1950/1, had fallen to £8,459,213. Meanwhile, the income from combined licences—raised to £3 in 1954—had reached the figure of almost £6 million.

'I know it is Sir Noel Ashbridge's firm view', Haley had written in 1944 of his distinguished Deputy Director-General and formerly Controller (Engineering), 'that Television is not likely to replace Sound for a very long time if ever';<sup>2</sup> and in 1955 itself, despite talk of Sound administrators and Sound producers leading a 'beleaguered garrison',<sup>3</sup> there was still fairly general agreement inside Broadcasting House with the

<sup>1</sup> 'Dinner held to discuss Television', 18 May 1950 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Sir Ian Fraser, the BBC's blind Governor (and later a supporter of competitive television), 12 April 1944.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 1023.

view expressed in 1948 by another engineer, this time the Superintendent Engineer, Television, D. C. Birkinshaw, that Television at best would supplant 'a portion only of Sound'. 'There is such a vast range of material broadcast on Sound alone which the public appears to want as a permanent feature of radio entertainment, but which would be intolerably dull if transmitted visually as well as orally.'<sup>1</sup>

The audiences for Sound Broadcasting in 1955 were certainly still huge enough to ensure that Sound programmes continued to be printed before Television programmes in the *Radio Times*, and that the sections on the Sound services preceded those on the Television service in the annual *BBC Handbook*. Indeed, on the very day commercial television entered the arena—22 September 1955—the families who watched it (370,000) were greatly outnumbered by those who listened with horror to the death of Grace Archer.<sup>2</sup> Colour television, promised for as long a period as television itself, was still in the future in 1954, but the decision to introduce VHF in Sound broadcasting, 'a move of far-reaching significance',<sup>3</sup> presented the last in a long chain of 'wireless' improvements. It permitted listeners to enjoy clear, faithful reception substantially free from interference, particularly that caused by foreign stations. Viewers, of course, had no access to foreign stations which, except on privileged 'Eurovision' occasions, were outside their range of vision.

It was Haley's successor as Director-General, Sir Ian Jacob, who presided over the great transformation of the BBC from an institution primarily dealing in Sound to one dealing predominantly in Television. Jacob assumed his duties as Director-General in December 1952 when the income from Sound licence fees was still almost four times as much as the income from combined Sound and Television licence fees, and he was determined from the start both to push television development and to plan its different phases. He was a vigorous advocate of corporate planning before the term became fashionable, and the BBC's ten-year plan of development, which he announced in 1953—

<sup>1</sup> \*D. C. Birkinshaw, 'Television Long Term View: Comments' (on a paper by Norman Collins, quoted below, p. 243), 17 Sept. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> See TV Research, Gallup Poll, 8 Nov. 1955; also below, pp. 1013-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register* (1954), p. 385. See also E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), pp. 337-45, and below, pp. 561-2, 1010-11.

after the BBC's prestige had reached its peak as a result of its Coronation broadcasts<sup>1</sup>—looked forward ambitiously to large-scale future development.<sup>2</sup> He clearly recognized that it had to be competitive in outlook, not least inside its own organization, and the corporate plan included a second television channel. This was intended to offer a 'real alternative' and a 'planned alternative', for, as Barnes put it, without planning, 'competitive programmes provide sameness, not variety, as can be seen any night in New York where the four main channels often broadcast different light entertainments . . . or different thrillers at the same time. Monotony is avoided and diversity served only if different kinds of programmes are broadcast simultaneously, and to do that the alternatives must be planned.'<sup>3</sup>

A different kind of planning—national planning with a strong emphasis on physical controls—had been responsible in large measure, if not entirely, for the delay in developing television before 1953, when the attack on the BBC's monopoly was growing in intensity. The BBC's critics were always at pains to blame the Corporation for what was happening, even though between 1945 and 1953 there were tight restrictions on its freedom of action. Leaving on one side restraints imposed on programming by vested interests unwilling to allow major national activities to be televised, it was not until 1953 that the Governors were free—for the first time since 1939—to begin to decide their own priorities within permitted totals of national expenditure. Hitherto, broadcasting development had been subject to the tightest possible sort of public controls over capital investment, consumer spending, including hire purchase, and licence fees. The immediate post-war years were years of continuing austerity—with rationing of basic commodities like bread (1946) and potatoes (1947) which had not been rationed during the war. 'It is obvious', wrote the *Glasgow Herald*, 'that the Government are more concerned with television as an export than as a source of entertainment in this country.' 'This', it went on significantly, 'is as it ought to be.

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 457-73.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 981.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes, 'Reflections on Television' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IX, no. 2, Summer 1954.



If funds were available for "luxuries" the majority of us would probably prefer to see the money go towards the purchase of a little tobacco.<sup>1</sup>

These were years when the word 'crisis' became one of the most overworked words in the language. The 1947 Economic Survey had stated simply that 'we have not got enough resources to do all that we want to do' and that 'we have barely enough to do all that we must do'. It was easy in such circumstances for many Labour politicians, in particular, to think of television as a 'luxury toy' for the rich and for Treasury civil servants to pit television against rearmament. The return of a Conservative Government to power in 1951 marked a reaction against philosophies of austerity—and completely changed the political context within which broadcasting policies were evolved—yet in December of that year John Profumo, a staunch advocate of commercial television, told Barnes that he fully recognized that the country might not be able to afford the means of competition until the rearmament programme was complete.<sup>2</sup> Even in 1955, when rearmament was no longer the major issue, R. A. Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had to introduce severe restrictive measures, including a whole number of 'squeezes' in a special autumn budget, the autumn of the introduction of competitive, commercial television.

The years from 1953 to 1955 had been an exceptional period of full employment, balance of payments surpluses and rapid growth, and it was not surprising that it was during this period—in 1954—that the Television Act was passed which broke the BBC's monopoly. The timing of the break-up was influenced by a chapter of accidents to individuals, including switches of jobs, notably that of Collins, illnesses, and deaths, including that of Bevin. There was also a relentless pressure from television enthusiasts whose manœuvres or intrigues often reached, sometimes dominated, the newspaper headlines. More fundamentally, however, the break-up was the result of a build-up of new economic and political forces. There was no grand design—or plot—to produce the Television Act of 1954, which bore the

<sup>1</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 Aug. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Note of an Interview, 14 Dec. 1951. Barnes made many interesting public speeches on economic factors influencing the rate of television development. e.g. to the Radio Industries Club of the Midlands, 20 Feb. 1952, and to Equity, 6 Feb. 1953 (Barnes Papers).

marks of many compromises. Yet there was an inevitability about the outcome which impressed many others besides Haley and Barnes.

One huge official inquiry into the future of broadcasting, that carried out by Lord Beveridge in 1949 and 1950—his Report appeared in January 1951—is described in full in this volume. Its results were negligible, however, when compared with the results of changes in political and social circumstances. The break-up of the monopoly not only coincided with the change in economic circumstances: it facilitated the change. There were more things to sell in 1954 and 1955 than at any time since 1939, and advertisers were ready to sell them. 'I shudder to think what this powerful advertising force is going to do to our distributive system,' a British advertiser told an American Senator in 1955. 'Some of our people don't realize it, but they're due for such a huge demand for their goods that neither the production nor distribution system at the outset will be geared for it. Our people have been starved of the good things of life so long, have known austerity so long, that demonstrations of modern products we will give them on TV are going to create vast changes in our economy.'<sup>1</sup> Already by 1954, when the cheapest sets cost £80, the statistics of television ownership demonstrated unequivocally that television was not a luxury of the rich:<sup>2</sup>

TELEVISION PUBLIC CLASSIFIED BY INCOME

	<i>Class I</i>	<i>Class II</i>	<i>Class III</i>
End of 1947	48%	27%	25%
End of 1954	16%	25%	59%

Commercialism provided a dynamic, and the Assistant Postmaster-General, Captain L. D. Gammans, was one of the far-sighted few who realized that commercial television would be 'a big money spinner' for the programme contractors.<sup>3</sup> There was another dynamic, too, which was shared by people who did

<sup>1</sup> *Congressional Record*, 14 Feb. 1955, Speech of Charles E. Potter of Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> B. P. Emmett, 'The Television Audience in the United Kingdom' in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* (1956), p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> Note to the author from L. Marsland Gander, June 1976.

not make money—the desire to break away from the curbs and controls of war-time. Between 1945 and 1954 there was an immense—and growing—gulf between those who thought and felt 'responsibly', like Barnes or Haley, weighing up advantages and disadvantages, and those among the 'television conscious' minority who insisted when governments were proclaiming austerity and imposing controls that television offered 'a revolutionary challenge' which it was essential to meet whatever the cost.<sup>1</sup> It was the same kind of challenge, they suggested, as that which had been taken up in war-time by the pioneers of radar. Whatever governments might say, they went on, nothing was impossible, and they added that in order to move into the 'television age' a coalition of forces had to be mobilized nationwide by lively leadership. 'So far,' wrote Kenneth Baily in 1952, 'Britain has not discovered the man, let alone the committee or corporation, strong enough to accept the challenge in an open-minded spirit of uninhibited enterprise.'<sup>2</sup>

They were quite uninhibited in passing from eloquent talk of scientific discovery to far more crude talk about popular entertainment, brushing aside Barnes's observation that 'however essential we believe television to be, we cannot but admit that the cuts and delays we have to accept are for things even more essential, the safety of the West and payment for what we eat.'<sup>3</sup> They insisted throughout, however, that television was 'too easily influenced by memories of sound radio'. 'Visual entertainment', Baily concluded, 'is only worth looking at when it is composed of the best kind of professionalism which money can buy.'<sup>4</sup> There was always a suggestion that the BBC was incapable not only of providing the necessary money but of judging how best to spend what was available.

This was only one line of attack. Sometimes they concentrated not on television's capacity—as yet unrealized, they claimed—to present mass entertainment, but on its power to

<sup>1</sup> See J. Swift, *Adventure in Vision* (1950), p. 119. The phrase 'television-conscious' had been used in 1944 by Haley's predecessor, Robert Foot (*\*Minutes of a BBC Meeting*, 18 April 1944) and had been picked up by the Hankey Committee on Television. (See *Report of the Television Committee, 1943* (1945).)

<sup>2</sup> K. Baily (ed.), *The Television Annual for 1952* (1952), pp. 9–12. The chapter is called 'It's Tough for Television'.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes's Address to the Radio Industries Club of the Midlands, 20 Feb. 1952 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>4</sup> Baily, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

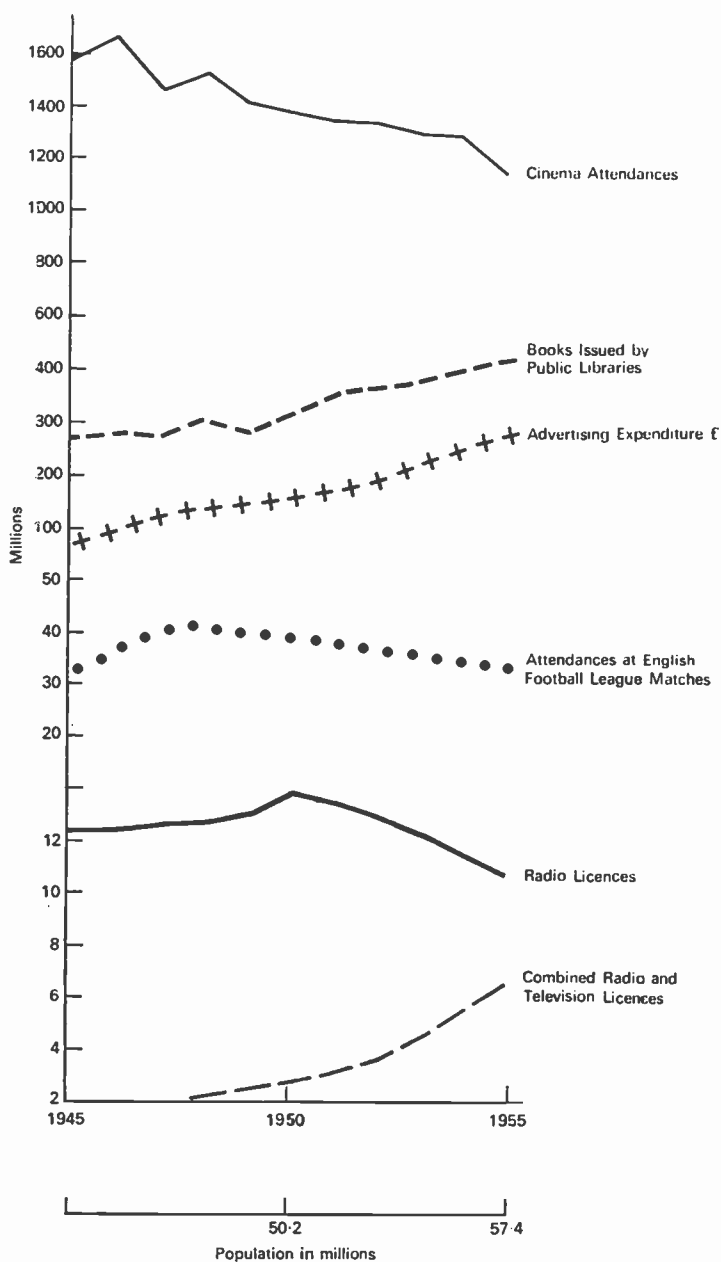
relay 'live events' and to convey 'actuality'. Viewers could 'go with the theatre queues and the shopping crowds and the workers streaming into the shops and docks'; they could go 'underground with the miners and aloft with the steelworkers'. 'Television can finish the work that radio and the Press have begun and show the one half how the other half lives.'<sup>1</sup>

Baily's one-sided critique of the 'canker of monopoly-complacency' was to command enough support in 1953 and 1954 to ensure that the future of television would not rest exclusively in the hands of the BBC. Yet the relationship between television and the other media cannot be disposed of as quickly as he or some of his fellow critics of the BBC implied. If mass entertainment was most highly organized by the 'celluloid interest' of the cinema, that interest was, in fact, a very divided one, with film makers, renters, and exhibitors thinking in different terms. It was also dominated by men who were less realistic about television than the BBC. Many of them—and there were significant exceptions—were far more concerned in 1945 and for years afterwards with getting pictures on to the Big Screen than they were with getting them into the home. A deputation of representatives of the industry had told Hankey's Television Committee during the Second World War that they thought people would continue to prefer sitting in cinemas to being entertained at home. 'The gregarious instinct would bring owners of television sets, like other people, to the cinema from time to time for entertainment.' Television might, however, 'cheapen' entertainment generally, 'if programmes could be seen in restaurants, public houses, etc., at almost any time of day; and interest in newsreels might be expected to decline if the items had already been seen at home in the television programmes.'<sup>2</sup> Yet television could also be used in cinemas, and for this simple reason the film industry could not leave everything to the BBC. 'Television is not merely a means of broadcasting; nor is it merely a means of presenting entertainment. It is the newest means of communication invented by man.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Hankey Committee, *Minutes*, 15 Aug. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum by the British Film and Cinema Industries, 'Television and the Cinema', 25 Jan. 1952. For the Hankey Committee, see below, pp. 175-88.



1. Leisure and media, 1945-1955: comparative annual UK statistics

Despite such stirring language, the main role of the film industry in practice was defensive, at least until just before and just after the advent of competitive commercial television. 'Post-war television with its present limited financial and transmitting resources and the comparatively small number of receiving sets in private houses,' a deputation led by J. Arthur Rank told the Television Advisory Committee (a standing body brought into existence by the Hankey Committee) in September 1946, 'does not affect the Film Industry, but with the technical and other advances which may reasonably be expected in television in the future, the Film Industry foresees the possibility of an encroachment, partial or total, on the field it has hitherto served.'<sup>1</sup> It asked, therefore, for 'the instituting by agreement of some kind of what we may call spheres of influence . . . something akin to the arrangement of the BBC with newspapers concerning the broadcasting of news.'<sup>2</sup>

Five years later, at a dinner meeting attended by Haley, Barnes, Rank, John Davis, Sir Michael Balcon, Sir Henry French, the Director-General of the British Film Producers' Association, and others, French began by arguing in an impassioned opening speech that he took it for granted that the BBC was opposed to the industry being granted any form of licence for television. Yet once again there was more talk of a possible agreement, even of a joint approach to the Government, than there was of collision.<sup>3</sup> By then, everyone in the BBC had come round to the view, first expressed clearly during the Second World War, that by its very nature 'the eventual destination of television' was bound to be the home;<sup>4</sup> and most of those present at the dinner recognized also, although it was not generally put so bluntly, that if the television public ultimately grew to ten million licence holders, 'the effects on the economics of the film industry would be profound'.

There was a choice of possible future lines of action for the industry, and Barnes was so convinced that 'the strength of the

<sup>1</sup> \*Television Advisory Committee, Note by Secretary on a Meeting with Film Interests, 17 Sept. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid. For the origins of BBC limitations on news broadcasting, see A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 262 ff. See also below, p. 567.

<sup>3</sup> \*G. R. Barnes, Note of Film Dinner, 15 Oct. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> The point was clearly stated in the BBC's printed evidence to the Beveridge Committee, 'Television and the Cinema', Sept. 1949. See below, p. 324.

BBC's position was obvious' that he did not look beyond the talk of a possible agreement or joint approach to government to the next step. It was a 'reasonable assumption' if the film industry were to make heavy losses that it would seek 'the readiest source of profit from its products' and would try 'to enter the home with financially remunerative sponsored programmes'.<sup>1</sup> It was an equally reasonable assumption that if and when commercial television arrived, even those film interests which had hitherto resisted it would seek to acquire a stake. 'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.'<sup>2</sup> There was a further consideration, affecting not the management but the 'creative side' of the industry. Sir Michael Balcon told Barnes in May 1950 that 'he thought that very soon the claim of the new medium would unsettle many bright film technicians and operators even though the films would continue to pay better'.<sup>3</sup>

Television was also bound to attract many journalists or would-be journalists, and it seemed likely once the cause of commercial television had begun to be publicized that Press interests as well as film interests would begin to become directly involved. Yet few people before 1955 and 1956 considered the 'media' comprehensively or related the Beveridge Report on Broadcasting to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Press (Cmd. 7700), which had appeared in 1949, when the Beveridge Committee was beginning its work. The obvious links were not noted, though by the time that the Press Council came into existence in 1953, the Director-General of the BBC, Sir William Haley, had been firmly installed in the editorial desk at *The Times*, a proof, as his appointment as Director-General at the BBC had been, that mobility was possible at the highest echelons of the communications networks.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Collins, 'Television and the Film Industry' 7 July 1948. For cinema attendance in 1955, see *Hulton Readership Survey* (1955), p. 46. See also A. M. Carr-Saunders, D. Caradog Jones, and G. A. Moser, *A Survey of Social Conditions in England and Wales* (1958), ch. 17, 'Use of Leisure Time', and H. E. Browning and A. A. Sorrell, 'Cinemas and Cinema-going in Great Britain' in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, Part II (1954).

<sup>2</sup> This is described in H. Thomas, *With An Independent Air* (1977), p. 143, as the industry's 'favourite cliché'. Ch. 7 of this book, 'Inside the Film Industry', gives a good first-hand account of attitudes.

<sup>3</sup> Note of a Meeting between Barnes and Sir Michael Balcon, 1 May 1950 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>4</sup> Haley's 1954 Clayton Memorial Lecture dealt with 'The Public Influence of Broadcasting and the Press'.

The BBC offered little competition to the Press in news gathering in 1955.<sup>1</sup> It was beginning, nonetheless, to generate anxieties in many provincial and some national newspaper offices, and there were already prophets who were proclaiming that the future fortunes of the Press would be influenced at least as much by the impact of television as the future fortunes of sound broadcasting would be. A few years later television was being identified as a major 'medium of information', 'theatre and newspaper in one'.<sup>2</sup>

In the pages which follow, dealing with these and many other themes, there is abundant evidence of attitudes which now after twenty years seem obsolete or even repugnant. Recent historians often neglect such evidence, preferring to deal in current clichés. It is necessary, therefore, to recognize that the social atmosphere—as well as the prevailing economic circumstances—of the ten years after 1945 was very different from that of the contrasting 1960s and 1970s and, equally important, from that of the late 1950s. As Anthony Sampson was to write in 1965, 'it is hard to recall what Britain was like before the first television toothpaste advertisement'.<sup>3</sup> Nor was commercial television the only or even the most significant break. Soon there was to be a sense of 'youthquake', of 'bomb culture'. This volume ends just before the revolution in 'pop' music which heralded much that was to follow, a genuine 'Platonic revolution' in sensibilities which was ushered in by another Haley, Bill, arriving from across the Atlantic with his 'Comets'. Elvis Presley was starting his dazzling career, and his *Heartbreak Hotel* was a new film of 1956. There was a new British stage production, too, in 1956—*Look Back in Anger*, interesting not only in itself but as a portent. After 1956 'things were not what they used to be'. The year 1956, of course, was also the traumatic year of Suez and Hungary. In retrospect, it stands out as a year both of increasing awareness and of dissolution. The Goons had been pointing to the dissolution before it had been fully articulated, and by 1958 Kenneth Allsop, distinguished on the television screen, was able to write comprehensively of a new 'angry decade'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 567 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 583.

<sup>3</sup> *Washington Post*, 28 April 1965, quoted in W. P. Tizard, *Television, A World View* (1966), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> See K. Allsop, *The Angry Decade* (1958).



Before 1955 the anger was muted (or intermittent and diffident) and so, too, were the new permissive morals.<sup>1</sup> 'May I remind you', Cecil McGivern, the Programme Director, told members of his staff in 1947, 'that smut or risqué stuff is much worse in television than in any other entertainment medium. The fact, for example, that a performer's material is accepted in "Sound" is no criterion for us. Gestures, facial expressions, etc., give an extra weight, and even seemingly rather harmless stuff can be quite embarrassing on one's home screen. When in doubt, the producers must cut, very firmly.'<sup>2</sup>

At the centre of the period covered in this volume was the Festival of Britain of 1951, a festival not of anger but of pride, a 'tonic for Britain', contentious only because of its political context and because for the more conservative (with a small c) its predominant styles, 'anti-commercial' in tone, already grated. The Festival was the 'multi-million pound baby' of Herbert Morrison, 'Lord Festival', who was to be among the chief opponents of commercial television, and Gerald Barry, its Director-General (appointed in March 1948), was to be a serious but rejected contender for the first Director-Generalship of the Independent Television Authority, set up in 1954. Others involved in the direction of the Festival included Huw Wheldon, then described as 'from the Arts Council' but very soon indeed to be known everywhere as 'from the BBC'. 'Showbiz' was kept well outside the Festival's celebrations.<sup>3</sup> So it was also—except on the television screens of the United States—during the Coronation of 1953, which on the very eve of the break-up of the monopoly was one of the BBC's greatest triumphs—and one of television's greatest triumphs, described by Maurice Wiggin, the distinguished radio critic, as 'television's finest hour'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There were protests when Gilbert Harding, one of the television stars of the period, referred in *What's My Line* to 'this spoonfed, spineless younger generation' (*News Chronicle*, 13 Jan. 1953). Cf. the seventy-fifth number of *Truth*, 4 Jan. 1952, where Derek Topping wrote, 'There has probably never been a time when the future has been less in the hands of youth than it is in this so-called "Age of Youth". This is very largely youth's own fault.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Cecil McGivern, 23 June 1947. Cf. a Note by Norman Collins, 6 Dec. 1949: 'Three anti-Government jokes in one series is too much. Would you please see that no more appear.'

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC *Scrapbook for 1951*, broadcast on 10 October 1957, gives an excellent picture of the year.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Times*, 7 June 1953. See below, pp. 472-3.

Radio Times (formerly the Gramophone) April 27, 1951  
No. 1621 Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper

BBC Programmes

APRIL 29—MAY 5

Television Edition



2. Radio Times cover of 27 April 1951 showing King George VI arriving at St. Paul's to open the Festival of Britain

There was a brief moment in 1952 when it seemed as if the country with a young new Sovereign was to enter a 'new Elizabethan' age, but the forces which were to influence events were too controversial and contradictory to permit such a label to stick.<sup>1</sup> Haley's successor as Director-General of the BBC, Sir Ian Jacob, knew that for good or ill the real 'age' into which the country was passing was 'the age of television'. It was this age with which he had to make terms, and he knew—with little relevant experience to back him—that this meant dealing with 'Showbiz' as well as with politicians and eventually with 'the competitor' (this was a term coined inside Broadcasting House) who had entered the world by the courtesy of both the politicians and of 'Showbiz'. The relationship between 'Showbiz' and 'Admass' could be set out in a number of equations. The two terms, the second coined by J. B. Priestley, one of the greatest broadcasters of the war, had become current during the early 1950s, before a third term, 'Establishment', began to be used. It was the first and the third which were to stick, and it was with the relationship between them that the BBC would have to concern itself in the future, fortified by the best listener-research system in the world.

Jacob had started as Controller, European Services, in 1946 and had become Director of Overseas Services in 1947: like Sir Hugh Greene, who was to follow him as Director-General in 1960, he approached Broadcasting House with substantial Bush House experience. One of the most important subsidiary themes in this volume is what happened to overseas broadcasting, centred mainly in Bush House, after the war was over. There were times when it seemed—as in 1946—that the Government was to abandon it or to take it over for itself, and there were times, too, when only the ultimate argument seemed to count—that if a particular service for overseas was abandoned it would be almost impossible to start it again. The audience would have been lost.

Much that lay behind the detailed story of overseas broadcasting can only be revealed fully when official as well as BBC archives are open to the inspection of historians. The immense volume of overseas broadcasting during 'the war of words', the title of my third volume, could obviously not be maintained

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 459, and \**Scrapbook for 1952*, broadcast on 19 April 1967.

in peace-time, even during years of 'cold war', but there was always argument, not often well-informed, about how big the 'cuts' in overseas broadcasting should be and in what directions. The full report of the Drogheda Committee on Overseas Information Services, which was appointed in 1954, has never been published, and the Government, which told the Committee that its task was of great urgency, was content to sit on its findings for months before producing even a summary. Nonetheless, the activities of the Drogheda Committee must be noted in this volume at least as carefully as those of the Beveridge Committee. Like so many other bodies during the period, the Drogheda Committee was seeking to establish priorities. Yet it never really did so. In 1950 Haley had described the BBC's external services as the 'most massive and stable of all international broadcasting efforts' and had claimed that 'they had continued on their way undisturbed'.<sup>1</sup> This was certainly not the case by 1955.

It is interesting to note that many of the key figures in the initial organization of commercial television came from the world of the 'information services' and not from the film industry or the Press. The Ministry of Information disappeared largely unlamented in 1946, but Sir Robert Fraser, the first Director-General of ITA, was a former Director-General of the Central Office of Information, and Bernard Sendall, his deputy, had been Brendan Bracken's secretary during the Second World War, when Bracken was in charge of the Ministry. Sir Kenneth Clark, the first Chairman of the new Authority, had worked there too. In ITA's improvised premises, first in a two-storey 'pre-fab' in Woods Mews and later in Prince's Gate, a former home of the American Embassy, there were many memories of the old days of the Ministry.<sup>2</sup> There had been no similar bond when the BBC was formed.

All the themes, major or minor, of this volume have not been outlined in this brief introduction. The volume, I hope, speaks for itself. There are so many and such varied themes, indeed, that the most obvious title for the book would have been the simplest of all possible titles, *Ten Years of Post-war Broadcasting*. The period of ten years covered in this volume should be compared in the range and depth of its experiences with the

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 505.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 965-6.

five years covered in Volume I, the twelve years covered in Volume II, and the six years covered in Volume III.

Taken as a whole, the ten years from 1945 to 1955 were far more difficult for the BBC than any earlier years in its history, for there was never any real sense of security for the Corporation in the course of them. At the end of the war in Europe the current Charter had twenty months to run, and when it was renewed—without an independent inquiry—it was for only five years. The effects of the war-time advance in electronics, it was stated, could not be foreseen, and nearly ten years later it was still possible to claim that 'the pace of invention is now so fast in television engineering that it is rash to prophesy the speed or the effect of the changes now in the laboratory'.<sup>1</sup> Whatever Haley might write about the 'mass' and 'stability' of the external services, he knew by the summer of 1952, when he left for *The Times*, how much else was uncertain. 'Surely at last,' he had hoped in 1949, when the Government set up its independent inquiry, 'our foundations will be secured for a reasonably long period to come and we shall be allowed, undistracted and with our whole attention really free to concentrate on the work, to revivify and to rebuild. We have never been free to do this this last six years. One cannot say that they have been six years that were wasted, but they have been years when so much has had to be slowed up that might have gone quicker, when so much that should have carried conviction and assurance has had to carry the ghost of a question mark.'<sup>2</sup>

Haley's hopes were not fulfilled. The next six years were to prove not easier but harder, for the Beveridge Committee settled virtually nothing and the 'ghost of a question mark' in the 1952 White Paper soon gave way to the very real presence of 'the competitor'. 'It is not easy in such circumstances,' Barnes had written in 1952, 'to bend one's whole energies and those of a growing staff on to the business for which we are paid, which is to operate a programme and develop its possibilities.'<sup>3</sup> By 1955 there was a challenge conceived not only in organizational

<sup>1</sup> Barnes, 'Reflections on Television' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IX, no. 2, Summer 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in C. Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (1975), p. 468.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes to R. M. Hutchins, 28 April 1952 (Barnes Papers).

terms but in terms of broadcasting output and the creative drives of scriptwriters and producers. In retrospect, we can trace many continuities before and after September 1955, but in that month all the talk was rather on the subject of the last chapter of this volume, ends and beginnings.

## II

### ‘WAR—TRANSITION—PEACE’

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Broadcasting covers so many aspects of national life, ranges so widely, goes so deep, that it must create itself afresh every day according to the highest ideals of national life.

*BBC Year Book, 1946*

Radio is the newest art and the newest social phenomenon. Why should it become a conservative art while still so young? Why should we believe that, without experience and without experiment . . . we should have hit, at first go, on the perfect system?

*The Economist, 18 November 1944*

How could so vast a switch-over as this, from war to peace, not find reflection in the programmes? Of course, they will be very different, and so for that matter will we. First and foremost a lot less indulgent. . . . Most of all, we shall be looking to radio not mainly as a drug or an anodyne, but as a tonic agent for keeping the mind alert to the huge task of re-educating dried up hearts and spoiled appetites; in discovering prophylactics against those plagues of the aftermath—distrust, disillusion and boredom.

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE in *The Listener*, 24 May 1945





# 1. Patterns of Control

ON THE night of VE Day, 8 May 1945, Broadcasting House was floodlit for the first time since Coronation Day on 12 May 1937. It was a changed Broadcasting House, muddy grey in colour instead of gleaming white and pitted with 'battle scars'.<sup>1</sup> Yet the BBC had changed even more than the building which housed many of its operations and symbolized all its purposes.

First, the Corporation had grown dramatically. Second, it had greatly extended the range of its activities at home and abroad. Third, it was largely, though not entirely, under new management. It had entered the Second World War with a staff of 4,899 and 23 transmitters with a total power of 1,620 kilowatts, and it was then broadcasting for 50 hours a day. It ended the war with a staff of 11,417 and 138 transmitters with a total power of 5,250 kilowatts, and it was now broadcasting for 150 hours a day. In 1939 it had been broadcasting in ten foreign languages: in 1945 it was broadcasting in thirty-eight.

Nor were all the changes quantitative. The arts of radio had developed strikingly in war-time in relation to both home and overseas broadcasting. Feature programmes, for example, had come to be regarded as a new 'art form',<sup>2</sup> and documentary features had enjoyed some of the same successes as film documentaries during the 1930s. Popular entertainment had discovered both a new range and a new tempo—with *ITMA* providing a new folklore as well as a new programme—while war reporting by radio, particularly from battle fronts, had achieved the enhanced status of newspaper reporting in nineteenth-century wars. One regular programme broadcast in French by Frenchmen, *Les Français parlent aux Français*, had exploited every kind of new technique of communicating across the frontiers. More generally, all the techniques of sound broadcasting had been simplified and had become far more easily adaptable.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), p. 711.

<sup>2</sup> See D. G. Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel* (1971), esp. ch. 3, 'Radio at War', and pp. 121-3, and D. McWhinnie, *The Art of Radio* (1959), pp. 48 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *The War of Words*, pp. 112-14, 213-15, 710-11 and *passim*.

In broadcasting management and policy-making new people had been brought into the BBC from outside, into both domestic and external services, some from business, some from journalism. They included the man-at-the-top in May 1945, the Director-General, William Haley, born in 1901, a remarkable recruit from the newspaper world, who was appointed to this post in March 1944 after serving for a time as the BBC's Editor-in-Chief. In 1939 the BBC had been torn by internal conflict:<sup>1</sup> in 1945 it was in strong hands. Haley was fascinated from the start by the task of designing a lively pattern of post-war broadcasting; he was also deeply conscious of 'the responsibilities of the broadcaster'. 'The BBC must provide for all classes of listener equally,' he had written magisterially in November 1943. 'This does not mean it shall remain passive regarding the distribution of these classes. It cannot abandon the educative task it has carried on for twenty-one years to improve cultural and ethical standards.'<sup>2</sup>

Broadcasting as a whole had gained in influence during the war not only in Britain but in all parts of the world. 'It had given final proof of its power to penetrate censorships and blockades, span oceans, enter into fortresses, fox-holes and prison camps, to bring news and orders, encouragement and menace, influence opinion, build morale, or spread doubt and despair. It had been used in every form from the most solemn to the most trivial, employing every means from the most powerful stations ever built to the mobile transmitter dropped by parachute to a secret agent, from beamed radio-telephone to 'the little spool of magnetised wire that enabled you to put an hour's entertainment in your pocket'.<sup>3</sup> And as broadcasting had gained in influence and power, the influence and power of the BBC within the world network of radio communication had gained also. If it was a building, Broadcasting House, which for most British listeners symbolized the BBC, the international symbols by which the BBC was known in Europe and across the oceans were symbols in sound—the V Sign in morse or music, *Ici Londres, Lillibullero*.

In international broadcasting the war of words seemed to

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 640 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of 5 Nov. 1943.

<sup>3</sup> M. Gorham, *Broadcasting and Television since 1900* (1952), p. 211.

have led to an outright victory, and it was appropriate that it should be the BBC that commissioned Vaughan Williams to compose his 'Thanksgiving for Victory' which was first broadcast five days after VE Day and was re-broadcast on VJ Day, 14 August. 'Today we can point to the history of broadcasting in Europe,' the *BBC Year Book* proudly proclaimed at the end of the year, 'and say that certain good principles in broadcasting have defeated the worst possible principles.'<sup>1</sup> In 1945, therefore, inside and outside Europe, national broadcasting systems, including those restored after years of foreign control, paid their tributes to the BBC. They took many forms—gifts, some of them still stored in Broadcasting House, official messages, special radio programmes, spontaneous private or public tributes from individuals and groups, and eloquent testimonials from organized committees, like the Dutch National Committee, 'The Netherlands thank the BBC'. Late in 1945 nearly a thousand letters a month were pouring into the BBC from Germany, the defeated enemy, from persons living in the British Zone and in Berlin.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC had been forced to struggle for its independence during the early stages of the war; it had been 'officially guided' at home by the Ministry of Information, which did not finally disappear until 31 March 1946, and in its overseas broadcasting it had been at times rather more than guided by the Political Warfare Executive, formally constituted in 1942. The 'silken cords' of control had sometimes felt like 'chains of iron'.<sup>3</sup> Yet from 1943 onwards they had been slackened. 'I should like to make it clear,' Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information, told a questioner in June 1944, 'that the BBC is not a Government Department, but a public corporation controlled by an independent Board of Governors. The Government, through the agency of the Ministry of Information, intervenes only in respect of the BBC's propaganda broadcasts to Europe. All the rest of the BBC's affairs are under the direct control of the Board of Governors.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase (8 Dec. 1943) was that of Sir Allan Powell, Chairman of the Governors since 1938, quoted in *The War of Words*, p. 34. For the system of guidance and control, see *ibid.*, pp. 31 ff. and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> \*Bracken to Brigadier James Hargest, 2 June 1944.

Senior BBC officials—and a few of them, like B. E. Nicolls, the Senior Controller, had been there from the beginning—recognized how important it would be after the war to free the Corporation from 'war-time restrictions' and to dispel any misconception that it was a 'mouthpiece of the Government'. A counterattack should be mounted, it was agreed, if opponents of a BBC monopoly were to argue that the BBC should be 'smartened up' by some form of competition.<sup>1</sup> It was only during the last phases of the war that problems of post-war 'reconstruction' came to the forefront,<sup>2</sup> although between 1943 and 1945 far more time and energy were devoted to planning for broadcasting after the war than had been devoted before 1939 to planning for broadcasting in war-time.<sup>3</sup> The most important requirement, it was felt, was to offer a greater measure of listener choice, and Haley and his senior colleagues were engaged long before the war ended in the preparation of a three-programme approach to home broadcasting, an approach which is described more fully below.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the future planning of television—one of the casualties of war—was left to a Government Committee, appointed in September 1943 under the chairmanship of sixty-six-year-old Lord Hankey,<sup>5</sup> a widely experienced administrator who, after serving as Secretary to the Cabinet from 1916 to 1938, had held a number of government posts since 1939. The Committee he chaired had to answer the crucial question of whether to restore television on its pre-war basis (405 lines) or to adopt a new standard. At first sight this looked like a question for engineers; in fact, as Haley recognized, the answer to it would determine the future timetable for the BBC and its audiences.

Other planning questions in relation to broadcasting, including those concerning future organizational structures and the 'high politics' of international broadcasting, were matters not only for consideration by the BBC or the Minister of Informa-

<sup>1</sup> \*M. Farquharson, the BBC's Director, Secretariat, to R. Foot, then Director-General, 10 Sept. 1943.

<sup>2</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 714 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 640–53.

<sup>4</sup> *The War of Words*, p. 722. See also below, pp. 50–84.

<sup>5</sup> *The War of Words*, pp. 723–6. It included as BBC representatives the Director-General and the Deputy Director-General, Sir Noel Ashbridge, formerly the Controller (Engineering), and it reported in March 1945. See also E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922–1972* (1972), pp. 311–15.

tion, but for the War Cabinet as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The Chairman of the BBC, Sir Allan Powell, a survivor from the Chamberlain era, gave evidence also in September 1943 to a committee presided over by Dingle Foot which was studying the role of public corporations.<sup>2</sup>

Relatively little immediate public interest was shown in the Hankey Report, although it stated firmly that the pre-war system could become operational within a year, so long as key staff in the Services and government establishments could be promptly released at the end of the war, whereas improved systems with higher definition would take between five and seven years. Its major recommendation, therefore, was that the service should be resumed from Alexandra Palace on 405 lines as soon as possible after the war.<sup>3</sup> *The Times* devoted only half a column of news and an inconclusive third leader to the Report, while even specialist periodicals like *Electrical Trading*, the *Electrical Times*, and *Electronic Engineering* were no more forthcoming.<sup>4</sup>

There was little more public interest in the key questions of the future control of broadcasting. Late in 1944, however, a number of interesting, provocative, and influential articles appeared in *The Economist*, each of them challenging the idea of a perpetual BBC monopoly.<sup>5</sup> At a time when the prestige of the BBC was at its highest and its reputation both at home and abroad seemed unassailable in the light of its war-time record, *The Economist* stated boldly, 'If radio is to be the servant of a free society, and not its assassin, it must follow in the printers' footsteps; it must regard itself as a free medium and be prepared to put out to the world virtually everything that is offered to it, subject, of course, to the laws against libel and indecency. Only so can radio avoid becoming a prison for the human

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 34-42.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Sir Allan Powell on a Committee presided over by Dingle Foot, MP, on the subject of public corporations with 'special reference to the BBC'.

<sup>3</sup> See *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, 29 Dec. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 9 March 1945; *Electronic Engineering*, April 1945; Pawley, op. cit., p. 313. *Wireless World*, May 1945, criticized the major recommendation and favoured an improved system even if there were to be delay. 'Is not the spending of a million and a half of good money on such a scheme something very like sheer waste?'

<sup>5</sup> *The Economist*, 28 Oct. 1944. The articles had the composite title 'A Plan for Broadcasting'.

spirit. . . . This means that there should not be a single Broadcasting Corporation.'<sup>1</sup>

Neither the Coalition Government headed by Winston Churchill nor the Labour Government headed by Clement Attlee, which took office after the general election of July 1945, seriously contemplated such an outcome. Brendan Bracken, however, had remarked at the BBC's twenty-first birthday celebrations in 1943—appropriately modest to fit the war-time mood—that while he would be surprised if the British public would approve of the introduction of commercial broadcasting in Britain, he thought that there was scope for 'healthy competition', a phrase already current in Broadcasting House, to be developed within the BBC itself.<sup>2</sup> Ernest Thurtle, Bracken's junior Labour minister, went further in suggesting that there were many dangers 'inherent in monopoly' and that it ought to be brought to an end. He saw nothing in the argument that 'the cultural and moral uplift content of broadcasting would suffer if commercial wireless took the place of the present national monopoly'.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly two months before the twenty-first birthday celebrations, Bracken, along with his ministerial colleagues, had been invited to send a departmental return to the Prime Minister stating what action he would recommend in policies relating to his department during the period immediately after hostilities with Germany ended and during a longer 'transition period' thereafter of two years.<sup>4</sup> Bracken replied that before his war-time responsibilities as Minister of Information were transferred back to the Postmaster-General, as had always been envisaged, a 'small committee' should be appointed by the Government to advise it on 'its attitude towards the future of radio broadcasting in this country'.<sup>5</sup> The BBC's current Charter was due to expire on 31 December 1946, and such a committee would have time to consider carefully before making a recommendation.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Script of Speech, 8 Dec. 1943. See *The War of Words*, pp. 720–1.

<sup>3</sup> E. Thurtle, *Time's Winged Chariot* (1945), pp. 176–86.

<sup>4</sup> War Cabinet Paper WP (43) 467, 19 October 1943, 'War—Transition—Peace', and WP (43) 476, 27 October 1943, prepared after the War Cabinet had given its general approval to Churchill's 'line of approach' on 21 October 1943.

<sup>5</sup> WP (44) 39, 19 Jan. 1944.

At the same time as Bracken's reply, Attlee, Lord President of the Council, Deputy Prime Minister and future Prime Minister, also submitted a memorandum, raising wider issues than Bracken. When the Charter of the BBC came up for renewal in 1946, he argued, 'international as well as domestic issues' would be at stake. The first set of issues concerned the role of foreign stations which were 'exploited by commercial interests', stations like Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg with their 'sponsored programmes in competition with the BBC'. What was to happen to these stations, Attlee asked, if, as he hoped, 'the policy of preserving the BBC free from commercial exploitation' was maintained? A second set of issues concerned the international allocation of wavelengths. 'The Lucerne Convention . . . will obviously have to be re-considered.'<sup>1</sup> What should take its place?

Nor were these Attlee's only questions. Negatively, he went on, what arrangements should be made for the control of the wireless in ex-enemy countries as a measure 'ancillary to the denial to them of the instruments of war'? And positively, what could and should be done 'to make use of the wireless as a positive instrument for peace'? Attlee added that he regretted that before the war the League of Nations had not been allowed to develop an international wireless service. Now was the time for an expert inquiry to see whether or not a new international service could be created, 'not purely didactic and educational, but . . . designed to give programmes of the highest quality drawn from many national sources'. Its 'prime duty' would be to present news 'as far as possible true and unbiased by national interests'.<sup>2</sup>

Attlee was an ex-Postmaster-General, and he had served as a member of the Ullswater Committee which had reported on the future of the BBC in 1935 in the distant years before the war.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note, therefore, that it was he as much as Bracken who triggered off the sequence of events which led directly to the setting up in January 1944 of a Committee, chaired by Lord Woolton, another key figure in the post-war

<sup>1</sup> For the Lucerne Convention, see *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 346-7.

<sup>2</sup> WP (43) 580, 21 Dec. 1943. \*The BBC proposed its own 'Draft Note for Declaration by the United Nations' in October 1943.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 476-504.

story, to review the future scope and organization of broadcasting. 'No time should be lost,' Bracken insisted, and the Committee met for the first time in May. It was not an independent Committee with an independent chairman, however, as Bracken had suggested and as BBC officials had anticipated when they talked of a 'new Ullswater Committee'.<sup>1</sup> It was a Committee of Ministers, and it registered differences of departmental outlook. The Chairman, Director-General, and Governors of the BBC were not fully aware of the initial moves or of Attlee's 'lively interest' in what was happening,<sup>2</sup> and Churchill's own views remained unknown.

The first meeting of the Committee was held on 15 May 1944. Woolton, who had approached politics through the retail trade and was known to millions as Minister of Food, was in the chair now as Minister of Reconstruction, and Attlee, Bracken, Captain H. F. C. Crookshank, the Postmaster-General, and Richard Law, Minister of State, were present. The international issues raised by Attlee had been placed on the agenda as well as the fundamental question, 'What should be the future organisation of broadcasting in this country?'<sup>3</sup>

The initial answer given collectively by the Committee was very close to the answer Bracken had offered at the BBC's twenty-first birthday lunch. The 'general feeling', the Minutes read, was that the BBC should be retained as the 'chosen instrument' of home broadcasting, but that it would be desirable to provide for 'the maximum possible amount of regional devolution'. Overseas broadcasting, which had increased immensely in volume during the war, should continue to be organized within the BBC, although the Government, it was felt, would have to exercise 'a much greater degree of control over overseas broadcasting than over home broadcasting'. Sponsoring of home programmes or advertising was also considered, as it had been in the BBC itself, with the Committee 'in general disposed to think that any developments of this kind would not be welcome'. Yet it was agreed that the opinion

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Farquharson, 'New Ullswater Committee, 16 Feb. 1944'. This note actually included twelve headings for such a committee which were called 'Charter Points'. The first was 'Period of Extension'.

<sup>2</sup> \*K. Adam, the BBC's Director of Publicity, to Haley, 31 Jan. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 15 May 1944. The terms of reference of the Committee were set out in B (44) 1.



of the President of the Board of Trade should be obtained as to whether overseas broadcasting should be used for advertising British goods. He and other ministers, including the Secretaries of State for the Colonies, for Dominion Affairs, and for India, were to be asked to submit their views. So, too, were the Governors of the BBC. On the wider issues raised by Attlee, there was discussion about a possible international agreement to prevent commercial broadcasting in other countries—the need for such an agreement was felt to be ‘urgent’, not least in order to protect Europe against American commercial interests; a proposal that control of enemy radio immediately after the war should be followed by a period of ‘re-education’ of the enemy by means of broadcasting; and a request to the Postmaster-General to explain the reasons for the failure of pre-war international broadcasting from Geneva.

There was a further gap of two months between the first and second meetings of Lord Woolton’s Committee, although two meetings were then held in July on the 17th and 26th. All in all, eight meetings were called, the last three in 1945 with no Labour members of the Government in attendance. At the third meeting in July 1944 television was one of the items on the agenda (along with wire broadcasting and the broadcasting of Parliament),<sup>1</sup> and at the fourth, broadcasting to overseas countries also figured. At the fifth, described as ‘informal’ and without minutes, Sir Allan Powell and Haley were both present. No written evidence was demanded at any stage from the BBC.

Before this fifth meeting, a number of critical decisions had already been reached—for example, that as far as home broadcasting was concerned, ‘the full measure of independence’ enjoyed by the Governors before the war should be restored. Their numbers, it was agreed, should be reduced as quickly as possible from seven to five, and careful consideration was to be given to the question of whether any of the present Governors should continue in office under the 1947 Charter.<sup>2</sup> In fact, there was to be no reduction in the number of Governors, although there was to be a general change in the composition of the Board.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 17 July 1944.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 449. Lord Reith, who saw Herbert Morrison, then in charge of broadcasting policy, in December 1945 (*Diary*, 3 Dec. 1945), objected to a small Board. He felt he ‘had done a very good job for the BBC’ on this occasion.

It was agreed also that while 'technical control' of the BBC should rest with the Postmaster-General, as it had done before 1939, general control, 'which should be remote', should be transferred, as the Ullswater Committee had recommended, to a senior Cabinet Minister without heavy departmental responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> A raising of the listeners' licence fee to £1 (double the fee before the war) was contemplated, and at the same time advertising and sponsoring of BBC programmes were ruled out.<sup>2</sup> Powell, Robert Foot (Haley's predecessor as Director-General), and Haley told Sir John Anderson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 30 March 1944, that they favoured a doubling of the licence fee, and by the time that they submitted a recommendation to this effect in October 1944 the Woolton Committee had recognized its necessity.<sup>3</sup> The Committee also pressed for 'the maximum encouragement' to be given to 'regional devolution',<sup>4</sup> and approval was expressed of the BBC's efforts to build up a news service of its own.<sup>5</sup> The Postmaster-General stressed, as his predecessors had been stressing since 1922, that the number of wavelengths available internationally imposed very definite limits on the expansion of BBC broadcasting.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most important point of agreement in relation to future control—given the decision to increase licence-fee income, the life-blood of the Corporation—was that a ten-year period should be retained for the operation of the next BBC Charter, which, it was confirmed, should again be renewable.<sup>7</sup> A Royal Charter, of the kind which had defined

<sup>1</sup> War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 18 July 1944. The BBC had prepared a detailed memorandum on this subject in June 1942, and it was raised by Powell at a meeting at the Treasury in September 1943 (\*B. D. Fraser to Powell, 24 Sept. 1943, and Powell to Fraser, 20 Oct. 1943). Powell said he could not advance an argument in favour of a senior minister having 'a kind of BBC brief'. 'He could not conceive of any issue on which the Corporation would need such backing.' He made the same point to the Dingle Foot Committee. (See above, p. 31.)

<sup>2</sup> War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 17 July 1944. 'The giving of such programmes', it was minuted, 'might raise political difficulties and there was a danger that the main types of products advertised would be foreign.'

<sup>3</sup> \*It was not until 18 April 1945 that Haley was informed by Sir Alan Barlow of the Treasury that the licence fee would be doubled.

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 84–117, 383–4.

<sup>5</sup> See below, pp. 572 ff.

<sup>6</sup> War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 26 July 1944. The Postmaster-General circulated a memorandum on this subject on 5 June 1944.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1944.

the BBC's constitutional position since 1 January 1927, is one of 'the least restricting legal instruments known in Britain',<sup>1</sup> and it was in 'chartered freedom' that the BBC was to move through the post-war world.

In reaching such important conclusions before its fifth meeting, the Committee had drawn heavily on a basic paper circulated by Bracken and described simply as 'Some Notes which have been prepared in the Ministry of Information about the future of broadcasting and which may help focus some of the issues before the Committee'.<sup>2</sup> The first section, on home broadcasting, began as basically as it could have done. 'The future of home broadcasting depends on whether a monopoly service should be maintained, as at present, or whether the existence of competitive services in some form should be allowed.' The second section, on 'broadcasting to foreign audiences', began with what then seemed a nearly self-evident proposition. 'Presumably it may be taken for granted that the Government will wish to have the BBC's services to foreign countries continued after the war, though no doubt on a reduced scale. The broadcast service of Britain has become a great influence in Europe and it would be a loss to us if this influence was to cease.'

Once these general propositions had been advanced, however, the argument in the 'Notes' twisted and turned, and there were asides or apparent asides which were to become substantive propositions at a later date. Thus, in the section on home broadcasting, there was a reference to a possible future pattern of home broadcasting in which BBC and commercial broadcasting services might exist in parallel as 'in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many South American countries'. It was recognized also that the Post Office might at some future date rent programme time to self-supporting stations living on their advertising revenues, even though the Committee 'could hardly expect any such development of commercial broadcasting as has taken place in America'. This line of thought, although not followed through, had been opened up in 1945

<sup>1</sup> A phrase of a future Director-General, Sir Hugh Greene, in 'The BBC's Duty to Society' in *The Listener*, 17 June 1965. Farquharson reminded the Deputy Director-General on 16 Feb. 1944 that Reith had prepared an alternative form of Charter and Licence before the Ullswater Committee had been appointed. For the later control of independent television by statute, see below, pp. 926 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The official number of the Paper was B (44) 7.

for the first time since 1922, and the way was never to be completely closed again.

By contrast, a number of points were taken for granted in the 'Notes'. For example, it was assumed without much exploration, in the section on broadcasting to foreign audiences, that 'there should be a distinct separation between the home and foreign services' of the BBC. The home service would necessarily have to be impartial in its 'handling of the problems of the day', while a monopoly foreign service would have no choice but 'to support the national policy of the day'. The 'experience of the Ministry of Information' was cited as the backing for this argument, which, as we shall see, did not become the basis of post-war external broadcasting.<sup>1</sup> Nor was another alternative in the 'Notes' followed through—that a 'Foreign Publicity Department' might co-ordinate external broadcasting with other publicity services. Post-war external broadcasting was to remain within the ambit of the BBC.

One major theme in the 'Notes' was the need for 'internal competition' inside the BBC itself, and Bracken, following up his 1943 address, encouraged the idea of separate regional and other services, each with a substantial degree of autonomy. Such a pattern, he argued, would be preferable to 'the maintenance of several independent chartered services' which 'would probably be regarded as wasteful'.

In a separate memorandum of June 1944 the Postmaster-General, Captain Harry Crookshank, raised a number of other issues, mainly drawing upon historical experience. He pointed out, for instance, that both in relation to programmes and to staff the policy of the Government had been to allow the BBC 'the maximum of independence'.<sup>2</sup> As far as advertising and sponsorship was concerned, he recalled that on the outbreak of war in 1939 the fate of a Treasury proposal that the BBC should provide advertisement programmes had been left 'undecided'.<sup>3</sup> He had less to say on this highly controversial subject than was being said inside the BBC itself at this time,<sup>4</sup> although he observed, first, that the BBC had shown no disposition to wish to

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 142 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum by the Postmaster-General, 5 June 1944, 'General Questions affecting the British Broadcasting Corporation'.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 618-19.

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 52-4.

advertise and, second, that 'many members of the public' would object to advertisement or sponsored programmes 'on cultural grounds'. He included several paragraphs also on commercial broadcasting from overseas for British audiences. Fears of American interests were still increasing.<sup>1</sup>

There was plenty of talk about the content of these paragraphs between Committee meetings, and at a further meeting of the Cabinet Committee in March 1945, when Woolton was in the chair and other ministers attending included Anderson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Oliver Stanley, Secretary of State for India and Burma, and P. V. Emrys-Evans, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, as well as Bracken, Crookshank, and Law. The first item on the agenda at this meeting was the series of *Economist* articles.<sup>2</sup> They were unpopular inside the BBC—'We do not like this *Economist* material at all and propose to counter it', A. J. P. Hytch, the BBC's Assistant Director of Publicity, remarked to a regional officer of the Corporation<sup>3</sup>—yet Bracken told the Committee that although he favoured the continuance of the BBC's monopoly, the arguments in the articles would have to be seriously considered.

In discussion, it was pointed out that technical considerations (limited wavelengths and the need for common services) did not in themselves constitute a conclusive argument in favour of monopoly and that since the BBC's Charter did not expire until 31 December 1946 there was 'a margin of time in which a public inquiry could, if necessary, be held'. *The Economist's* controversial contention that 'the state monopoly' had all the faults to be expected from a monopoly—'timidity, conservativeness, greyness, dullness'—seems to have won no support, and the 'possibility' of a further inquiry before 1946 was left completely open.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of later history, some of the most interesting comments in the *Economist* articles did not make their way into the précis offered to members of the Committee. This concentrated on the proposal to set up three separate broadcasting

<sup>1</sup> 'The Future of Broadcasting', 12 July 1944.

<sup>2</sup> A précis of the articles was prepared for the War Cabinet Committee, 9 Feb. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*A. J. P. Hytch to Colin Turner, West Region, 23 Nov. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 6 March 1945.

corporations. 'When soberly analysed,' the first of the articles remarked, a 'general BBC programme' for all kinds of people in all parts of the country was 'an absurdity'; it suggested instead programmes differentiated in terms of audience, thereby anticipating, if not clearly, the sound broadcasting pattern of the 1970s—Radios One to Four.<sup>1</sup> The second article suggested that technical developments, including frequency modulation, would encourage a shift from the large-radius medium-wave station to 'a much larger number of stations with a much smaller radius'. The whole post-war argument about VHF was anticipated in this article.<sup>2</sup> The third article by-passed 'regionalism'—and all the many later debates about it—and looked forward to a 'network of local stations instead of the present national stations', a direct forecast of recent broadcasting history.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in the fourth article, the idea of two new companies, ABC and CBC, competing with the BBC, was explored.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the *Economist* articles there were short, sharp judgements on many specific points and one excursion into social psychology. 'Since every speaker who begins to acquire a radio personality will have a growing number of enemies, anyone who begins to be interesting must be removed.' The observation may have been related to the war-time argument about J. B. Priestley and his 'Postscripts',<sup>5</sup> but it also carried with it intimations of the future. Many of the 'radio personalities' of the post-war period were already known to listeners in 1945. Among them were Tommy Handley, Cyril Joad, Freddie Grisewood, Wilfred Pickles, and Richard Dimbleby. One of the best-known and best-loved of pre-war BBC personalities, C. H. Middleton, the BBC's Gardener, who died in September 1945, was given a mention in the BBC's *Annual Report and Accounts* for 1945-6, a White Paper which was presented to Parliament.<sup>6</sup>

The War Cabinet Committee devoted one of its last meetings to television and to the report of Lord Hankey's Television

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 28 Oct. 1944.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 Nov. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 Nov. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 Nov. 1944.

<sup>5</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 212-13, 320-2, 618, 621.

<sup>6</sup> Cmd. 6985, *The British Broadcasting Corporation, Annual Report and Accounts*, Dec. 1946.

Committee.<sup>1</sup> R. A. Butler, the Minister of Education, was present on this occasion for the first time, but there were no Labour members alongside him. Butler pointed out that the use of television in schools, which he was 'most anxious to develop', could not be promoted within the 405-line system, which the Hankey Committee had recommended, and the Foreign Office representative complained that the Americans would be placed at an advantage in world markets if they alone could offer customers television sets on an improved 525-line standard of definition. There seems to have been at least as much discussion in the Committee on the likely sale of sets as on the control of programmes, and, like the Hankey Committee itself, the War Cabinet Committee came to no final conclusions about the finance of television development.<sup>2</sup> Bracken emphasized that 'a heavy responsibility would rest with the Minister concerned with television' and that it would be unwise to bind him solely to the advice of the Television Advisory Committee which had been in existence before the war. Key men should be released for research and development as soon as the war ended, and the oversight of commercial development should be left directly to the President of the Board of Trade. Fifty key men, if released at once, mainly from radar work, would be able to deal with urgent post-war planning, and the BBC, the Post Office, and the two important firms in the radio industry—it was not yet called an electronics industry<sup>3</sup>—could name them all.<sup>4</sup> Bracken did not add that many of these men, who had made a decisive contribution to the war effort, were chafing to return to television and wished to see it develop as quickly as possible. They were imbued with the war-time belief that everything was possible given will as well as knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

The War Cabinet Committee had not completed its meetings

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 30 ff. 'Post-War Television Policy', 22 Jan. 1945; War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 11 April 1945; Note by the Minister of Reconstruction, 23 March 1945.

<sup>2</sup> War Cabinet Committee, *Minutes*, 11 April 1945; see below, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> See C. Freeman, 'Research and Development in Electronic Capital Goods' in the *Economic Review* of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Nov. 1965, and M. M. Postan, D. Hay, and J. D. Scott, 'Design and Development of Weapons' in *History of the Second World War* (1964), Part III, ch. XV.

<sup>4</sup> War Cabinet Committee, *Minutes*, 11 April 1945.

<sup>5</sup> See below, pp. 189 ff.

when the Coalition broke up and Churchill formed his 'caretaker government'. It was left to Attlee's Labour Government, therefore, to take note of what had been discussed and to make preparations for the future. Attlee delegated immediate responsibilities in this field (except those relating to political broadcasting) to Herbert Morrison, his own Lord President of the Council, a senior politician who had played no part in the war-time discussions but who was to play a major role in post-war broadcasting politics.<sup>1</sup> It was under Morrison, therefore, that a small committee was set up, including the Minister of Information, the Postmaster-General, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to consider future policy. The Committee accepted the draft report of the Coalition Cabinet Committee in November 1945<sup>2</sup> and explicitly rejected the *Economist's* pattern of three competing corporations. It was not until February 1946, however, that Attlee, not Morrison, told the House of Commons that the Government did not intend to hold an independent public inquiry before the BBC's Charter was renewed,<sup>3</sup> and it was not until 2 July 1946 that a White Paper on Broadcasting was published.<sup>4</sup> By then the Ministry of Information had been dissolved and the powers of the Minister transferred back to the Postmaster-General.<sup>5</sup>

In the interval there were signs of a change in parliamentary and in public attitudes. When Attlee made his statement to the House in February there was relatively little comment,<sup>6</sup> although Alfred Robens from the Labour back benches had already asked the Government whether it was considering sponsored programmes,<sup>7</sup> and in April 1946 a Conservative

<sup>1</sup> There are no references to broadcasting in Bernard Donoughe's life of Morrison, and among his papers the only ones relating to broadcasting deal with Party complaints of BBC bias.

<sup>2</sup> CP (45) 293, 20 Nov. 1945. A copy of this Paper was sent privately to Haley by Lord Reith with his own comments, 'for BBC Archives'.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 419, cols. 952-3, 19 Feb. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 6852 (1946).

<sup>5</sup> For the background, see *Picture Post*, 20 Oct. 1945, which has an interesting article by Edward Hulton, 'Should the M.O.I. continue?' There was some Press controversy on the subject but as the *Eastern Evening News* put it, 18 Dec. 1945, 'The announcement by the Prime Minister that the Ministry of Information is to be wound up will scarcely win the "passing tribute of a sigh" from the average man.'

<sup>6</sup> See *The Spectator*, 3 May 1946.

<sup>7</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 419, col. 183, 12 Feb. 1946.



back-bencher was to press the Prime Minister to set up a commission to consider introducing commercial programmes.<sup>1</sup> There was clearly little interest in the Commons in future broadcasting structures and policies, and the Government could quietly consult the BBC behind the scenes about the shape of its White Paper.<sup>2</sup> Yet the absence of Morrison in the United States—where he completed difficult negotiations about food with the Americans—left a gap, and on 20 June Churchill tabled a motion that renewal of the Charter should not be taken for granted and should be referred to a Joint Select Committee of both Houses. Two hundred MPs signed the motion, which was followed by the tabling of a motion in the House of Lords by Lord Brabazon asking for a debate and for an independent investigation before the Charter was renewed. On the day when the Lords debate was due to take place, 26 June 1946, readers of the correspondence columns of *The Times* were confronted with a letter attacking the monopoly from Sir Frederick Ogilvie, who had succeeded Reith as Director-General of the BBC in 1938 and left it very unhappily in 1942.

This was the first of many occasions on which letters to *The Times* contributed to open debate on broadcasting, and in retrospect Haley felt that Morrison's enforced visits to the United States (to clear up difficulties created by the Minister of Food, Sir Ben Smith) were the first fortuitous events in a 'chapter of accidents' which was to end in the destruction of the monopoly.

'What is at stake,' Ogilvie argued, 'is not a matter of politics but of freedom. Is monopoly of broadcasting to be fastened on us for a further term? Is the future of this great public service to be settled without public enquiry, by Royal Commission or otherwise, into the many technical and other changes which have taken place in the last ten years. Freedom is choice. And monopoly of broadcasting is inevitably the negation of freedom, no matter how efficiently it is run, or how wise and kindly the boards or committees in charge of it. It denies freedom of choice to listeners. It denies freedom of employment to speakers,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 421, col. 494, 18 April 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Townshend wrote from the Post Office to Haley, 16 April 1946, asking for the BBC's views, and Haley replied with an eighteen-page document beginning with the sentence, 'The BBC is a public service and the only mainspring for all its actions is the good of the community.'

musicians, writers, actors and all who seek their chance on the air. The dangers of monopoly have long been recognized in the film industry and the Press and the Theatre. . . . In tolerating monopoly of broadcasting we are alone among the democratic countries of the world.<sup>1</sup>

This was strong stuff from an ex-Director-General, even if he had always been suspect to Reith and even if he had been turned out of the BBC at the nadir of its war-time fortunes. Yet when it came to the point, the debate in the House of Lords produced fewer fireworks than Ogilvie's letter. Lord Brabazon did not want the BBC to 'go commercial'; instead, he wanted a system like that in Australia where commercial and non-commercial stations operated in parallel. Lord Elton, who had been a member of the Ullswater Committee, favoured 'some element of competition in the air' in the interests of artists. Lord Samuel wanted more time to think—and an inquiry. Lord Tweedsmuir paid a tribute to the BBC, but feared that like all monopolies it would eventually sell to the public an 'inferior product'. He said this at a time when, uneasy about the 'mounting public disquiet',<sup>2</sup> his fellow-Scotsman, Lord Reith, whom he had known for many years, was preparing the famous—some thought notorious—passage in his autobiography in which he claimed that only 'the brute force of monopoly' could maintain BBC standards.<sup>3</sup>

In reply to the debate, Lord Listowel, the Postmaster-General, returned to the original case for the monopoly as advanced in 1922—the technical shortage of wavelengths—a case which was soon to be critically examined by one of the first scholarly writers on British broadcasting, the economist R. H. Coase.<sup>4</sup> He stated also that in the forthcoming White Paper the Government would explain more fully why it felt that it was undesirable at that time, despite the pressures, to stage a large-scale public inquiry. This was not to be the only time

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 26 June 1946.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (1949), p. 523. For the help given by Buchan to Reith and to broadcasting in its early years, see *ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> R. H. Coase, *British Broadcasting, A Study in Monopoly* (1950). The technical argument for monopoly was challenged by P. P. Eckersley, first Chief Engineer of the BBC, in a letter to *The Times*, 16 July 1946. See also his *The Power Behind the Microphone* (1941). For the later use of Coase's work, see below, pp. 299, 376. For the relevant early BBC history, see A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961).

after 1945 that a Government spokesman was to be given this particular task. In the House of Commons Churchill's motion was supported not only by Conservatives but by Lady Megan Lloyd George and W. J. Brown.<sup>1</sup>

The new White Paper, published a week after the debate in the House of Lords, was short—only twenty-seven pages in length—and it was to have an equally short life. It yielded to the pressures to the extent that it now proposed that the BBC's Charter and Licence should be renewed not for ten years but for a period of five years from 1 January 1947; and although it set aside the idea of any immediate public inquiry, this change in timetable was to be of the utmost importance. Broadcasting policy was not to be settled securely for a long period. This was the significant point. Morrison himself was even reported as having promised a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party that there would be an independent inquiry within three years of the renewal of the Charter, although he actually offered one within five. The issues seemed to centre at this time on the future of sound broadcasting. There was nothing new in the White Paper about television, though it pointed out that the Television Service had already resumed a month earlier and that a new Television Advisory Committee had already been set up in the autumn of October 1945.<sup>2</sup>

The first section of the White Paper was devoted to history,<sup>3</sup> the last to finance, and in both sections the traditional system of organizing and financing British broadcasting was accepted as the best. This, indeed, was the presupposition of the Report as well as its conclusion. 'Taken as a whole, the achievements of British broadcasting since 1926 will bear comparison with those of any other country.'<sup>4</sup> 'The Government have considered the use by the Corporation of commercially sponsored programmes, and do not consider that there is a case for any change in the present policy of prohibition. The Corporation has shown no desire to use sponsored programmes, and any attempt to do

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 424, cols. 375–6, 20 June 1946. Morrison announced the imminent publication of the White Paper later in the month (*ibid.*, col. 1321, 26 June 1946).

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> For Coase's critical comments on the version of early history in the White Paper, particularly for what it said on the Report of the Sykes Committee, see Coase, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–9. Cf. *The Birth of Broadcasting*, ch. IV.

<sup>4</sup> *Cmnd.* 6852 (1946).

so, they consider, would be resented by a large body of public opinion. Such programmes would also be out of keeping with the responsibilities of the Corporation as the trustee of a public service.' Nothing could have been firmer. And there was a further pledge. 'The Government . . . intend to take all steps within their power, and to use their influence with the authorities concerned, to prevent the direction of commercial broadcasts to this country from abroad.'<sup>1</sup>

In retrospect, perhaps the most interesting section of the White Paper was that dealing with the reasons for 'not appointing a Committee of Enquiry on this occasion'. Why had the Government not followed the precedent of the Ullswater Committee? It was not 'opposed in principle to the appointment of an independent committee of enquiry', the White Paper stated, but it had three reasons for not appointing one at that juncture. First, the BBC had been operating during the war under 'abnormal conditions'. Thereafter Charter and Licence had applied in 'normal conditions' for only one-and-a-half years, 'an insufficient period to enable any conclusions to be formed as to the merits or otherwise of the broadcasting organization which they established'. Second, it was not easy to foresee the peace-time implications of 'the very material technical progress in the field of electronics' during the previous ten years. Third, British broadcasting had to function within the framework of international agreements regarding the allocation of wavelengths, and it would take time for international agreement on this subject to be reached.<sup>2</sup>

The case sounded convincing to most commentators outside political circles, and it was fully backed in *The Times*, which more than a year earlier had already urged before the war ended that instead of considering whether or not to abolish the BBC, the Government should rather be seeking the best means of guaranteeing its 'permanent' independence.<sup>3</sup> 'The general desire, now crystallised by experience,' it reaffirmed in July 1946, 'is to retain broadcasting as a public service, ultimately supervised by Parliament, and on the other hand to free the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para 47.

<sup>2</sup> Agreement, less effective than the pre-war agreements, was reached at Copenhagen in 1948. See below, pp. 480-2, for the Copenhagen Plan.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1945.

executive of the Corporation as much as possible from political interference in the day-to-day conduct of its affairs. The proposals of the Government conform in the main to this well defined trend of public opinion.<sup>1</sup>

Events after 1946 were to prove that this 'well defined trend of public opinion' was less securely based than *The Times* suggested. Yet the *Manchester Guardian*, springing to the defence of the monopoly, went even further than *The Times*. 'It is a little difficult to know why this sudden demand for an enquiry sprang up. . . . A Constitution with which the country has been pretty well content for years all at once begins to grow hooves and a tail, and a former Director-General stirs out of his Oxford repose [Ogilvie was then Principal of Jesus College, Oxford] to descry in his former charge the nationalisation of the infinitely precious things of the mind and the spirit. It is hard not to suspect in all this the sulphurous smell of the political and commercial pit and not a disinterested attempt to secure . . . the best possible broadcasting service.' The *Guardian's* conclusion was as firm as the Government's. 'The Government is entirely right to stick to a system which in our small island at least has proved its worth and technical suitability.'<sup>2</sup>

The debate in the House of Commons which followed the publication of the White Paper broke little new ground. The opening speaker, Henderson Stewart, Liberal National Member of Parliament for East Fife, thought, like *The Economist*, that 'two, three or four independent broadcasting corporations or organizations in this country, each vying with, competing with, challenging the others in engineering, technical production and programmes' could not fail to improve standards.<sup>3</sup> He did not advocate commercial broadcasting, yet his references to engineering in this context, like those of Lord Sandhurst in the House of Lords, angered Lord Reith, who not only wrote a letter to *The Times*, but to the amazement of Ashbridge, the BBC's Deputy Director-General and former Controller, Engineering, actually visited Broadcasting House for the first

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 3 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 425, col. 1073, 16 July 1946. He also said that 'the story of the BBC at war ought to be written by the finest historian in our land, because it is a story of great courage, endurance and loyalty, probably unsurpassed in the whole field of world affairs.'

time since he had left it in 1938.<sup>1</sup> The drama pleased him, and he must have been pleased, too, with a parliamentary statement by the Labour MP, Patrick Gordon Walker, that the BBC's monopoly should be further strengthened by banning wire broadcasting altogether, whoever operated it. 'The power of those who control wire broadcasting is even greater than that of those who originate programmes in studios because those who control the wire broadcasting can dictate what the listeners shall not listen to.'<sup>2</sup>

Bracken, by contrast, left the BBC's twenty-first birthday celebrations far behind in the past and praised American radio on the grounds that it was 'infinitely superior' to the BBC in entertainment and 'far more courageous in dealing with controversial issues'. He would have said neither of these things in public, at least, before leaving the Ministry of Information, and he now wanted 'the strongest possible committee of enquiry the Government can appoint'. This was Churchill's position also in 1946, and Bracken was always very close to him. The Committee should consider, first and foremost, Bracken said, the question of whether 'by accident we have fixed upon the best system of broadcasting' or whether 'we are perpetuating a monopoly which will cramp the great potentialities of broadcasting'.

No one took up explicitly his choice of the curious words 'by accident', words which recall Haley's later words that the break-up of the BBC's monopoly was also to be achieved by accident.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Sir Ian Fraser, who had been a member of the Crawford Committee in 1925 as well as a Governor of the BBC, challenged the view that the broadcasting service had become a monopoly 'almost by a mistake'.<sup>4</sup> Herbert Morrison offered an alternative explanation to that of Bracken and an altogether more flattering one when he referred to the BBC as

<sup>1</sup> He also secured a testimonial to the engineers from David Sarnoff, radio pioneer and chairman of the Radio Corporation of America; see the entry in his *Diary* for 26 July 1946. He saw Nicolls and T. Lochhead, the BBC's Controller (Finance), as well as Ashbridge, but not Haley. He was soon in correspondence with Haley, however, at the latter's suggestion. See C. Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (1975), pp. 456-7.

<sup>2</sup> See *Hansard*, vol. 425, col. 1115, 16 July 1946. The BBC's alliance with the Post Office to limit wire broadcasting was strongly criticized by Coase.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> He later became a critic of the BBC and of the monopoly (see below, p. 363.)

an example of 'the British genius for finding workable solutions to the most intractable problems'.<sup>1</sup>

When he turned to possible alternatives to the BBC, Morrison anticipated the language of the mid-1950s. 'Personally I find it repugnant to hear, as I have heard, a programme of beautifully sung children's hymns punctuated by an oily voice urging me to buy somebody's pills.' He also had good socialist objections to high artists' fees. 'As for artistes' fees, I believe them to be adequate to anyone who is not suffering from megalomania.'<sup>2</sup>

The *Manchester Guardian* found the House of Commons debate as disappointing as it had found the White Paper sensible. Yet 'it proved at least', its leader ran, 'that there is no demand for commercial broadcasting in this country. Hardly a single speaker was prepared to champion the sponsored programmes. It is therefore clear that if we are to have better broadcasting in this country . . . it must be done within the wide boundaries of the BBC.'<sup>3</sup>

What was happening 'within the wide boundaries of the BBC' in 1946? Haley and his staff were busy with programming, and the Governors themselves simply 'noted' the White Paper,<sup>4</sup> while congratulating Haley, who had just received the KCMG in January 1946, on the fact that a new Charter was 'largely a repetition of the old'.<sup>5</sup> They had been given an assurance by the Treasury that although in future the Comptroller and Auditor-General would be given access to BBC accounts, this would not mean any encroachment on BBC independence.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, there was a guarantee of increased income when the raising of the listeners' licence from 10s. to £1 took effect from June 1946.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1945, which had called the BBC 'perhaps the most fruitful experiment yet attempted in the combination of national responsibility with professional independence and enterprise'.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 425, cols. 1089-90, 16 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 18 July 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 11 July 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 31 Oct., 27 Nov. 1946.

<sup>6</sup> \**Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1946.

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 36. *Hansard*, vol. 422, col. 2086, 16 May 1946, reports the decision. See also *ibid.*, vol. 418, col. 34, 22 Jan. 1946, for the first announcement of the increase, and *ibid.*, cols. 693-5, 29 Jan. 1946, for an early parliamentary discussion on the subject, when Morrison said firmly that 'if the institution is to pay its way, and if there is to be room for development in an improving direction, I can assure the House that it just cannot be done on 10s. a year.' The BBC Governors had expressed their satisfaction with the increase. (\*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 24 Jan. 1946.)

To understand the operational plans and aspirations in 1946 of broadcasters themselves—controllers, producers, or performers—it is necessary to go back, as in the case of government, to discussions held during the war. They ensured that a new pattern of broadcasting could be introduced after VE Day with the minimum of delay.

## 2. Home, Light, Third

IT WAS during the year 1943, the year when the Government began to concern itself with post-war broadcasting,<sup>1</sup> that the BBC itself began to consider 'the allocation of wavelengths after the War' and the effect of such allocation on broadcasting output and listener choice. On 19 March the then Director-General, Robert Foot, circulated among a few senior colleagues 'Some Notes on Post-war Position'. Most of the fifteen points listed were headings, like 'problems of accommodation' and 'no sponsoring', the latter a firm declaration, but there was one leading question, number eleven—'Home Programmes. How many, what kind and how many (if any) to be regionally produced?''<sup>2</sup>

A number of replies were received which reveal clearly that a tripartite division of home programmes was already being envisaged. In 1943 the Home Service, the basic war-time service and for a time the only BBC service designed for listeners in Britain, had not yet been supplemented by the 'General Forces Programme', although the Forces Programme, which preceded it, had been deliberately planned from its inception in 1940 to be 'lighter' in character.<sup>3</sup> There was no doubt about the popularity of the Forces Programme with large numbers of civilian listeners, and as early as 1941 there was talk of one post-war wavelength continuing to be used 'to carry

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 30 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum of 19 March 1943. The first heading read, 'All broadcasting from this country and distribution within this country to be under one general control, viz. the BBC.' The memorandum was discussed at the Controllers' Meeting on the same day (*Minutes*) and at their Conference on 7 April (*Minutes*).

<sup>3</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 589-97.



the Forces-Luxembourg type of material'.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it was recognized that the Home Service did not allow enough items for the minority audiences which the BBC had tried to serve. Not surprisingly, therefore, Nicolls, the Senior Controller, who was never entirely at ease with the Forces Programme,<sup>2</sup> sketched out in 1943 a scheme for three post-war services—a general 'Home Service', a 'light' programme, 'popular, but not "rubbishy"', and an 'Arts Programme', which would be devoted to high-quality performances of masterpieces 'in all the arts amenable to broadcasting'.<sup>3</sup>

The Arts Programme would 'be the answer to the people who say that we never broadcast anything good, or that when we do we mangle it by cutting it down within absurd limits'. Nicolls suggested boldly that this new programme should not have any 'vertical balance' whatever, that programmes should be allowed to run short or long, and that there should be no restraints except 'programme allowance'. The only example of possible programme content which he chose to give for his new Arts Programme was the broadcasting of 'the whole of *The Ring*' for 'four nights running',<sup>4</sup> an interesting suggestion to make in the middle of a war when Wagner was being treated in most quarters with a certain reserve.

The influence of Nicolls on the making of a new broadcasting structure was considerable, and it was he in the first instance who insisted that all three programmes should be 'firmly British in character' and that there should be 'an effective resistance to the Americanisation of our entertainment'.<sup>5</sup> Yet Nicolls was by no means the only begetter of the plan for three programmes. There were several producers in Drama and Features who wished to produce programmes for minority as well as for majority audiences, and their views were shared by Talks producers also. At an early point in the story, certainly by March 1943, the proposals of producers and administrators concerning programmes and listener choice began to take account also of the wavelength position as it was explained to them by the engineers.

<sup>1</sup> \*S. J. de Lotbinière to Sir Cecil Graves, 1 Jan. 1941.

<sup>2</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 216–20, for some of Nicolls's difficulties.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Post-War Home Programme Set-up', 21 Dec. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Nicolls, 28 Oct. 1943. *The Ring* was to be broadcast in its entirety on the Third Programme in 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*'Post-War Home Programme Set-up', 21 Dec. 1944.

Thus, Sir Richard Maconachie, then Controller (Home), anticipated that when the war ended eight wavelengths would become available for home listeners in Britain, including one each for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and suggested that within this pattern one wavelength should be 'light' ('Programme E') and one ('Programme A') 'cultural (for want of a better word)'.<sup>1</sup>

This qualification, tucked away within the brackets, summed up generations of English doubt, if not prejudice; doubt not only about the employment of the word 'culture' but about its meaning. Maconachie, an elder statesman in Broadcasting House who had joined the BBC in 1937 after serving in the Indian Civil Service, went on to be more specific about 'Programme A'. He stressed first that the Programme should be directed to a 'highly intelligent minority audience', second that it should include 'difficult music', third that it should include 'experiments' in radio drama, and fourth, the most English conception of all, that it should broadcast 'programmes in foreign languages, etc.'. The 'etc.' was not put between brackets. Maconachie, like Nicolls, felt it necessary to deal briskly at the outset with the charge that within a tripartite system most listeners would choose his 'Programme E'. 'Giving people what they want' had never been sound BBC doctrine, and Maconachie, with a great weight of personal and institutional experience behind him, put his trust in a forbidding general sanction. 'As regards the E service, the principle of the assistant in a sweetshop being allowed to eat himself sick might apply.'<sup>2</sup>

The idea of a 'popular' programme took fuller shape in 1943, with the main argument being advanced that a post-war BBC would have to be able to compete successfully with 'sponsored programmes from our neighbours'. Radio Luxembourg was still casting its shadows, and there was the new fear that American interests might become involved in Europe.<sup>3</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> \*Sir R. Maconachie to Robert Foot, 16 March 1943.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid. Maconachie was Director of Talks before he moved to the posts first of Assistant Controller and then of Controller (Home) in 1940 and 1941. For his outlook, see his Obituary in *The Times*, 20 Jan. 1962, and a further note on him *ibid.*, 25 Jan. 1962, by John Green, who worked with him as a Talks Producer.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 33; War Cabinet Broadcasting Committee, Papers B (44) 12, 27, 27 July 1944, which talked of a strong American bid 'to capture European markets, particularly in television'. \*Cf. M. Farquharson, 'Comments on D.G.'s Note on

were a few people inside the BBC—notably *not* the editor of the *Radio Times*—who were prepared to consider the introduction of advertisements on this programme, and even Nicolls did not completely rule out ‘carefully controlled sponsoring’, designed to improve BBC light programmes on a suitable wavelength.<sup>1</sup> This was always thought of as a ‘concession’, however, and it was quickly dropped when it seemed increasingly likely that licence fees would go up after the war and that there would be adequate finance to support a tripartite programming system. Opinions about the balance of the ‘popular’ programme continued to vary. Some favoured a programme devoted exclusively to light music; others wanted *ITMA*, *Music Hall*, *Happidrome* and other Variety programmes to be part of the mix. Sport was also mentioned in at least one memorandum.<sup>2</sup> The General Forces Programme seemed to point confidently in the right direction.<sup>3</sup>

It was Kenneth Adam, the vigorous Director of Publicity, who was to become Controller of the Light Programme in December 1950<sup>4</sup> and in 1961 Director of Television, who argued

<sup>1</sup> \*M. Farquharson, ‘Notes on Post-War Position’. Nicolls’s viewpoint was shared by N. Ashbridge, then Controller (Engineering), T. Lochhead, then Controller (Finance), and R. Jardine Brown, the BBC’s lawyer, who argued in a note of 5 April 1943 that—assuming that the BBC’s income was derived only from licence fees and publications, ‘the amount obtained might very well be inadequate for the service required post-war’. Ashbridge (Note of 19 Aug. 1943) even sketched the outline of the scheme which was eventually to become the basis of commercial television—the introduction of advertising slot periods of limited duration ‘paid for at a rate varying with the time of the day’ and subject to strict ‘decency’ control. ‘Broadcasting would then in effect be on the same basis as a newspaper which has advertisements not connected with the text.’ Another suggestion from inside the BBC came from Robert MacDermot—that of ‘a dual system, allowing for “official” and “sponsored” programmes, both under the ultimate control of the BBC’ (Note of 12 May 1943).

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by Nicolls, 20 Oct. 1943; Memorandum by K. Adam, 27 Aug. 1943. See below, pp. 838 ff. In his memorandum dated 2 Sept. 1943 R. J. E. Silvey, the Head of Listener Research, drew an important distinction between programmes intended to be heard as ‘background’ and other programmes. ‘I do not believe the average listener wants to hear a background all day, but I do believe that he wants to be able to hear a background programme at any time of the day.’ He recommended the introduction of a ‘background programme continuously radiated from early morning till midnight, broken only by short news summaries’.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 13 Jan., 17 Feb. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 543.

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Post-War Position’, March 1943; Gorham to Nicolls, 28 May 1945. ‘It may be felt that by [broadcasting American programmes] we are keeping together an audience for shows that may one day figure as commercial rivals to our own broadcasts.’

most strongly that advertising should be kept out. Its exclusion, he said, was 'a negative but not unimportant duty in the national interest'. If the advertisers came in, 'Blurb would be King' and broadcasting would languish. Two of the main advertising agencies were already lying in wait, he claimed, with their plans 'cut and dried'. The BBC's 'Programme B' should be the Corporation's answer to these interests, an unashamedly 'majority service', which could carry sport as well as 'light music, dance bands, vaudeville, popular short stories and thrillers, and songs from musical shows', with five-minute news bulletins at different times from those broadcast on 'Programme A', a 'minority' service, and 'Programme C', drawing on regional material. Adam thought of 'Programme A' as carrying all school broadcasting and adult education as well as music and the arts, along with news bulletins which by contrast with those on 'Programme B' and 'Programme C' would be 'full and discursive'. 'Programme A' would be 'first, last and all the time, leisurely and spacious in its outlook'.<sup>1</sup>

All these war-time memoranda were written—as Nicolls was to insist later<sup>2</sup>—before Haley became Editor-in-Chief. Haley rightly was to stand out later as the creator and philosopher of the Third Programme, the BBC venture in which he took the greatest pride and for which he carried the main responsibility. Yet the immediate effect of his arrival at Broadcasting House was a joint decision made by the then Director-General, Robert Foot, and himself not to proceed with any further meetings to plan programme structures or policies at that time on the grounds that less than 100 per cent coverage for any BBC programme was deemed undesirable.<sup>3</sup> Already it was plain that after the war there would be difficult problems relating to wavelengths and to power; in particular, there were misgivings 'on the technical side' because of the limited coverage that could be achieved in the medium-wave band with the channels which were likely to be available.<sup>4</sup> It was only during the last months of 1944 and the first months of 1945 that decisions were taken about the shape of a 'Programme C' on the basis that

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Adam, 27 Aug. 1943.

<sup>2</sup> \*Nicolls to Farquharson, 24 Feb. 1949, questioning Harold Nicolson's account of the origin of the Programme in *The Listener*, 7 Oct. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), p. 326.

100 per cent coverage was not necessary.<sup>1</sup> By then the shift from a Forces Programme to a Light Programme had been fully planned and there had been far-ranging discussions about the scope of post-war regional broadcasting,<sup>2</sup> leading to the decision to introduce an identifiable 'regional element' into the post-war Home Service.

The final stages of the reorganization were carried through with great speed and efficiency, and the names of the Heads of the three new Programmes were all settled before VE Day and announced a week later. Lindsay Wellington, who had joined the BBC in 1924 and had served during much of the war as the BBC's North American Director, was to be in charge of the Home Service, Maurice Gorham, former Editor of the *Radio Times* and in 1945 Head of the Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme, took over the Light Programme, and G. R. Barnes became Head of the Third Programme. Haley promised listeners 'rivalry both of creativeness and of craft'.<sup>3</sup>

The Light Programme was launched almost as soon as the war ended—on 29 July 1945—in direct continuity with the General Forces Programme. It was on the air from 9 a.m. until midnight, as against Home Service hours of 7.30 a.m. (Sundays 8 a.m.) until midnight. The General Forces Programme was in future to be restricted to the short waves and the Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme was to disappear. Haley had promised SHAEF (the Supreme Headquarters of the AEF) that it would disappear between sixty and ninety days after the end of the war, and he kept his promise. The event was celebrated with one of the best of the many post-war parties on 28 July. There was a special message from Eisenhower, who also sent a testimonial to the BBC.

Even the names of particular individual war-time programmes were to be eliminated from the Light Programme as quickly as possible, but *Forces' Favourites* and *Navy Mixture* were

<sup>1</sup> \*Notes on a Meeting, 29 Jan. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 84 ff.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors. *Minutes*, 3 May 1945; General Advisory Council, *Minutes*, 13 June 1945; M. Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (1948), p. 162. At the same time, R. A. Rendall replaced Sir Richard Maconachie as Controller of the Talks Division. In November Gorham moved over to Television (see below, p. 189) and was replaced by Norman Collins.

to be retained for the time being.<sup>1</sup> Other shows with new names sometimes carried with them continuity. Thus, *Much Binding in the Marsh* (January 1947)—with Kenneth Horne and Richard Murdoch—had its origins in *Middle East Merry Go Round*, which had begun in the Overseas Service in 1943, changing its name later to *Mediterranean Merry Go Round*.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile a new *Merry Go Round*, starring Eric Barker, turned immediately to post-war politics, introducing a cockney socialist First Lord of the 'Admiralty', the first Baron Waterlogged, played by Richard Gray.<sup>3</sup> Lady Waterlogged never appeared, though their daughter Phoeb quickly became a national character. *Ignorance is Bliss* was another post-war programme, a skit on the *Brains Trust*, with a new formula which soon had a large audience. The brief of the new Programme seemed to offer 'unlimited scope for experiment and ingenuity', and the summer season, when there was a light summer programme schedule for the Home Service, was thought to be a good time to start.<sup>4</sup>

Great reliance was placed in the early months on gramophone records—on the Light Programme 216 hours were devoted to records during the winter quarter of 1945 as against 130 hours three years later—and it was possible to use many recorded repeats of musical shows. A number of popular programmes, like *Family Favourites*, were treated as 'castle' programmes in chess terms, programmes which 'would draw an audience wherever placed' and which would 'contrast with almost anything in the Home Service'. Other daily programmes like *Housewives' Choice* (1946) attracted enormous audiences and were in as much demand by the disc jockeys (they did not yet so describe themselves) as the listeners. *Woman's Hour*, first broadcast in the autumn of 1946, soon acquired a full-time editor, Mrs. Nest Bradney, who was succeeded in the summer of 1947 by Eileen Molony. The very first numbers might be dismissed by readers of the *Daily Mirror* as 'uninteresting, waste of time, full of old ideas', but within less than a year the same newspaper was pointing out that it had reached 'a peak for

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 18 June 1945. One well-known war-time programme, *Music While You Work*, celebrated its fifth anniversary in June 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to C. Madden, 29 Feb. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> See E. Barker, *Steady, Barker* (1956), pp. 220-1.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Chalmers, 17 March 1949.

daytime listening'.<sup>1</sup> It was 'angled' at first 'for the average British housewife and aimed at a not too sophisticated audience',<sup>2</sup> but it soon attracted—consistently—a very wide range of listeners. They listened as individuals—'and for the most part alone'<sup>3</sup>—but they soon came to constitute 'a responsive and appreciative audience' of 'outspoken and discerning critics'.<sup>4</sup>



3. 'There are times. Miss Amory, when I wish you were a gramophone and eight records.' *Tatler*, 7 April 1943

'Castle' programmes, like *Woman's Hour*, usually secured very definite and regular fixed times. Thus, *Mrs. Dale's Diary*, which was not broadcast until January 1948, gave a new significance to the hour of 4.15 in the afternoon, turning large numbers of people (not without controversy) into 'slaves of the Dale family'.<sup>5</sup> Here again there was some continuity. The very successful *Robinson Family* serial programme, which Gorham had taken over from the war-time Overseas Programme, was taken

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 11 Nov. 1946, 4 Aug. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Mrs. Bradney. 6 Dec. 1946. Mrs. Bradney's successor Miss Molony was succeeded in 1948 by Evelyn Gibbs who was in turn succeeded in 1950 by Janet Quigley (see below, p. 543).

<sup>3</sup> \*E. Molony, 'Report on Woman's Hour', 5 Feb. 1948. There is also an interesting Listener Research Bulletin on the subject, 13 May 1948.

<sup>4</sup> E. Gibbs, 'What Women Like', in *Everybody's*, 24 June 1950.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunday Sun*, 5 Nov. 1950. See below, p. 699.

off the air—in spite of protests—in 1947 after a six-year run,<sup>1</sup> but among the people who had taken part in it were Douglas Burbidge and Ellis Powell, the first Dr. and Mrs. Dale. One peak programme with no war-time antecedents was *Dick Barton* which became an immense success as soon as it began in 1946. The appeal of its ace secret agent became a subject of psychological study even before the psychologists turned to Mrs. Dale.<sup>2</sup> It had not been designed originally for 'an exclusively juvenile audience', but it quickly captured one,<sup>3</sup> and its treatment of 'right or wrong' in exciting—even violent—settings now interests historians as well as psychologists and sociologists.<sup>4</sup> *ITMA*, which retains a similar interest, continued to be studied at the time by sociologists after its successful return in new form—with new characters—in September 1945, but it had gone to the Home Service in 1945 (along with *Saturday Night Theatre* and *Music Hall*), not to the Light Programme.<sup>5</sup>

When Gorham left the Light Programme for television in November 1945, Norman Collins took over, and the Programme went on providing an ample diet of light music, mainly English and American with a dash of 'continental cabaret' music from Paris and Stockholm. Popular songs were 'vetted' with immense care and many numbers were completely banned, including not only 'suggestive' songs but those based on classical melodies like 'What is Love?' (a version of Chopin's *Polonaise Militaire*). 'So Deep is the Night' could only be sung as 'a straight ballad', and 'Open the Door, Richard!' could not be sung in a 'drunken manner'.<sup>6</sup> A limited amount of 'classical' music was presented in light lunch-time concerts and later in full-scale afternoon symphony concerts, but mainly by stealth in the form of dances and ballads in pot-pourri programmes. Dance music by big bands was declining after a brief post-war boom, as Henry Hall

<sup>1</sup> See *The War of Words*, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> G. Webb, *The Inside Story of Dick Barton* (1950).

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum by Collins, 20 Feb. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*A new set of rules was adopted in June 1950. What was right and wrong had to be stated clearly at the beginning of each story and reiterated in each succeeding episode (Memorandum of 29 June 1950). There was also a Listener Research Paper on 'Dick Barton and Juvenile Delinquency', 15 May 1950.

<sup>5</sup> *Radio Times*, 14 Sept. 1945.

<sup>6</sup> \*'Words of Popular Songs', Memoranda by the Acting Director of Variety, P. Hillyard, 28 Jan., 25 Feb. 1947; Mrs. D. Neilson, Dance Music Organizer, to C. F. Meelhan, 18 Feb. 1947. See also below, pp. 760-1.





4. 'Can Dick Barton outwit the audacious criminals? Will he recover the stolen valuables? Listen again next week. . . .' Lee in the *Evening News*, 23 January 1948

recognized.<sup>1</sup> His *Guest Night* was a very popular show, but when he played in the London Coliseum in May 1947 he thought that his was going to be the last orchestra to top the bill in a West End theatre. In these circumstances Victor Silvester strengthened his hold on the Light Programme audiences—as he was to do with the wider Coliseum audiences—against the national trend.<sup>2</sup>

An early Listener Research Report showed that 'the overwhelming majority of the public approved of the "policy" behind the Light Programme'. There were only two substantial criticisms—first, that nine o'clock in the morning was too late a start,<sup>3</sup> and second, that the demise of popular war-time American Variety left a gap which British Variety stars could not fill. BBC officials, concerned with dollars as much as with culture, remained unimpressed by the second complaint. 'The BBC is concerned, so far as possible,' one of them wrote, 'to give British listeners the best British entertainment performed by British artists.'<sup>4</sup> 'We don't want to be ultra-nationalistic,' another wrote a year later, 'but surely we can think of titles, ideas, etc., purely of our own. . . . We don't want to end up just a pale copy of American radio sans sponsoring.'<sup>5</sup>

There was an obvious gap between the detailed statements of listeners about particular programme preferences and policy pronouncements inside the BBC, including the lofty, if not very high-minded, general comment of the Chairman of the Governors, Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, who had taken over in 1947, that the objectives of the Light Programme were to 'entertain the masses, to obtain at least eleven million listeners at £1', and 'to keep European concert programmes [*sic*] out by best quality and most popular entertainment'.<sup>6</sup> Collins had

<sup>1</sup> Henry Hall, *Here's to the Next Time* (1955), p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 752.

<sup>3</sup> \*Listener Research Report, 6 Sept. 1945. From 18 July 1946, the Light Programme started at eight o'clock on Sundays. Significantly, commercial Radio Luxembourg had just been reopened on 1 July 1946. As early as March 1946, Norman Collins had been pressing for an early BBC start every day on the grounds that the programme drew its chief audience 'from that section of the public which rises early to get off to work' (Collins to Nicolls, 25 March 1946).

<sup>4</sup> \*L. Wellington to W. L. Streeton, 30 Aug. 1945.

<sup>5</sup> \*R. J. F. Howgill to Hillyard, 6 Sept. 1946.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Lord Simon, 16 Aug. 1948. Three years earlier Haley had called the Programme 'a popular programme with a general mandate to interest listeners in life and in the world without at any moment failing to entertain them'.

6.45 'DICK BARTON—  
SPECIAL AGENT'

Episode 2 of the new thriller serial, with Noel Johnson as Dick Barton. Script by Edward J. Mason. Produced by Neil Tuson

6.45 'DICK BARTON—  
SPECIAL AGENT'

Episode 3 of the new thriller serial, with Noel Johnson as Dick Barton. Script by Edward J. Mason. Produced by Neil Tuson

6.45 'DICK BARTON—  
SPECIAL AGENT'

Episode 4 of the new thriller serial, with Noel Johnson as Dick Barton. Script by Edward J. Mason. Produced by Neil Tuson

6.45 'DICK BARTON—  
SPECIAL AGENT'

Episode 5 of the new thriller serial, with Noel Johnson as Dick Barton. Script by Edward J. Mason. Produced by Neil Tuson

5. From the first week's episodes of *Dick Barton—Special Agent*. *Radio Times*, 4 October 1946

more definite objectives—to add to the number of more 'serious' elements in the Light Programme—including *Radio Newsreel*, *Focus*, and *Curtain Up*. He believed that success in programming depended above all else on sustained 'team effort' and he devolved initiative to men like T. W. Chalmers, who was eventually to take over the Programme, and John McMillan who joined the Light Programme from British Forces Overseas.

Whatever the merits of the language Simon or Collins chose to employ, already by October 1945 fifty-one out of every hundred home listeners were tuned in to the Light Programme and only forty-nine to the Home Service. A year later, the share of the Home Service had shrunk by a further quarter and the share of the Light Programme had increased by a fifth.<sup>1</sup> An appendix to an unsigned BBC paper of May 1949, 'The Board

<sup>1</sup> \*'A Review of Listener Research Findings', Dec. 1949, pp. 4-5.

of Governors, the Chairman and the Director-General', formidably entitled 'Standards of Culture in the Home Programmes of the BBC', stated succinctly that the existence of the Light Programme was responsible for the success of the BBC in securing the payment of the £1 licence from approximately 83 per cent of all the householders in the country.<sup>1</sup> By then, the Programme was openly acknowledging its serious 'obligation' in 'better fields', as Collins wished.<sup>2</sup> Comparative output figures were produced for the last quarters of 1945, 1946, 1947, and 1948 which showed the main changes in programme constituents.

CONSTITUENTS OF THE LIGHT PROGRAMME  
AND ITS AUDIENCE APPEAL

	<i>Analysis of Last Quarters of:</i>			
	<i>1945 percentage</i>	<i>1946 percentage</i>	<i>1947 percentage</i>	<i>1948 percentage</i>
Serious Music	6.3	7.3	7.8	8.5
Light Music	35.7	32.4	33.0	37.0
Dance Music	13.5	13.2	16.0	13.4
Variety	18.0	17.8	14.0	9.5
Talks and Discussions	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.7
Magazine Programme	0.3	5.4	5.7	5.0
Plays	2.3	2.6	1.7	3.2
Serial Plays and Thrillers	3.7	4.5	6.5	5.6
Feature Programmes	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.7
Forces Education	5.5	5.2	1.6	1.6
Sport	1.9	2.6	2.2	3.0
Religion	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4
Other Broadcasts	9.7	6.2	8.6	9.4
	100%	100%	100%	100%
Light Programme share of Total Evening Listening in same period	49	54	58	63

A more detailed analysis reveals ample initiative on the part of the programme makers—poetry readings by Wilfred Pickles, who had become one of the star names of post-war entertainment,<sup>3</sup> *Fantasia* (1947), *The Plain Man's Guide to Music* (1948),

<sup>1</sup> \*Paper of 20 May 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*T. W. Chalmers, 'The Light Programme and its Obligations', 13 Sept. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 109-12.

Boyd Neel's *Music Club*, *Focus*, *Picture Parade*, *New Books and Old Books*, and *Dear Sir*, a letters feature, involving listeners directly, which eventually attracted an audience of eleven million. As Forces Educational Broadcasts faded out,<sup>1</sup> special efforts were made, not without success, to interest 'the Younger Generation', the title of a highly successful series of programmes. The average duration of programmes increased also between 1945 and 1948—from forty minutes to sixty minutes in the case of 'serious' music, thirty minutes to forty minutes in the case of 'light' music, and twenty-three minutes to thirty minutes in the case of plays.

As the Light Programme—a fully national programme—extended its range and grew in popularity, the Home Service (Programme B), with its regional variants, continued to be thought of as the staple BBC service. A document presented to the Governors in February 1944 stressed that Programme B was 'the real Home programme of the people of the United Kingdom, carefully balanced, appealing to all classes, paying attention to culture at a level at which the ordinary listener can appreciate it; giving talks that will inform the whole democracy rather than an already informed section; and generally so designed that it will steadily but imperceptibly raise the standard of taste, entertainment, outlook and citizenship'.<sup>2</sup> A later public statement of 1949 described it as inclusive rather than exclusive, designed 'to reflect the life of the community in which we live', 'the broad middle strand of the BBC's broadcasting'.<sup>3</sup>

There were touches of Reith in these statements with perhaps older echoes of the 'broadest' of the 'broad' nineteenth-century manifestoes of the Church of England. They were just the kind of statements, moreover, which *The Economist* had been attacking when it described 'the general programme' as 'an absurdity'.<sup>4</sup> In practice, however, whatever the philosophy

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 807–16.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by the Director-General, 14 Feb. 1944. The same phrases were used in the BBC's evidence to the Beveridge Committee and were reprinted in the Beveridge Report (Cmd. 8116, *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, para. 35).

<sup>3</sup> *EBC Year Book, 1948*, p. 67; *General Survey of the Broadcasting Service, 1949*.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 40. Cf. *The Economist*, 28 Oct. 1944. 'When soberly analysed, the general programme is an absurdity. Even the most "general" newspaper has no ambition beyond that of entering one household out of three, and if a periodical interests one in ten of the reading public it has been a phenomenal success.'

might be, the operational planning problems of the post-war Home Service were substantial enough to influence, even to dictate, its content. The nine o'clock news bulletin, an A. P. Ryan innovation, limited daily to only fifteen minutes, to the irritation of one Governor, Arthur Mann,<sup>1</sup> meant that there were difficulties in putting a long programme item later in the evening. *Saturday Night Theatre*, for example, lost nearly two million listeners when it was rescheduled a quarter of an hour later than it had first been placed. 'The peak listening period', Haley told the Governors, 'is a very short one, from 8 to 10.20 p.m. Into that we have to concentrate our main efforts and serve as many audiences as we can.'<sup>2</sup>

For all its rigidity, the system seemed to possess virtues. The first Head of the new Home Service, Lindsay Wellington, argued strongly against changing 'fixed points' in evening or weekly schedules since they 'conditioned the pattern of living in this country'.<sup>3</sup> One of these fixed points was the nine o'clock News, 'for millions of people', as Haley put it, 'a corrective to sensationalism and a sort of gyroscope stabilising sober comprehension of the news and keeping in perspective public appreciation of its importance and its implications'.<sup>4</sup> Other points within the weekly schedule were *In Town Tonight*, a fixed point with 'the secret of surprise' contained within the programme itself,<sup>5</sup> *Saturday Night Theatre* (which reached an audience of over ten million), and *Twenty Questions*, which first went on the air on 28 February 1947. The yearly schedule included 'the Proms' (restored after a break of one year)<sup>6</sup> and Wimbledon. Wellington did not believe in placing too much emphasis on topicality. 'It is literally impossible', he argued, 'to have a structure which is at once rigid enough to attract big audiences to its known fixed points and flexible enough to allow for unlimited change at the last minute.'<sup>7</sup>

There had been complaints at meetings of the Board of

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 24 Jan., 7 Feb., 7 March 1946. For Ryan, see below, pp. 571, 574-5.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum of 17 Jan. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Wellington to Haley, 25 March 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Sir William Haley, 'The Home Programme Policy of the BBC', 4 July 1946.

<sup>5</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1949, pp. 26-8.

<sup>6</sup> See R. W. Clark, *The Royal Albert Hall* (1958), p. 222.

<sup>7</sup> \*Wellington to Haley, 25 March 1946.

Governors during the autumn of 1945 that there was too much of a likeness between Home Service and Light Programme, particularly in the mornings,<sup>1</sup> but Wellington himself complained rather that since 'by force of circumstances' it was falling to the Home Service 'to honour most of the Corporation's public service obligations', 'sober commitments could only too easily make for inelastic and unexciting broadcasting'. The Third Programme was taking away part of the great audience for Music, the Light Programme part of the great audience for Variety.<sup>2</sup> In reply, Norman Collins, then the Head of the Light Programme, argued that the Home Service should concentrate on 'educating and informing the public on matters of current importance' and that Wellington's worries were misplaced. After listening to them,<sup>3</sup> Haley admitted that the Home Service was losing out both to the Light Programme and, to a lesser extent, the Third, but rejected the remedy Collins proposed. It would 'vitiate' the BBC's 'purpose of raising public taste' throughout the whole range of services.<sup>4</sup>

Again there was a gap between such commentary and the actual facts of listener behaviour. During the later 1940s regular listeners to the Light Programme were listening for an average of nine-and-a-half hours a week as against seven hours a week in the case of regular Home Service listeners and three hours a week in the case of regular Third Programme listeners.<sup>5</sup> Already, therefore, the Light Programme audience had quietly acquired some of the characteristics of the mass television audience of a far later date. We can trace a direct vertical line in time, indeed, between the Forces Programme during the war, the Light Programme after the war, and the first BBC mass television.

The Third Programme had gone on the air for the first time on 29 September 1946 in the face of sniping and more serious hostility inside and outside the BBC,<sup>6</sup> and in October of that year it was claiming four listeners out of every hundred. Haley

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 20 Sept. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*The audience for Wednesday night symphony concerts fell sharply by more than a quarter in 1948 and 1949 ('A Review of Listener Research Findings', p. 5).

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Wellington, 26 Nov. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 29 Nov. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*'A Review of Listener Research Findings', p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> For the opposition, see H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (1968), p. 161.

had envisaged it as a programme of 'a high cultural level', devoted to the arts, serious discussion and experiment, which would 'provide an intelligent alternative at peak hours' to the Light Programme.<sup>1</sup> The Governors were impressed from the start not only by Haley's belief in such a Programme<sup>2</sup> but by the obvious growth of public interest in the arts in war-time, to which the BBC had greatly contributed, and by what seemed at that time 'the virtually insatiable demand for serious literature and drama, for good music and intelligent discussion'.<sup>3</sup> Although they were to change their minds later when the Beveridge Committee was examining the future of broadcasting, they were strongly supported in 1946 by a retired BBC official of a different era, Sir Stephen Tallents, who had played an important part also in the history of the documentary film. He not only prophesied that the number of listeners to such programmes would increase steadily, but that from the start 'the audience would be greater than it would have been before the war'. 'He shoots higher than threatens the moon', Sir Ernest Barker told Haley, 'than he that aims at a tree.'<sup>4</sup>

The Third Programme set out not to meet the wishes of listeners who would be engaged in continuous listening but rather to recruit 'patrons',<sup>5</sup> and it was claimed that in the late 1940s there were between one-and-a-half and two-and-a-half million listeners, comparable figures with those of the readership of the *Sunday Times* or *The Observer* or both.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, when the Programme first began, its audience share was between 4 and 5 per cent.<sup>7</sup>

The Programme had been late in starting for a technical reason—finding a wavelength which would permit as wide a coverage as possible as free as possible from interference—

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley, Note for the Governors, 'The Home Programme Policy of the BBC', 4 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 22 March 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*'The First Ten Years of the Third Programme', a BBC Report, April 1956. For the phenomenon of increased war-time interest in literature, music, and the arts, see A. Calder, *The People's War* (1969), pp. 501–23.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Stephen Tallents, 'The BBC Third Programme', in the *Sunday Times*, 29 Sept. 1946; \*Sir Ernest Barker to Haley, 7 July 1945: 'It is, I am sure, the right thing to attempt, absolutely right.'

<sup>5</sup> \*'A Review of Listener Research Findings', p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid., and Listener Research Report, 6 Nov. 1947.

<sup>7</sup> \*'The First Ten Years of the Third Programme', p. 9.





6. 'No need to hurry back, darling—Julian and I are thoroughly enjoying the Third Programme.' *Radio Times*, 8 November 1946

rather than for reasons of administration or policy. Two weeks before it was due to go on the air in 1946 on a wavelength of 514 metres from Droitwich, 'Soviet Latvia' started transmissions on the same wavelength.<sup>1</sup> This meant that Droitwich had to reduce its power and in consequence its range, with the result that the Third Programme would now reach less than 80 per cent of the population. This in itself ruled out the possibility of a listening ratio between Home, Light and Third, of 40, 50 and 10, which the Governors had sought to achieve.<sup>2</sup>

Little could be done to add greatly to coverage in the short run by using auxiliary low-power transmitters, and even in

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 Sept., 3 Oct. 1946. A further blow was suffered in November 1948, when Radio Tunis also started broadcasting on 514 metres. This led to a further reduction in coverage. For later developments, see below, pp. 551-7.

<sup>2</sup> \*Sir William Haley, Address to the General Advisory Council, 29 Oct. 1947. The ratio then was 40:53:7.

areas where listening was possible there were persistent complaints about reception. Only VHF could ultimately offer an answer.<sup>1</sup> The complaints came from different quarters. Lovers of the harpsichord, for instance, a minority within a Third Programme minority, often objected to listening to harpsichord music when reception was worse than it had been for members of European resistance movements listening to the BBC for coded instructions during the war. Philip Hope-Wallace spoke of the sound received as resembling 'someone distantly thrashing a birdcage', and Leonard Marsland Gander, the experienced and distinguished radio critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, said that interference in some districts gave Chaucer 'a background like frying sausages'.<sup>2</sup>

The programmes for the first evening of the new Programme had included the first performance of Benjamin Britten's 'Festival Overture', Bach's Goldberg variations, talks by Field-Marshal Smuts, Sir Max Beerbohm, and Sir William Haley, and a feature *How to Listen* (including 'how not to, how they used to and how you must') devised by Joyce Grenfell and one of the most ingenious specialists in programmemanship, Stephen Potter. *Man and Superman* in its entirety and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* followed later in the same week along with Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* sung in Italian. Such a bill of fare was presented for 'selective not casual' listeners, listeners who were both 'attentive and critical'. No other audience, it was agreed, should be cultivated, and any material that was 'unlikely to interest such listeners should be excluded'.<sup>3</sup>

George Barnes, who became first Programme Head on 1 July 1946—he had been chosen for this post more than a year earlier<sup>4</sup>—described in an article in *The Listener* how every night there would be 'a principal item of considerable length demanding sustained attention'. 'But equally every night,' he went on,

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 1010.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in E. Sackville-West, 'Music and the Third Programme', in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VI, no. 3 (1951); *Picture Post*, 30 Nov. 1946. In 1948 Haley wrote that 'the uncertainty of good reception has been an increasing deterrent. The most faithful Third Programme listeners have been known to give up when after a succession of evenings of quite passable reception they suddenly, often on an evening when there is something of outstanding interest, find the level of interference quite intolerable.'

<sup>3</sup> \*Terms of Reference, 14 Jan. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 22 March 1945.

'something in addition to the chief item will be provided for people of different tastes who wish to hear ideas discussed or to share aesthetic experience.' Again Wagner came to the rescue as the chosen example, this time not with *The Ring* but with *Tristan and Isolde*. 'We shall make no effort to appeal to everyone all the time, nor shall we try to be all things to all men.'

Adam's notion of an identifiable educational dimension was explicitly rejected, as it was to be rejected also by Barnes's successor, Harman Grisewood, who became Controller in 1948 after Barnes had been promoted to the high-sounding post of Director of the Spoken Word,<sup>1</sup> and by inspired Third Programme planners like Etienne Amyot, to whose distinctive contribution to sound broadcasting justice has seldom been done. The last thing that any of them wanted was adult education, and this in itself was calculated to irritate a number of people, some of them influential, not only in adult education but in the universities. Such distaste for the experiment was at the opposite pole from the 'philistine' contempt, particularly strong even in certain parts of the Corporation. The sense that 'the best' only was good enough in selection and performance was not a new BBC conception. What was new was that there would be no 'hearing aids' of any kind for listeners to the Third Programme. 'We hope that . . . our audience will enjoy itself without crutches.'<sup>2</sup> 'The audience', it was hoped, would include 'the most intelligent, receptive people in all classes, persons who value artistic experience all the more because of the limited opportunities they have of enjoying it'.<sup>3</sup>

That audience would doubtless 'widen' as the years went by, it was expected, among 'all classes and ages', but no effort should be made to force the process. There was a further point. 'Since the [Third] Programme is intended to be of artistic and cultural importance, it must secure the goodwill of writers, composers, performers, as well as of listeners. It will not continue to stimulate the interest of the public unless authors, playwrights, poets, composers and critics will take a far greater interest in radio than they do at present. . . . To find what is

<sup>1</sup> See H. Grisewood, *op. cit.*, for his indispensable inside account of the story. He does not say much about other individuals, however, and leaves out Amyot.

<sup>2</sup> *The Listener*, 26 Sept. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley, 'The Home Programme Policy of the BBC', 4 July 1946, pp. 9-10.

new and significant it must use its own judgement, while keeping in touch with the professions, the universities and learned societies, the Arts Council, the Pilgrim Trust and similar bodies both here and abroad.<sup>1</sup>

One ingredient was deliberately missing from the Programme—'entertainment', even on distinctive Third Programme lines. Francis Worsley, an acute observer, argued in 1946 that the Third eschewed humour because the Programme was 'far from sure of itself'. Later he noted with regret how it eschewed satire also. 'Man cannot live by the eighteenth century alone.'<sup>2</sup> (He might have added, more aptly, by the nineteenth.) Stephen Potter's broadcasts—his broadcast script on the very first evening pointed the way—were to be one of the few real attempts to initiate explorations, and they soon influenced broadcasting as a whole. 'Is it too much to hope', Alan Pryce-Jones asked in 1951, 'that to all the other pleasures of the intelligence may be added during the next five years a more frequent experience of the intelligent chuckle?'<sup>3</sup>

By then the Programme had established itself. The earliest Press reactions had been predictable—with *The Times* enthusiastic—'C for Culture'<sup>4</sup>—and the *Daily Mirror* disdainful. At least one local newspaper called it the 'heavy' Programme, and for the *Daily Express* it was 'the timeless wonder'.<sup>5</sup> Yet qualifications about the Programme were expressed on both sides. The *News Chronicle* warned of the dangers of packing broadcasting into 'separate boxes', and even *The Times*, while pointing out that success depended on securing 'an inter-related scheme' offering listeners choice between three alternative BBC programmes, echoed older views of broadcasters of a different time. There were echoes of Reith in the claim that 'fencing off a group of more exacting listeners' from the rest would not be compatible with such a scheme. If Third Programme listeners ignored other programmes and other

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Worsley to Hillyard, 10 Dec. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VI, no. 3 (1951).

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1946. 'The drama will be given room to stretch its limbs. The BBC have given some ground for complaint that, from the beginning of the war, they allowed their policy to be guided by an unnecessarily low estimate of the public taste.' See also *The Times* leader after the first six months (7 April 1947). 'The art most likely to be affected directly by the Third Programme is music.'

<sup>5</sup> *Greenock Telegraph*, 20 Sept. 1946; *Daily Express*, 3 Oct. 1946.

listeners ignored Third Programme broadcasts, 'the new programme would not fulfil its high purpose'. It would develop inside a cocoon. Meanwhile, 'most people will keep on the Light Programme and will not hear what otherwise they would come to appreciate.'<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Waugh, who ordered his wife to buy a wireless set just to hear the Third Programme—on Max Beerbohm's advice—was an exclusive but unimpressed listener: 'I have listened attentively to all programmes, and nothing will confirm me more in my resolution to emigrate.'<sup>2</sup>

If the most eulogistic comment on the Third Programme came from the *New Statesman*, the comment which most compellingly evokes the mood of the moment can be found in *The Economist*. To the former, 'no one who has the values of civilisation at heart could be other than . . . delighted by the almost incredible prospect of interest, variety and novelty held out by the schedule'. To the latter, the new programme was a welcome respite from 'the endless wrangling at Paris, bickering in home politics and the steady beat of rain on the harvest fields'.<sup>3</sup> Later Edward Sackville-West was to outdo even the *New Statesman* with his remark that the Third Programme might well become 'the greatest educative and civilising force England has known since the secularisation of the theatre in the sixteenth century'. The comment was phrased in the best Third Programme manner, although it was made in an article in *Picture Post*.<sup>4</sup>

The programme planners certainly got a great deal of excitement out of the Third Programme. Harman Grisewood appreciated most not only the absence of fixed time points but the opportunities of 'associative planning', the deliberate placing together of related material which would enable the listener to gain in knowledge and appreciation. Thus, in May 1948 he placed one day after Robert Birley's Bryce Memorial Lecture on the German problem a conversation with four German prisoners-of-war and the first performance of Zuckmayer's play about a German Air Force Commandant, *The Devil's General*. To complete the blend he brought in Sir Ernest Barker talking about his recent experiences when lecturing to German

<sup>1</sup> Reith's Notes on CP (45) 283, paras. 33-66.

<sup>2</sup> M. Davie (ed.), *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh* (1976), p. 681: entry for 23 June 1947.

<sup>3</sup> *New Statesman*, 5 Oct. 1946; *The Economist*, 28 Sept. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Picture Post*, 30 Nov. 1946.



7. 'They're nice people—definitely third programme.' Grimes in *The Star*, 14 January 1947

students in Cologne. 'It was generally agreed', Grisewood added, 'that the interest of each of these items was enhanced by listening to the others that had been grouped with it.'<sup>1</sup>

Germany figured in another whole cluster of programmes designed to celebrate the bicentenary of Goethe's birth in 1749. A new translation of *Faust* in six parts by Louis MacNeice was specially commissioned, and there were several talks, including one by Thomas Mann. There was also a series of music programmes associated with Goethe. Not everyone was happy. 'In 1949 there were evenings', Compton Mackenzie complained, 'when I wished that Goethe had never been born.'<sup>2</sup> Two other ambitious series concerned Victorian England. In April 1951 there was a meticulously prepared '1851 week' when nothing was read or performed which did not belong to that year.<sup>3</sup> Already three years earlier, a collection of talks on *The Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians* by a medley of historians had been a most ambitious venture which suggested that the time was ripe for a reassessment of the Victorians.<sup>4</sup> Not all the contributors, who included many famous names, were sufficiently knowledgeable about their subject to provide such a reassessment, but there were some notable contributions, subsequently published in book form.<sup>5</sup>

Music was planned ambitiously—Barnes, when he was Head of the Third Programme, believed it should constitute a third of the output—with centenaries featuring prominently, perhaps too prominently, in the planning. Thus, the Chopin centenary in 1949 and the Bach bicentenary a year later were treated as very special occasions. There was a regular place also, however, for performing works by little-known composers, like Heinrich Schütz, for performing and commissioning new works, and for encouraging writers and musicians to collaborate in features. One of the declared aims of the Programme was to explore the whole output of composers, reviving when necessary their neglected or little-known works, and relating it to their time. Liszt, for example, was dealt with in this way in a series of talks

<sup>1</sup> \*Grisewood to Rendall, 9 June 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Compton Mackenzie, 'Broadcasting as the Author's Friend', in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VII, no. 4 (1952).

<sup>3</sup> R. Fulford, 'The 1851 Week', *ibid.*, vol. VI, no. 2 (1951).

<sup>4</sup> See the Preface to the American edition of *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians* by H. Grisewood (1949). <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

and musical programmes prepared by the composer Humphrey Searle in 1950. An initial target of one full-length opera a week was not easy to realize, but there were some fascinating opera performances in 1948 and 1949, including a recording of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in Italian from Brussels in 1949, and in the following year a recording from Vienna of Berg's *Lulu* and a studio performance of *Wozzeck*. Plans were being made in that year for the fiftieth anniversary of Verdi's death.<sup>1</sup>

In the planning of drama, much the same principles and practices prevailed as in music. *Man and Superman* was followed soon afterwards by a programme to celebrate Shaw's ninetieth birthday. In 1946 Louis MacNeice translated Aeschylus and presented 'a panorama of Aristophanic comedy', *Enemy of Court*, with music by Antony Hopkins, and a series called 'International Drama' was introduced by Racine's *Phèdre*. In 1947 parts of Plato's *Dialogues* were broadcast and a sequence of Shakespeare's history plays from *Richard II* to *Richard III* was put out on successive nights (after consultation with Professor Dover Wilson). By 1950 listeners had had the opportunity of hearing Pirandello, Cocteau, Lorca and Brecht, and Kafka's *The Trial* was adapted for radio in that year.

The Governors continued to support the Third Programme through thick and thin, and spent considerable time discussing whether or not it might be a good idea to broadcast it directly not only to Britain but to Europe, where it already had enthusiastic listeners.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the strong European emphasis in the programming kept it ahead of the current tastes of even the 'cultured minority' in Britain.<sup>3</sup> At a time when the war-time links with the different exiles brought to Britain were snapping—and most politicians were welcoming the British liberation—the Third Programme showed that Britain could not and should not stand alone in peace-time. Of course, it had to win over its own domestic allies, and much was made of the fact that it was gaining support in the universities in 1947 and 1948 on a

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 727.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 28 Nov. 1946. 'It was suggested that the best possible projection of Britain would be to make the Third Programme available to European listeners.'

<sup>3</sup> \*J. C. Trewin said that the French contemporary theatre had become the Third Programme's 'spécialité de la maison'. Quoted in 'The First Ten Years of the Third Programme', p. 21.



broader front than at the beginning. In so far as it began not only to entertain 'dons' but to serve as a patron for their performances, it was fulfilling one of the first of its objectives set out during the war. The *Oxford Magazine*, without claiming that there was 'any real change of attitude', noted not only that for the first time senior members of the University were 'at last beginning to listen to the radio' but that the number of broadcasters had shown 'a welcome increase in recent months'. It pitted Oxford against Cambridge in a university challenge. 'The Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, recently held the attention of his radio audience for an hour. . . . Have we no one capable of like performance?'<sup>1</sup>

The dangers of divergence between objectives and achievement in the Third Programme were obvious enough. They derived from the tendency of some producers and planners to go beyond Haley's initial rubric and to select *avant-garde* items which at times reduced the minority audience to a series of coteries. Haley had told the British Institute of Adult Education just before the Programme started—and it is interesting that *he* did not look down on adult education—that 'there is a body of work by the great masters to which we should return again and again. Neither the exigencies of planning nor the changing tastes of aesthetic fashion should discharge us from that obligation.'<sup>2</sup> He also chose to see the Programme in long-term perspective, when he said that radio was still in its 'Caxton stage'.<sup>3</sup> Not everyone shared this perspective.

While the last thing that Haley wanted was to be modish, there were always currents of fashion influencing producers' and planners' attitudes. At the very beginning, there were signs of resistance to what they were offering—even within the first 'target' audience. In the very first week, for example, Val Gielgud thought *Huis Clos* (stage presentations of which had been banned by the Lord Chamberlain) 'pretentious bosh and . . . of a decidedly unpleasant type'.<sup>4</sup> Complaints grew, and at a

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Magazine*, 6 March 1947.

<sup>2</sup> 'Broadcasting and British Life', an Address to the British Institute of Adult Education, 21 Sept. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> See the report in the *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Sept. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Gielgud to Amyot, 20 July 1946. More Sartre plays were broadcast in 1947 and 1948—*The Flies* and *Crime Passionnel*. For further comments of this kind later, see below, p. 690.

lively Board of Governors' lunch in May 1949 Lord Simon, Chairman of the Governors, and Haley were accused by Lord Layton, Geoffrey Crowther, and Laurence Cadbury of becoming far too 'highbrow'. 'Why could we not have more Beethoven and Haydn quartets instead of music which nobody else ever played—probably because it was not worth playing?'<sup>1</sup>

Haley thought of the three Programmes within the tripartite structure as forming part of a cultural spectrum, and he certainly did not wish to see 'culture' segregated on the Third Programme. 'We do not want to give any idea that we are going to put all our cultural eggs into one basket.' The Home Service would be 'flanked' by the Light Programme and the Third Programme, but each Programme would 'shake into' or 'merge' into the other. Music, plays, and talks, for instance, would be found in each. In each also there would be 'an expression of the desire' to develop 'awareness in public affairs'. Before the war, the listener had been 'plunged straight from popular to unpopular material, from highbrow to lowbrow and vice versa', in what Haley called a 'hot and cold process'. The result had been that the BBC had 'gained a name for being didactic, arbitrary and something of a governess'.<sup>2</sup> The new system marked an attempt to 'lead the listener on to more serious things rather than to fling him into them . . . to get him to move forward of his own volition and with his acceptance'. It was 'a subtler but more indirect method of bringing listeners to move up the cultural scale'.

There was no suggestion, therefore, in this 'strategy of indirect approach',<sup>3</sup> of a lowering of standards or of a weakening in 'the general aim of the BBC to raise public taste'. The classical music in the Light Programme, Haley hoped, would be attractive enough 'to lead listeners on to the Home Service', and the Home Service 'should lead on to the Third Programme'.<sup>4</sup> Haley took Richard Strauss, not Wagner, as his example. Light Programme listeners, who would be put off by the very name *Der Rosenkavalier*, would respond at once to Richard Strauss's waltzes from that opera, would explore further when they

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Lord Simon, 20 May 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley, Address to the General Advisory Council, 29 Oct. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley, 'The Home Programme Policy of the BBC', 4 July 1946.

listened to some of the arias in the opera in the Home Service, and would end by listening to the whole. 'At each stage, of course . . . a good many . . . listeners' would be shed, but 'something substantial' would remain.<sup>1</sup> 'Maybe in a few years' time the Light Programme will be where the Home Service is now and the Home will have passed on to other standards.'<sup>2</sup>

Within this pattern, the Third Programme was conceived of as a 'cultural reinforcement' and not as a replacement. 'To put all our eggs into this one basket' would be 'to deny all the past work the existing Programmes of the EBC have done. That work will go on. Nor will it be a question of degree and manner of approach. These three home programmes of the BBC will form part of a single co-ordinated whole and the whole will to the best of our ability be devoted to the enlightenment, entertainment and informing of the community and the slow but rewarding process of raising public taste.'<sup>3</sup>

There was another fundamental principle behind the tripartite system at the start, although this principle was to be abandoned in 1948. Each service—Home, Light, and Third—had to be 'in competition' with the others. There was to be no centralized planning. A thirteen-page memorandum drafted by Nicolls, the Senior Controller, in December 1944 and revised in April 1945 emphasized the need 'to allow the freest possible "competition" within the BBC's monopoly', including competition in the pages of the *Radio Times*. The competing programmes had to be organized, however, on lines which would 'give the best aggregate service to the listener', and this meant that 'their types and scope must be determined outside the competition'.<sup>4</sup>

A substantial degree of 'pre-determination' was thought to be necessary and was incorporated in 'Queensberry rules' giving examples of how programme material should be allocated between Programmes A, B and C. B (Light) would contrast with A (Home), and the most important aspect of the contrast would be one of 'texture'. Programme A would be planned a week ahead of Programmes B and C so that in their own planning the organizers of B and C would have full

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley, Address to the General Advisory Council, 29 Oct. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \**Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> 'Broadcasting and British Life', an Address to the British Institute of Adult Education.

<sup>4</sup> \*Nicolls, 'Post-War Programme Set-up', 21 Dec. 1944, revised 23 April 1945.

fore-knowledge of what the Home Service was doing. These organizers would be 'entitled to *requisition* the exact *type* of programme' they wanted and to secure adequate resources on a basis of equality. There would even be a Programme Reserve Fund, unallocated in advance, 'for helping lame dogs in special circumstances'. 'Swaps' were to be permissible, but in general competition would have to be 'friendly, sporting and not cut-throat, with the total interest of the Corporation as its background'.<sup>1</sup>

While within the structure the 'individuality' of each Programme was emphasized, all three Programmes would draw on three 'Supply Divisions'—Entertainment (which included Music, Features, Drama, Variety, Children's Hour, Gramophone, Outside Broadcasts, and Recorded Programmes); Talks (which also included School Broadcasting); and News. Yet ideas would not be the monopoly of the 'Programme side'. 'Supply Divisions will be encouraged to make suggestions for programmes to the Programme Heads. In fact, subject to the final right of veto resting with the Programme Heads, there must be an easy-running two-way traffic in ideas between the two sides.'<sup>2</sup>

By the summer of 1946, however, Haley himself was somewhat uneasy about the degree of decentralization ('the widest measure of Programme decentralization the BBC has undertaken')<sup>3</sup> and the limited co-ordination between the three Programmes. 'The Programme teams, who are really the "editors" of their programmes, are divorced from the Supply Divisions, and a Co-ordinating Committee under Senior Controller arbitrates on conflicting claims to resources and on other points at issue.' Competition had led to 'holes' in programmes being filled by 'better listening', but programme teams were tending 'inescapably' to go after the same audience, 'to duplicate each other's field, and even to detach audiences from each other'.<sup>4</sup> Nicolls himself made somewhat the same points five years later. The Queensberry rules had 'undoubtedly tended to liveliness and initiative in programmes', yet there had been times when 'better results might have been achieved by central planning'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 'Post-War Broadcasting', 24 July 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Haley, 27 July 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley, 'The Home Programme Policy of the BBC', 4 July 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Nicolls to Haley, 23 May 1951.

Between these two dates the Co-ordinating Committee, which held eighty-one meetings in all between May 1945 and December 1947,<sup>1</sup> had been replaced by a Home Broadcasting Committee. Haley himself took a keen interest in the deliberations of both Committees, and set out to invoke 'the overall interests of the BBC' when competition became too keen.<sup>2</sup> In 1946 Lindsay Wellington and Norman Collins as Heads of the Home and Light Programmes were in constant touch with him about what constituted 'fair competition'. There was certainly an arbitrary element in such a judgement as 'big popular events in sport should go to Programme B, while those of middle-class appeal should go to Programme A' or 'all major live commentaries should be on Light with occasional exceptions on Home'.<sup>3</sup>

While the Third Programme went its own way, Home and Light were arguing at times as to whether the Light Programme was really 'light enough'. Should the Home Service deliberately overrun its 6 p.m., 9 p.m. and 10 o'clock News bulletins? If Home Service offered Variety before lunch and Light Programme at tea-time, was that too 'co-ordinated'? These were some of the matters discussed by Wellington and Collins at a lunch with Haley in the summer of 1948. A little later, it was Collins who sent Haley a copy of a letter to Wellington in which he argued that while 'the principle of competition which D.G. has introduced has been of inestimable value in vitalising the home services', there was 'need for co-ordination in output'.<sup>4</sup> Wellington professed himself unhappy about 'the vulgarity of the Light Programme', many of whose programmes were 'deplorable in kind even when they are professionally competent'.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, both he and Collins were uneasy about the 'regionalised parts of the Home Service' within a system which allowed not only for local programming on the Regional Home Services but for 'opting out' from national programmes.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Its first meeting was on 15 May and its last on 9 December.

<sup>2</sup> M. Gorham, *Broadcasting and Television since 1900* (1952), p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> \*Co-ordinating Committee, *Minutes*, 29 May, 5 July 1945. The Cup Final went to B, but International Rugby to A; Horse Races to B, but Wimbledon to A; the Boat Race to B and the Americas Cup to A, and so on.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to Wellington, 26 Nov. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Wellington to Haley, 31 Jan. 1947.

<sup>6</sup> See below, pp. 96-101.

balance of constituent items in the first months of 1947 was set out at the time in tabular form:

CONSTITUENTS IN HOME PROGRAMME  
12-25 JANUARY 1947

<i>Programme Constituents</i>	<i>Home Service</i>	<i>Light Pro- gramme</i>	<i>Third Pro- gramme</i>	<i>Total All Pro- grammes</i>	<i>Comparison with first fortnight in Oct. 1946</i>	<i>Comparison with Aug. 1945 to Aug. 1946, HS &amp; LP only</i>
Classical Music	% 16·57	% 8·91	% 50·28	% 18·91	% 18·42	% 13·27
Light Music	19·89	35·21	—	22·82	21·61	29·18
Dance Music	3·72	13·03	—	6·84	8·19	10·07
All Music:	40·18	57·15	50·28	48·57	48·21	52·52
Plays and Features	9·85	9·60	36·62	14·04	11·59	8·07
Variety	10·86	14·82	—	10·70	11·51	12·78
Entertainment Total:	60·89	81·57	86·90	73·31	71·31	73·37
Talks and Discussions*	6·85	6·63	12·24	7·63	7·18	3·26
Other Broadcasts†	32·26	11·80	0·86	19·06	21·51	23·37
Grand Total:	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00

\* *excludes* talks in religious, schools, and children's-hour programmes.

† *includes* news, running commentary, O.B.s, religious, schools, children's-hour programmes.

The new Home Broadcasting Committee, presided over by Nicolls, had to sort out all the issues which lay behind this pattern of programming, and in March 1948 it was given clear indication of a change of course by Haley:

The aim of the BBC must be to conserve and strengthen serious listening. It follows that destructive placings should be avoided. Constructive and creative planning within Programmes and as between Programmes should take its place. While satisfying the legitimate public demand for recreation and entertainment, the BBC must never lose sight of its cultural mission. In order the more fully to strengthen this purpose, the Corporation has decided that,

conformable to the three Programmes retaining their character, they should be co-ordinated to the fullest possible extent in the listeners' general interest. The BBC is a single instrument and must see that the nation derives the best advantage from this fact.<sup>1</sup>

This was not quite the last word, however authoritative it sounded. There were further difficulties, for example, in June 1949 when T. W. Chalmers, who had succeeded Collins as Controller of the Light Programme a few months earlier,<sup>2</sup> protested against projects of the Controller, Home Service, designed, in his view, to 'protect' Home Service Variety against Light Programme competition.<sup>3</sup>

If the policy of 'competition' as at first enunciated had to be revised in the light of experience, how did Haley's theory of a 'single co-ordinated whole' with a 'widening audience' for the Third Programme within it work out in practice? First, the size of audience for the Third Programme fell rather than rose after the first few months of public interest; by 1949 there were weeks when a ratio of less than one in a hundred listeners was reached,<sup>4</sup> and the figure submitted to the Beveridge Committee was 0.3 per cent of the population, 100,000 people in all.<sup>5</sup> A few months later detailed figures were presented to the Governors, showing that the average audience per quarter for the Third Programme since 1948 had fallen far more sharply than a parallel fall in listening to the Home Service (100 to 82) and the Light Programme (100 to 88):<sup>6</sup>

## THIRD PROGRAMME LISTENING

Quarter	1948		1949		1950	
	%	Index	%	Index	%	Index
First	0.32	100	0.22	69	0.14	44
Second	0.24	75	0.13	41		
Third	0.33	104	0.18	56		
Fourth	0.29	91	0.17	53		

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 'Home Programme Policy', 15 March 1948.

<sup>2</sup> He became Controller on 1 Oct. 1948, when Collins moved to become Controller of Television. See below, pp. 222 ff.

<sup>3</sup> \*Chalmers to Nicolls, 7 June 1949; Wellington to Chalmers, 14 June 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by the Director-General, Oct. 1948, which was discussed by the Governors a month later (*Minutes*, 11 Nov. 1948).

<sup>5</sup> \*BBC Memorandum, 'Review of Listener Research Findings', Dec. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Report on Third Programme Listening Figures, June 1950.

Three compensatory arguments began to be produced when figures of this kind were used to attack the tripartite system. First, it was said, the barometer was not an appropriate instrument, given the initial purpose of the Third Programme: what should really be measured was the extent of Third Programme listening among 'that part of the population' to which it was 'reasonable' to expect the Third Programme to appeal. The fall in listening by this 'target audience' was said to be smaller than the fall in the whole audience.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the lower figures could be considered acceptable if the theory that the Third Programme depended on 'patrons' (non-interfering patrons) was accepted. 'One listens when and where one can,' Rose Macaulay, a keen supporter of the Programme, contributor as well as 'patron', had written in 1946; 'perhaps one should have a long but not debilitating illness and really get down to it.'<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, intensity of appreciation, it was claimed, mattered far more than size, and there was no sign that this was falling.

This third point was made most effectively by R. J. E. Silvey, the Head of the BBC's Listener Research Department, both in 1946 and in 1950. 'Judged by a qualitative rather than a quantitative criterion—listeners' enjoyment of broadcasts rather than numbers listening—Third Programme output compares favourably with that of any other Service.' Bach's *Art of Fugue* had been welcomed with 'particular enthusiasm', for example, by the first listeners.<sup>3</sup> The Appreciation Index was 'reasonably steady' in 1950.<sup>4</sup> Silvey even produced a fuller compensatory argument at this time. The audience had been too big in the first months to be 'natural'. Now it was too small because non-listeners took its existence for granted. 'If appetites grow by what they feed on, they are equally capable of atrophy by neglect—at any rate in the sphere of aesthetics.'<sup>5</sup>

There was continuing, if conflicting, evidence of development of tastes through 'interchange' between the Programmes, the point stressed by Haley.<sup>6</sup> To begin with, the Third Programme was provided with one of the best-known announcers from the Home Service, Alvar Lidell, along with Marjorie

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.      <sup>2</sup> *Time and Tide*, 2 Nov. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in 'The Third Programme' (BBC publication, 1947), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> \*'Review of Listener Research Findings', Dec. 1949.

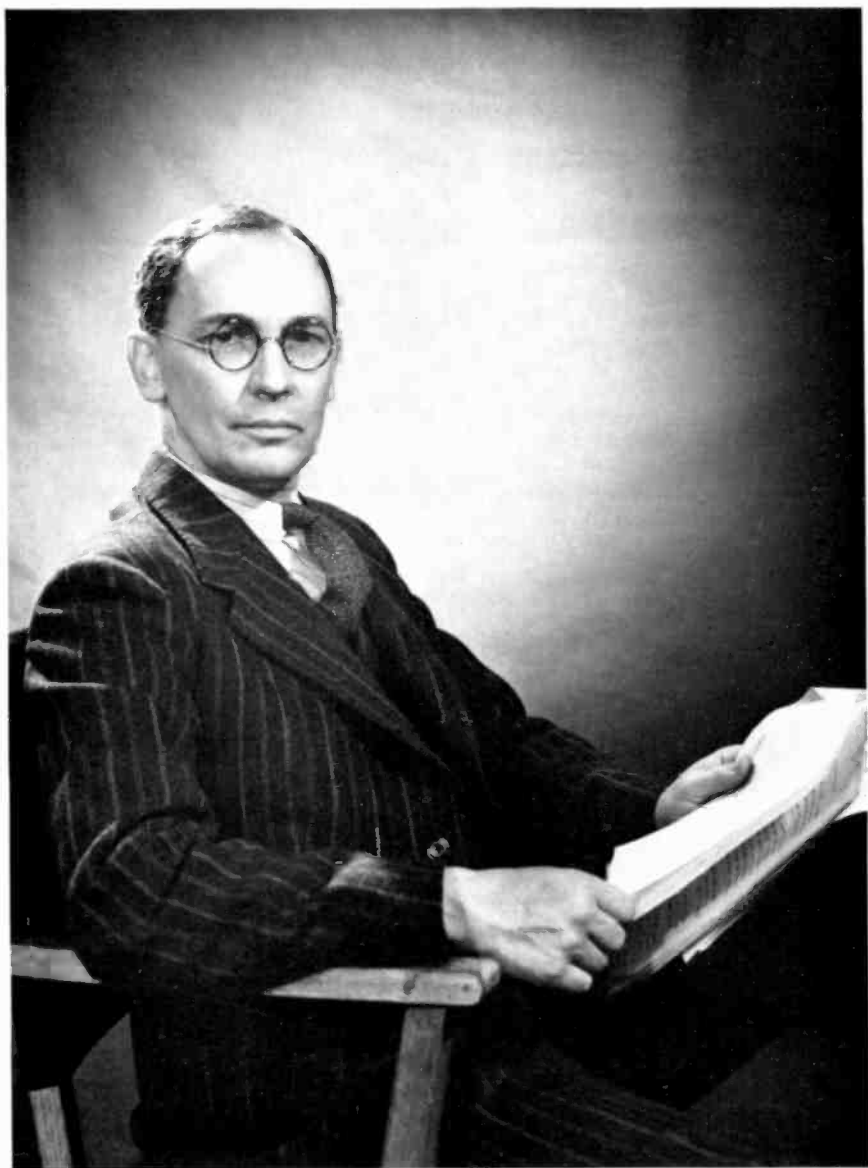
<sup>5</sup> \*Report on Third Programme Listening Figures, June 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Haley, Address to the General Advisory Council, 29 Oct. 1947.





1. Sir William Haley



2. Sir Ian Jacob

Anderson, equally well known as an announcer in the wartime General Forces Programme and one of the best natural broadcasters of the post-war BBC. Later, however, it became more 'self-contained' and more conscious of its own distinct identity. Throughout, some Third Programme items were repeated on other services and vice versa, with Home Service repeats of many musical programmes and of *The Spirit in the Cage*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and a number of *Imaginary Conversations*. Likewise, in 1946 three outstanding recorded Home Service programmes—Louis MacNeice's *The Dark Tower*, an adaptation of *Pilgrim's Progress* (with John Gielgud as Christian), and Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*—were broadcast as repeats in the Third Programme, while John Hersey's superb report on *Hiroshima* on four successive evenings in the Third Programme was re-broadcast in a shortened version six weeks later on the Light Programme.

For all the interchange, however, it was noted very early in the history of the Third Programme that there was a 'hard core', consisting of about one-third of the public, who made no attempt to try to listen to the Third Programme, let alone enjoy it.<sup>1</sup> In class terms also the theory of the 'cultural pyramid' had disturbing implications. The average audience for Light Programme broadcasting in 1949 included 3 per cent upper middle-class listeners, 18 per cent lower middle-class listeners, and 79 per cent working-class listeners. By comparison, that for Home Service broadcasting included comparable proportions of 7 per cent, 24 per cent and 69 per cent. The Third Programme audience, however, was entirely different in composition—28 per cent, 37 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Philosophy might point to the theory of the 'widening audience'. BBC Listener Research tended to suggest the opposite, that 'the matrix' determining tastes, a matrix influenced by biological factors such as age and sex, and sociological factors such as class and (related to it) education, was very slow to change.<sup>3</sup> And it could have been—indeed, was—argued that

<sup>1</sup> \*Listener Research Report, 6 Nov. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*'Review of Listener Research Findings', Dec. 1949, p. 6. The 'middle classes' as defined here comprised only 25 per cent of the population.

<sup>3</sup> The variations in programme preferences were striking. Thus, for instance, among women of over fifty years old those with elementary education placed Variety first while those with a university education placed it fourteenth.

the impetus for change would have been greater if the Light, Home, Third split had not been introduced as a matter of 'idealist' high policy.

Much was still being argued about when the Beveridge inquiry began. How were all the 'trends' and 'tendencies' and the judgements made to be integrated? Above all, perhaps, what was to be the future of 'regional' broadcasting? The answer to this question was one on which the Heads of the Home, Light, and Third, if pressed, could often agree. In order to grasp the significance of the question, as well as the range of alternative answers to it, we must return to the same war-time debate behind the scenes which had led not only to the perpetuation of the monopoly—with conditions—and to the beginnings of the tripartite system, but to a new pattern of regional broadcasting.

### 3. The Regions

AFTER Foot had circulated his paper of March 1943 on the post-war position of the BBC,<sup>1</sup> several of the most interesting comments came from the Regions.<sup>2</sup> Their activities had been drastically curtailed during the war,<sup>3</sup> and they were ready for action. Foot's eleventh note specifically asked two questions. The first question, 'Home programmes. How many? What kind?' has already been considered, but the question was supplemented by the second, 'How many (if any) are to be regionally produced?' Regional broadcasting had gone through many vicissitudes during the 1920s and 1930s,<sup>4</sup> and Foot was

<sup>1</sup> \*R. Foot, 'Notes on Post-War Position', 19 March 1943. See above, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> \*The 'Notes' were circulated to Regional Directors with a request for both individual and collective replies. (Controllers' Conference, *Minutes*, 7 April 1943.)

<sup>3</sup> See Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 541-3. There were no Regional wavelengths, but there was a 'Regional contribution' to the Home and later to the Forces and Overseas Programmes, and from 1942 onwards the Regional Directors attended monthly meetings in London to discuss programming with the central Controllers. Summaries of the Regional contributions to national programming were regularly provided (e.g. \*Miss Lawson Dick to G. D. Adams, 22 April, 5 Nov. 1943; Adams to Haley, 1 Feb. 1944). There were frequent complaints, however, about excessive 'centralization'.

<sup>4</sup> See Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), esp. pp. 293-339 and pp. 489-90.

saying nothing new when he pointed to the dangers of the BBC becoming 'a top heavy and remote organisation looking at its policy . . . with the eyes of a Londoner'.<sup>1</sup>

Before Foot asked his leading question, Nicolls had seemed to imply in an earlier memorandum that Regional broadcasting might be totally eliminated after the war, and there were certainly people inside the BBC who had no desire to restore Regional wavelengths. Two months after Foot's question, Maurice Farquharson, the BBC's Secretary, summarized the documentary record relating to the BBC's Regional policies and concluded that pre-war Governors had given 'no kind of guarantee about future Regional programmes as such'. Indeed, they had specifically referred to 'finance' as 'a limiting factor of increasing importance'. In effect, if not explicitly, they had rejected completely the idea of a 'Charter of Regional Rights', which had been advocated in 1936 in a specially commissioned report on the Regions by a senior BBC official, Charles Siepmann, who had subsequently left the Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

Before the Regional Controllers submitted their replies to Foot in 1943, Kenneth Adam, the BBC's Director of Publicity, wrote also to the Publicity Officers of the Regions—at the Director-General's instigation—to seek their views on the 'Regional question'. He identified twelve main issues in the form of questions, and these, along with a later memorandum of August 1943,<sup>3</sup> still constitute the most direct approach on paper to some, though by no means all, of the relevant issues.

First, Adam asked, 'should the old Regional set-up be resumed after the war, with the same or greater or less independence?' Did any Region contain 'within its boundaries, the resources to provide a completely alternative system to London?' How far were 'localised interests (in education, culture, entertainment, sport, etc.) capable of sustaining whole-time Regional, as opposed to, or perhaps one should say, in parallel with, national attention?'

The complexities of the last sentence reflected the complexities of the subject. The only over-simplification in Adam's first

<sup>1</sup> Foot, Manuscript Autobiography, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Farquharson, 3 May 1943. For Siepmann's Report and its 'cautious' reception, see *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 331-9.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 53-4.

set of related questions was the term 'the old Regional set-up', which suggested that there had been one single set-up in all the Regions and at all times before 1939.

Adam's second question was fundamental, although it is by no means obvious that the Regional Publicity Officers were in any privileged position to answer it. 'Is there a workable alternative to Regional broadcasting in the licensing of political and social or cultural bodies who would then, in competition, run their own services against, or in conjunction with, or entirely without, a BBC?' This, like Adam's questions 4 to 12, seems to have been a question to himself as much as to his subordinates. Yet the first part of his question 3, a hinge question, obviously looked to them for information and advice. 'Can Regional broadcasting, whether restored on a pre-war basis, or elevated to greater autonomy, really provide this element of *competition* which is much in the mind of people at the moment?' The second part of his question raised, albeit in relation to a short period of time, all the big issues which were being decided elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> 'And in any case, is competition so desirable anyway? Can you, for instance, imagine competition in schools broadcasting or adult education? Or, indeed, music? Does not competition really mean competition in entertainment, simply?'

There were no other references to Regional issues as such in the remaining questions in Adam's paper, which never mentioned Scotland or Wales once. These were countries rather than regions, but they had always figured in the BBC's Regional plans. In a later paper, Adam advocated the creation of Northern and Southern 'Divisions', with the Trent as the boundary and a new BBC Regional Headquarters outside London—'say, at Oxford or Leicester'—where a Regional Planning Board would organize a new 'Programme C'.<sup>2</sup> It would be the business of this Board to see that 'the life and activity of different counties would be adequately reflected in this Regional Programme', and in order to facilitate such representativeness BBC county officers should be appointed, 'young men and women earning their spurs, not remittance men'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A key book was P. P. Eckersley, *The Power Behind the Microphone* (1941). As the first Chief Engineer of the BBC, Eckersley, a lively and imaginative pioneer of broadcasting from its Writtle days, had designed the Regional scheme. He now emerged as a strong supporter of Regional devolution and competition.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum of 27 Aug. 1943.

The replies which Adam collected from the Regional Publicity Officers do not survive, but fortunately most of the replies of the Regional Directors to Foot do. The Directors were being kept busy in war-time with carefully identified tasks 'in the national interest', but they were not in any sense 'directing' Regional broadcasting, and some of them had ample time to contemplate the shape of things to come in the light of their own experience. Gerald Beadle, from Bristol, who had joined the BBC in 1923 and had become West Regional Controller in 1943, dwelt on the overall position of the Corporation, financial and technical. He had been involved in war-time policy-making in London more than his fellow Directors, and he was to be called back again to head an Efficiency Committee in 1952.<sup>1</sup> M. Dinwiddie, the Scottish Director, writing from Glasgow, and R. Hopkin Morris, the Welsh Director, writing from Cardiff, dwelt more on social and cultural issues. It was G. L. Marshall from Belfast, however, who recommended a pattern similar to that which was eventually fashioned.

A regional system whereby all local events and material will be produced regionally on a separate wavelength will have to be set in motion once more, but a national programme will also have to be available on which not only all items and events of a national character should be included but also all programmes initiated regionally which are considered of first quality. The number of programmes on the regional wavelength will, of course, depend on the resources in the particular region, but the decision as to this would obviously have to be made by the Regional Director. Regional self-expression will have to be maintained at all costs where it is justified ethnically. The Regions should obviously deal locally with such things as a local News Service, Music, including an orchestra which would be used for public concerts (this is particularly necessary in the case of Northern Ireland where no orchestra, municipal or otherwise, exists at the moment), local Drama and the encouragement of dramatic societies in the region, Religion, Appeals, Talks, Children's Hour and Topicality.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Briggs, *The War of Words*, p. 528; G. Beadle, *Television, a Critical Review* (1963), pp. 29-30; \*Beadle to Farquharson, 15 April 1943; and below, p. 687.

<sup>2</sup> \*G. L. Marshall, 'Post-War Position', 30 April 1943.

The collective document from all the Regional Directors was signed, as was right and proper, by Percy Edgar, a veteran BBC Regional administrator, who had been Director of the Midland Region in Birmingham, the oldest Region, since its foundation.<sup>1</sup> It began by pointing out, correctly, that all discussions about the future were bound to be limited in scope until it was known precisely how many radio channels would be available to the BBC after the war. The main weight of argument in the document, however, was that 'Regional resources' needed to be mobilized far more in 'general broadcasting for the whole country' than had been the case during the 1930s. Before 1930, every effort had been made 'to discover and present programmes from all sources in Great Britain and Northern Ireland capable of producing them', but after 1930, the BBC's own London-based programme departments had turned the BBC into 'a highly centralised programme factory increasingly out of touch with the activities of the British people and far too dependent on *ex post facto* statistical surveys of listeners' reactions'. This forthright version of history suggested a diagnosis of the current malady. 'We have become the equivalent of a monopoly publishing firm which writes most of its own books in the office.'

The language was spirited, but parts of the prognostication, particularly the first, were less convincing. 'After the war there will have to be a big reduction in our output of news, morale features, topical magazines and all those programme forms which war engenders. Instead the emphasis will fall on education, music and entertainment. . . . We believe that high standards cannot be maintained without real competition.' At this point, it was taken for granted that 'high standards' could best be secured nationally by regional competition, a tenable, if controversial, deduction in relation to education, music and entertainment. A central programme planning authority would be free to take programmes from where it wished, including the Regions, and competition would have to be encouraged 'between the metropolis and the Regions and between one Region

<sup>1</sup> He had been associated, indeed, with 'the first feeble wireless waves from the Witton works of the General Electric Company' before the British Broadcasting Company came into existence (*Sunday Mercury*, 22 July 1945). See also Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), p. 140.



and another'. More resources in money and men would be needed to develop such competition, and the whole of England, including the Home Counties, which, like East Anglia, or for that matter 'the South', had been left out of the pre-war Regional scheme, should be fully drawn into the picture. London, the South-East, the South-West, and the North could be the new regional units—alongside Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. 'Each Region could carry as much internal producing machinery as might be necessary to ensure a steady output. Each would aim primarily at the publication of programmes produced by external organisations operating in its territory.'

As far as 'territorial broadcasting' was concerned, there should be an exclusive radio channel for each Region, but the pre-war boundaries in England should not be restored. They had been drawn, it was said, 'to coincide more or less with the coverage of the available transmitters' and did not conform with any very well-defined political, cultural, or sociological divisions. While Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland should have their territorial broadcasting rights restored and extended, therefore, 'the need for territorial broadcasting in England on the basis of county and/or city constituencies should be borne in mind, with the object of introducing it as soon as technical developments make it possible'.<sup>1</sup>

The North Regional Director, John Coatman, one of the strongest advocates of regional competition inside the BBC,<sup>2</sup> did not subscribe to this conclusion, but he shared the general social and cultural objectives of his colleagues:

We regard territorial broadcasting in England and in other parts of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a matter of great importance for the future of democracy. In practice, only a very small proportion of the people of this country ever have an opportunity of playing a part in Governmental or social organisation, except in the cities, towns and villages in which they happen to live, and the appalling apathy in recent years towards local affairs, and local government in particular, is indicative of the social and political irresponsibility which is the greatest danger to democracy today. Unfortunately in recent years the main media of publication (broadcasting and the national press) devote themselves almost entirely

<sup>1</sup> \*'Regional Directors' Criticism, Proposals for Post-war Development', August 1943.

<sup>2</sup> See *The War of Words*, p. 542 and below, p. 101.

to national and international affairs. The result is that local affairs—the only affairs that most people have an opportunity of doing anything about—are seriously neglected, especially by radio, and they are too often accompanied by inefficiency and corruption.

Coatman, who was backed by a strong body of local opinion,<sup>1</sup> took it as 'axiomatic' that 'the best broadcasting is that which is in most direct touch with the life of the people . . . at all points'. He felt strongly that after the war authority and 'powers of control' should no longer be concentrated in London. War-time centralization had induced 'deep anxiety and apprehension', but there should be no return to the *status quo* of 1939. Initiative and control should pass to the provinces. Invoking his early experience in the Indian public service on the North-West Frontier of India—Coatman was 'an imperialist of enlightened stamp'<sup>2</sup>—he claimed that 'the North Country' had always meant more to him than 'England' itself. 'Such feelings as these lie latent in all of us, whether we are North Countrymen, East Anglians, Welshmen or Scots, and they rightly form one of the most clamant of all the factors in our thought on the organisation of broadcasting in this country.'

The Coatman Plan, which was to produce much hostility in BBC quarters in London and Bristol, envisaged six territorial Regions as 'the power-units' of broadcasting, among them the North of England which, Coatman stressed, had as much 'individuality and identity' as Scotland or Wales. Derbyshire and Lincolnshire should be added to the North, and the Midland Region should stretch across from West to East, 'a visibly diversified Region, nicely balanced in agriculture and industry and full of history'. The pre-war West Region should disappear, however, and there should be one South Region from Cornwall to Kent. The six Regions should not only broadcast in their own areas but should supply programmes, through competition, for the Controllers of two new national services—'light' and

<sup>1</sup> \*Coatman addressed a meeting of the Ministry of Information's Northern Advisory Committee on this subject on 19 Jan. 1943, when he pointed out that the Northern counties demanded 'the restoration of Regional broadcasting as quickly as possible'. He sent a memorandum to Foot on 21 Feb. 1944 complaining that the new division between Home and Forces did not permit 'the characteristic activities and life of the North of England' to enter into programming. (Note by Nicolls, 17 Feb. 1944.) See also A. Briggs, 'Local and Regional in Northern Sound Broadcasting' in *Northern History*, vol. X (1975).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1963.

'more serious'. It followed logically that the BBC's Control Board of the future should consist of the Director-General, the two Controllers of the basic National Programmes, and the Regional Directors.

Coatman also included a lengthy section on organization, emphasizing the virtues of competition as a purgative of 'the weak and inefficient'. He added that he had no worries about the attainment of equal standards throughout the country. These would be achieved through competition between Regional Directors who would be responsible for standards, and all of whom would 'aim high'. 'I want to get right away', wrote Coatman, 'from the idea that the Regions are to broadcast "Kail-yard" stuff only. The very essence of my conception of the Regions is that they shall be . . . devised so as to harness all the broadcasting resources of the nation.' Without such harnessing, 'the life of the whole country dries up'. Post-war British broadcasting should achieve 'inter-acting diversity'. It should also foster 'nation building' in 'the truest sense of those words' and 'project the whole of Great Britain to the world'. In other words, Coatman wished to separate out different cultural strands in order to create a new unity. He thought of the country as a whole being served by the Regions, 'from each according to its capacity, to each according to its needs'. He confessed no sympathy with the political claims of the Scottish or Welsh Nationalists or of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland, although he wanted the people of England 'to know Welsh, Irish and Scottish history, and Welsh and Scottish and Irish life'.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of this phrase 'according to capacity and needs' adds to the impression that Coatman had produced a manifesto rather than a memorandum, a somewhat boisterous manifesto which alienated as many people as it convinced. During the rest of the war, Coatman spent many hours preparing the manuscript of a whole new book on broadcasting—its philosophy rather than its structure—while BBC high policy continued for a number of reasons to favour restrictions on Regional

<sup>1</sup> He held that if Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland became full Regions, they would be 'driven into politics and twisted and warped away from their primary business of broadcasting as parts of the inclusive nation to which they belong, namely the British nation'.

initiative. Thus, in the note on the future of broadcasting which he sent to Foot in September 1943, Farquharson mentioned the 'Regional question' only once, even though the whole note was concerned with possible systems of 'competitive broadcasting'. '“Regional broadcasting”', he remarked, almost as an aside—he was careful to use quotation marks—'is sometimes suggested as an alternative to commercial competition and as a means of avoiding “metropolitan concentration”'.<sup>1</sup> Three months later, Haley himself expressed the opinion that the Corporation's efforts should be concentrated on the improvement of Home and Forces programmes before any 'Regionalization' was introduced, and he was strongly supported from within the Corporation in his view that the main emphasis in long-term policy should be 'development of broadcasting on a national basis', not 'separate, self-contained Regional programmes'.<sup>2</sup>

At a later stage, the furthest Haley would go in talking of 'Programme A' was to say that it would be 'capable of Regionalisation in the same way as programmes were regionalised before the war', a comment which aroused considerable suspicions in the provincial press.<sup>3</sup> For his part, Nicolls pooh-poohed talk of an additional 'Southern Region', which had been advocated by Adam and Coatman. It would cost £200,000 a year, he said, a sum greater than could be justified by the programme material available.<sup>4</sup> These attitudes persisted as late as May 1945, when Coatman was running into difficulties both with the Board of Governors and with Haley about the manuscript of his book. The Director-General had insisted that certain changes had to be made before publication, and the Governors had refused to allow Coatman to publish it in its first form on the grounds that it would mislead the public as to what the BBC's policies really were.<sup>5</sup> Coatman had to accept their decision and revise his text,

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson, 'Post-war Broadcasting', 10 Sept. 1943.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Farquharson, 'Post-war Broadcasting: Transitional Arrangements', 16 Dec. 1943, on a Meeting between Foot, Ashbridge, Haley, and J. B. Clark.

<sup>3</sup> \*W. J. Haley, Address to the Radio Industries Club, 'Post-war Broadcasting', 28 Nov. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> \*Nicolls to Dinwiddie, 13 March 1945.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Coatman, 10 April 1945; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 May 1945; Note by Haley, 22 May 1945. Haley recognized that there was 'a wide measure of coincidence of view' between himself and Coatman, but said that this might make publication of Coatman's views even more 'misleading'. 'The public may think Mr. Coatman is an unofficial spokesman for the Corporation.'

but the book was never in fact published—largely because after revision it lost its polemical flavour.<sup>1</sup>

One of the fears which seems to have influenced Haley and his colleagues in London not only at this time but later was that Regional Directors, as they were then called, and their colleagues might be able—through local Members of Parliament—to draw Parliament more directly and continuously into discussions about programme policies and BBC standards of service. Coatman had stated in his manuscript that his interest in writing it had been initiated by parliamentary questions about the future of broadcasting in August 1943,<sup>2</sup> and this in itself seems to have upset Haley and the Governors. Even after the BBC had accepted—if in some quarters reluctantly—the argument for a greater measure of autonomy in Regional broadcasting, difficulties arose persistently concerning detailed local questions from MPs, many of which the Postmaster-General or his Assistant found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to answer.<sup>3</sup> There were other BBC fears, too; for example, that politics might be brought into BBC affairs at the local and regional level. These fears persisted, and culminated in an expression of strong opposition to proposals for a new form of 'Representative Regional machinery' after the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1951.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the problems of the future were foreseen late in 1944 and 1945 before they actually took shape. Yet it was during this period, when the BBC's post-war plans were being clarified, that a significant change in emphasis becomes apparent in BBC statements. The Cabinet Committee was obviously interested in generating 'competition inside the BBC', and Bracken in his important paper of 12 July 1944 urged as 'the practical alternative to splitting up and weakening of the BBC' the arrangement of 'simultaneous services' from the Regions. Before the

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 June 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Coatman published an article later on 'Regional Broadcasting' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. II, no. 3, pp. 160-4. He wrote on other broadcasting subjects also, including the BBC's constitution (see *Public Administration*, vol. 27, Summer 1951), and after his retirement as North Regional Controller in 1949 he wrote several newspaper articles on 'Broadcasting in the North'. 'Parliament, the BBC and the public alike,' he argued, 'are not agreed that Regional broadcasting exists as of right.'

<sup>3</sup> Major Petherick had raised the question of the constitutional position of the BBC. See *Hansard*, vol. 391, cols. 2582-4, 5 Aug. 1943.

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 401-2.

war, he remarked, 'the BBC's Regional Services were developing in this way'. 'Though directed to particular Regions,' Regional programmes after the war, he went on, 'could be made available over large parts of the country, so providing genuine alternatives to the national programme.' Bracken admitted that there was a 'disadvantage' in this proposal. 'The autonomy of the Regions might easily become merely nominal.'<sup>1</sup>

Regional broadcasting was duly restored in July 1945 at the same time as the introduction of the Home, Light, and Third, and increases in the number of programmes broadcast followed the return of Regional administrators and producers. There were complaints later from the Head of the Light Programme that the effect of 'regional fragmentation has naturally been to substitute a number of programmes with small audiences for comparatively few programmes all with large audiences',<sup>2</sup> but the implicit issues were of a different order. It remained difficult after 1945 to foster a lively growth of Regional broadcasting when there was a shortage of wavelengths for home listeners. Two medium waves were retained for the European Service, and Haley, like the Government, wished his Third Programme to start as soon as possible with the largest possible coverage.<sup>3</sup> The Labour Government's Minister of Information, E. J. Williams, and its Postmaster-General, Lord Listowel, talked, therefore, of merging the Northern and Midland Regions and of forcing Northern Ireland to share the wavelength.<sup>4</sup>

At a conference held in October 1945, with Herbert Morrison in the chair, the same idea was pressed that the number of English Regions should be cut to two.<sup>5</sup> The pressure was so great, indeed, that, on behalf of the BBC, Haley was driven to suggesting that the only way of getting round the wavelength difficulty would be to amalgamate not the Northern and Midland but the Midland and West Regions.<sup>6</sup> The Cabinet accepted this suggestion, which was to prove highly controversial, but

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 34-6.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by Collins, 6 Feb. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 65; \*Sir Eric Bamford, Director-General, Ministry of Information, to Haley, 4 Oct. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note on a Meeting of 10 Oct. 1945. Philip Noel-Baker, Minister of State, was among the others present.

<sup>6</sup> CP (45) 293, on which Cmd. 6852 was based; \*Haley to Bamford, 15 Jan. 1946; Bamford to Haley, 7 Feb. 1946; BBC Paper of 12 Feb. 1946, 'Effect on Home Service Coverage of Introduction of C Programme'.

as late as March 1946 there was further talk in the Post Office of the need to amalgamate all the Regions into one.<sup>1</sup>

There was an obvious element of irony in what was happening. As Haley pointed out, it was pressure from the Coalition Government which had been largely responsible for the 'revival of Regionalisation' in the summer of 1945, and it was now pressure from the Post Office that was forcing the BBC to restrict it. Yet the rhetoric was the same. 'Competition in broadcasting' could and should be achieved through 'regional devolution'.

At the moment when the new Regional structure was introduced in July 1945—a system of three English Regions, along with Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the last-named sharing a North Regional wavelength—Haley emerged in public as an eloquent advocate of Regionalization. Regional co-existence, he told the millions of readers of the *Radio Times*, 'should lead to rivalry both of creativeness and craft and to the fostering of those national and local cultures which are an enduring part of our heritage and which broadcasting can encourage more powerfully than any other medium.'<sup>2</sup> The six Regions would offer separate 'mixes' of programmes to meet different capacities and needs, including minority needs. Thereby 'diversity' would be guaranteed. Whatever the wavelength problems, the cultural object was plain. L. A. G. Strong maintained that 'civilisation which tends towards mass production and uniformity needs the corrective of individual views and ways of life expressed in individual voices'.<sup>3</sup> Such a view when expressed by a sturdy 'provincial' like Strong was not surprising. It is perhaps surprising, however, that Lord Keynes, with the weight of Bloomsbury behind him, also stated that 'the return of the BBC to regional programmes may play a great part in awakening local life and interest. . . . Nothing can be

<sup>1</sup> \*Meeting of 9 March 1946, *Minutes*. Bamford was in the Chair. A month later Townshend of the Post Office wrote to Haley, 12 April 1946, saying that there should be three English Regions. In the same letter, he stated that the start of the Third Programme should be delayed until 1 Oct. 1946, when it was hoped a new high mast at Brookmans Park would be available.

<sup>2</sup> *Radio Times*, 29 July 1945. He made an interesting speech on the subject at Birmingham at a luncheon given by the Lord Mayor in December 1945 (*Birmingham Post*, 7 Dec. 1945).

<sup>3</sup> L. A. G. Strong, 'Long Live Regional Broadcasting' in *BBC Year Book, 1945*, pp. 23-5: 'Regional broadcasting reveals Britain to herself and to the World.'

more damaging than the excessive prestige of metropolitan standards and fashions.'<sup>1</sup>

As the Regional programmes were restored after their 'long sleep', an effort was made throughout the country to increase the number of hours of Regional broadcasting within the total national mix. This was the second of the two sides of Regional broadcasting. The first was the creation of a lively Regional output for the Region's own listeners. The second was the presentation of the Region to listeners in other parts of the country, putting itself and its programmes on display. There were negative aspects of Regional policy also. The Home Service provided a 'basic' service of a 'network variety' for the whole country, but Regions had the right to opt out in their own Regional Home Services, not necessarily at fixed or agreed times.

The term 'opting out' did not find universal favour in the Regions, and at a later date Andrew Stewart, the Scottish Programme Director, was to suggest that it should be dropped. 'The operation is Regional Programme Planning.' Dinwiddie made the same point. 'Our job, as I see it, is to select the most suitable items for Scottish listeners, and we are not exercising an option, but operating an agreed policy.'<sup>2</sup> Certainly as Regional output increased in 1945 and 1946 there was pride in what was being offered—along with demands for more. 'North seeking bigger share of BBC time' was a headline of July 1946. In the West the pride was perhaps strongest. The Region, which in 1939 had broadcast eight to nine hours a week of material it had originated by itself, reached a figure of twelve during the last months of 1945 and nineteen during the last months of 1946. In all the Regions, the Regional News Service, supported by recording vans, was more comprehensive and livelier than it had been before the war, and there was an increase in the number of news bulletins.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Listener*, 12 July 1945. He added, 'Let every part of Merry England be merry in its own way. Death to Hollywood.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Stewart to Nicolls, 25 July 1947; Dinwiddie to Nicolls, 1 Aug. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 14 July 1946. By 1946 the North Region, for example, was broadcasting two daily bulletins, one for listeners in Lancashire and Yorkshire and one for listeners in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, and Westmorland (*Annual Report and Accounts, 1946-7*). *Northern News Reel* reached its hundredth edition in 1948.



There was also a quest for local talent. The 'lessons' of the war were to be applied to local life. 'Our policy', Frank Gillard, returned from war reporting, remarked in Bristol in July 1945, 'will be to get away from the artificial atmosphere of the studio as much as possible and take the microphone among the people. We have learnt a lot about recording during the war, and this knowledge will be put to good use.' In the Midlands, Denis Morris, Gillard's counterpart as the new Midland Regional Programme Director, had pioneered *Listeners Answer Back* and was determined to 'echo the voice' of the Midlands.<sup>1</sup>

This approach was effective in the long run in the different Regions as their 'basic establishments' were increased and programmes like *Have a Go*, *Any Questions*, and *Town Forum* won both Regional and national audiences. The response to the first audience participation programmes, however, was not uniform throughout the country. There was a warm welcome in the North, where people seemed 'proud to have their own radio back', now called the North of England and not the North Regional Programme;<sup>2</sup> in the Midlands, which chose as the title of its first programme *It's All Yours*; in the West, which pronounced itself 'progressive yet . . . traditional' and resumed its programmes with *Bristol at War*; and, not least, in Northern Ireland, which celebrated its twenty-first anniversary on 24 October 1945 with a reception attended by the Governor, Earl Granville, and the Prime Minister, Sir Basil Brooke.<sup>3</sup>

Both in Wales and in Scotland, however, there were difficult problems from the start, almost all of which quickly made their way from the studios into the Press. In Wales, where the Regional service had first been inaugurated in 1936, listeners were given back their 373 metres wavelength, but they were

<sup>1</sup> The West Region tried out *Stars of Works Wonders*, and in 1947 the North Region held 2,000 auditions. Many of the 'discoveries' broadcast in *Curtain Up* and *Stay at Home* and 'some of the best' of them in *RSVP*. There were 1,750 auditions in Wales in 1946-7—287 in Music, 131 in Features and Drama, 1,054 in Variety, 260 for Children's Hour, and 18 for Schools (*Annual Report and Accounts, 1946-7*).

<sup>2</sup> For demand in the North of England for Regional programme expenditure commensurate with the numbers of Regional licence holders, see, for example, the *Daily Mail*, Manchester edition, 21 July 1945; *Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1945; and *Yorkshire Observer*, 21 July 1945.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1946*, p. 81. See also the *Belfast News Letter*, 25 Oct. 1945, and *Northern Whig*, 25 Oct. 1945. 'In general,' the second of these two newspapers commented, 'the BBC has served the Province well.'

soon complaining of poor reception in certain areas, of the lack of a BBC Orchestra, and of too many programmes in English;<sup>1</sup> and Undeb Cymru Fydd (the New Wales Union) was demanding a separate Charter for Wales.<sup>2</sup> So, too, were a number of other public bodies.<sup>3</sup> In Scotland criticism of BBC programmes had for long been 'almost a national pastime',<sup>4</sup> and early progress in 1945 was far too slow to satisfy those bodies like the Saltire Society which set out to advance 'national culture' and condemned the BBC for what it called 'timidity neurosis'.<sup>5</sup> One of the questions asked by supporters of the Saltire Society was 'Why are there no Scottish Directors?' Another was 'Why was Scottish news treated as an appendage to BBC news?' What Scotland needed, the Society urged, was 'a proper integration of Scottish news with world news'.

A parliamentary question was asked in December 1945 on the first of these Scottish complaints by the Conservative MP for Perth and Kinross, Colonel A. Gomme-Duncan, who favoured a separate Scottish service similar to that in New

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1946*, p. 84. For a comprehensive critique, see *The Welsh Review*, Sept. 1945, which wrote that the service was 'rather a matter for apology than paeon'.

<sup>2</sup> *Western Mail*, 29 Nov. 1945; *Liverpool Echo*, 5 April 1946; *Cambrian News*, 22 March 1946, for Undeb Cymru Fydd's ten-point memorandum.

<sup>3</sup> Among them were Flintshire County Council (*Chester Chronicle*, 23 March 1946), Merthyr Corporation (*Merthyr Express*, 30 March 1946), Caernarvon County Council (*Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 5 April 1946), and Anglesey, Brecon, and Merioneth (*The Observer*, 14 April 1946). By nine votes to six the General Purposes Committee of Pembrokeshire County Council turned the proposition down. The new Corporation, it was argued by the majority, would eventually be 'in the hands of the Welsh Nationalists' (*Pembrokeshire Telegraph*, 4 April 1946). Keidrich Rees supported P. P. Eckersley's idea of an 'independent committee of investigation' to study the subject (*The Times*, 15 April 1946), and Lady Megan Lloyd George asked, more modestly, for a competition for suitable scripts in Welsh (*Manchester Guardian*, 12 June 1946). For a critique of the extreme Welsh case, see Glyn Griffiths in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, 10 May 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *The Scotsman*, 21 July 1945.

<sup>5</sup> Speech of the President, Robert Hurd, at the Annual Meeting of the Saltire Society, July 1945 (*The Scotsman*, 30 July 1945). The Society had earlier produced a critical brochure, *Broadcasting: a Policy for Development*. See also a letter from Hurd to the *Glasgow Herald*, 3 Aug. 1945, and the report of an Aberdeen conference on religious broadcasting (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12 Sept. 1945), asking not only for a daily Presbyterian service but for more Scottish voices and 'less Cockneyism'. The critics of the BBC had obviously not been appeased by the remarks of the Regional Director, Dinwiddie, at a Press Conference in Edinburgh in July 1945 when he promised to make the Scottish Home Service 'true to its name' (*The Scotsman*, 21 July 1945).

Zealand;<sup>1</sup> and after the Minister of Information had replied that Scottish programmes were widely appreciated, Mrs. Jean Mann, voluble Labour Member for Coatbridge, demanded in a sharply worded supplementary, 'Could my right hon. friend say who in Scotland is satisfied with the BBC?'<sup>2</sup> This was not the last time that Mrs. Mann was to go into the attack. A few months later, Gomme-Duncan went further and initiated an inconclusive parliamentary debate on Scottish broadcasting in which he reiterated the arguments of the Saltire Society and strongly attacked 'control from London'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet not all the local argument pointed in the same direction. Regional listeners, deprived by their own Regional planners of items to which they wished to listen in the National Programme, soon began to complain bitterly of the policy of 'opting out'. Half-scientific, half-culinary language reflected the times. Thus there was talk of 'the abysmal and exasperating failure of the BBC's experiment in splitting the National atom, i.e., the system whereby Regional programme directors may pick and choose from London items and dish up to their local victims *plats régionaux* at most inappropriate moments. . . . The West of England Home Service', a critic, George Richards, stated, 'has become the Worst of England Home Service,'<sup>4</sup> only to have his judgement qualified by another correspondent. 'BBC Scotland is worse. . . . I do begin to fear that the Chairman of the Board of Governors [then Sir Allan Powell] tends to think of

<sup>1</sup> The New Zealand system had been mentioned earlier as a possible 'model' along with that of Denmark, and Gomme-Duncan had been involved in a newspaper argument on this subject with Dinwiddie (*Sunday Chronicle*, 6 Jan. 1946). Several Scotsmen, including the members of the Saltire Society, also made much of a remark of Sir Frederick Ogilvie that he favoured autonomy in both Scotland and Wales (*The Scotsman*, 15 July 1946).

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 417, cols. 222-3, 11 Dec. 1945. Apparently the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, George Buchanan, loved the programme *The McFlannels* which Dinwiddie said was 'anathema to the Saltire Society' (*Evening Dispatch*, 18 April 1946). Hurd challenged this interpretation (*The Scotsman*, 17 June 1946). For a further parliamentary intervention by Gomme-Duncan, see *Hansard*, vol. 419, cols. 954-95, 19 Feb. 1946, when Harold Wilson (then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works) replied on behalf of the Government, stating that Scottish expenditure figures could not be separated from those of the BBC as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 421, cols. 1868-96, 9 April 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to *Time and Tide*, 26 Jan. 1946. See also below, pp. 550-1. For a different verdict see the *Cornish Guardian*, 20 June 1946.

Scotland in terms of the Metropolitan Asylums he formerly served so well' as an administrator. Nor was this a 'metropolitan' verdict.<sup>1</sup> Inside Scotland itself, the *Glasgow Herald* stated that it preferred a first-rate programme from over the border to 'a third-rate programme of Scottish flavour'.<sup>2</sup>

While one of the letters written to another Glasgow newspaper feared that 'if our own Programme grows too serious, there will be another drift South—to the London "Light" wavelength',<sup>3</sup> a third, opting for Tommy Handley, attacked 'our Scottish watchdogs' for confusing 'broadcasts of Scottish origin with broadcasts of Scottish interest'.<sup>4</sup> 'Scotland has no Ted Kavanagh, and could not pay him his worth anyway.'<sup>5</sup> In Wales, too, a member of Merthyr Corporation said that he preferred to hear *ITMA* on a Sunday night rather than the Welsh Programmes.<sup>6</sup> Even within 'light' broadcasting there were complaints about what the Regions were doing. Thus *Melody Maker* accused the West Region of turning dance music programmes into a farce. 'There is no grading in the West Country', and listeners were 'demanding a better return for their doubled licence fee'.<sup>7</sup>

These divisions of opinion were reflected in the BBC's own internal correspondence. In Scotland, for example, during the first two months of the new Service, out of total letters received

<sup>1</sup> *Time and Tide*, 2 Feb. 1946: 'How desperate our plight is can be seen when I tell him that they have even removed the *Brains Trust* from its peak period to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.' There were grumbles, too, about the Region's opting out of the *Brains Trust* (*Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*, 1 Feb. 1946), and there were complaints from the North (*Time and Tide*, 9 Feb. 1946) when the Director was courageous enough to replace *Monday Night at Eight* with a Quiz which soon proved a popular success (*The Observer*, 14 July 1946).

<sup>2</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 1 Aug. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> *Glasgow Evening News*, 31 July 1945. This paper later attacked 'highbrow nationalism in the shape of "modern poetry"' (9 Aug. 1945). See also the *People's Journal* (Aberdeen edition, 4 Aug. 1945). Less than 0.15 per cent of the Scottish population spoke Gaelic, and 'Scottish listeners needed more light entertainment—not only from Glasgow comedians'.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Record*, 6 Aug. 1945. The word 'interest' or 'interests' was often employed. Cf. a Reithian article by Andrew Stewart in *Scottish Country Life*, Nov. 1945: 'To us Scots, the measure of success of our broadcasting service should lie in the ability with which it takes its unique place as an index of our vital interests.'

<sup>5</sup> *Evening Dispatch*, 3 July 1946.

<sup>6</sup> *Merthyr Express*, 30 March 1946.

<sup>7</sup> *Melody Maker*, 22 June 1946. It criticized 'cheese-paring from London' as the cause. Cf. A. Ross in the *Bristol Evening World*, 24 May 1946: 'I have been appalled at the standard of light music and entertainment offered.'

221 were appreciatory and 133 critical.<sup>1</sup> In Wales, about half the people troubling to write to the BBC demanded more programmes in Welsh, and about a half demanded more programmes in English.<sup>2</sup> There were differences of opinion, too, about the availability of 'local talent'. *The Scotsman* realistically faced the possibility that there was neither the material nor the talent in Scotland to provide consistently excellent programmes,<sup>3</sup> and as far as Wales was concerned, Haley and Alun Oldfield-Davies, the Regional Director, told a group of Welsh Members of Parliament in June 1946 that there was 'not enough talent . . . in Wales to sustain a full continuous programme'.<sup>4</sup> 'What nonsense,' retorted 'Cynon' (the Rev. A. E. Jones). 'The BBC should devise means of using this talent instead of confining itself to a small pool of actors within cheap rail and bus fares of the Cardiff studio.'<sup>5</sup> In the North of England, James Gregson, the dialect playwright who had become Drama Producer in March 1941, was equally forthright. 'Local patriotism is to be no excuse for broadcasting local piffle.'<sup>6</sup>

The emphasis of the Regions was certainly not merely 'provincial'. Indeed, Coatman in Manchester was just as firm on this point as Dinwiddie in Glasgow. 'The North', he told the *Guardian*, 'has industrial, cultural and intellectual interests that are more than provincial.'<sup>7</sup> His Programme Director, J. S. A. Salt, lately returned from New York,<sup>8</sup> shared his approach, as did a Birmingham journalist who emphasized that 'the world of wireless was no parish pump'.<sup>9</sup> In Edinburgh, *The Scotsman* saluted the new age in a leader declaring that 'paradoxically Scottish broadcasting has suffered by going out of its way to appear Scottish . . . drawing its products in tartan'.<sup>10</sup>

While local and national debate was proceeding at this level

<sup>1</sup> *Evening Dispatch*, 21 Sept. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Western Mail*, 5 June 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *The Scotsman*, 22 Sept. 1945. A Scottish talent-discovery programme, *Take Your Pick*, was quietly taken off the air. Note a comment in the *Dumfries Standard*, 31 July 1946: 'Many of these so-called entertainers are so dreary that we are left marvelling at their audacity even after we have switched on to another station.'

<sup>4</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 5 June 1946.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Dispatch*, 6 June 1946.

<sup>6</sup> *Yorkshire Evening News*, 6 March 1946. I had the pleasure of doing an ambitious and memorable programme with him from the Leeds studios in 1946 on the centenary of the repeal of the Corn Laws.

<sup>7</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1945.

<sup>8</sup> See *The War of Words*, p. 408.

<sup>9</sup> *Birmingham Weekly Post*, 22 July 1945.

<sup>10</sup> *The Scotsman*, 27 July 1945.

—with the noise on more than one occasion reaching Westminster—parliamentary questions were also asked, but not necessarily answered, about the proportion of BBC expenditure spent on all or particular Regional services<sup>1</sup> and about difficulties of reception in particular areas, including East Anglia; the most vociferous complaints came from there and the South-East.<sup>2</sup> Local newspapers sometimes initiated, sometimes echoed, local demands. Two of the strongest complaints, each growing in intensity in 1946, were that listeners in Northern Ireland and in the North-East of England had to share the same wavelength, an almost intolerable imposition, and that Somerset listeners were picking up Welsh programmes which they did not want to hear. 'The North-East Region has been neglected ever since the commencement of public broadcasting in this country', complained a Newcastle letter writer,<sup>3</sup> while a Women's Institute Conference in Bristol passed a resolution in November 1946 reminding the BBC that 'the West of England is not Welsh-speaking'.<sup>4</sup> The shared wavelength between Northern Ireland and the North-East was eventually to inspire its Northumbrian poet:

'We know full well the microphone  
Can link Korea with Ceylon,  
Sub-tropic to sub-Arctic zone  
When linking up it's bent upon—  
Surely an even simpler course  
Is to arrange for a divorce  
That severs that untidy tie  
Binding us fast to Northern I.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 419, cols. 954-5, 19 Feb. 1946; cols. 299-300, 21 Feb. 1946. Figures were given of Regional staffs with the warning that 'the Regional establishments are still in the process of re-forming' (*ibid.*, vol. 421, col. 377, 15 April 1946).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 419, cols. 955-6, 19 Feb. 1946; col. 221, 19 Feb. 1946; vol. 423, cols. 516-17, 23 May 1946; vol. 425, cols. 572-4, 11 July 1946. 'Put Kent on the Radio' the *Bromley and Kentish Times* was still urging in 1952 (8 Feb.).

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Chronicle*, 26 March 1946; *Newcastle Journal*, 5 July 1946. See also the comments of the *Evening Chronicle* on the BBC booklet *This is the North of England* and *Hansard*, vol. 430, col. 105, 20 Nov. 1946; vol. 431, cols. 144-5, 5 Dec. 1946. 'Joint Planning' between Manchester and Belfast had taken place even before the end of the war so as to reduce as far as possible 'the inconvenience to listeners' (*Annual Report and Accounts, 1945-6*).

<sup>4</sup> *Somerset County Gazette*, 9 Nov. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> 'Rhymes of the Times' by 'Borderer' in *Newcastle Journal*, 6 Dec. 1952.

The major local argument and the major parliamentary intervention centred eventually, however, on the highly controversial proposal to merge Midland and West Regions, a proposal intricately bound up, as we have seen, with Haley's own approach to tripartite programming and to the Third Programme in particular. The issue did not emerge in public until the early summer of 1946, but it was plain for all to see when the Government's White Paper on Broadcasting Policy (Cmd. 6852) appeared in July. So, too, were the contradictions in official policy. The White Paper included an eloquent paragraph on 'Regional devolution', which had been accepted by the Cabinet in the autumn of 1945,<sup>1</sup> and in addition recommended the establishment in each Region of an 'Advisory Council . . . broadly representative of the general public of the Region'.<sup>2</sup> Yet it went on in a later paragraph to state definitely that the West of England and the Midland Regions should be merged as part of necessary BBC 'reorganization'.<sup>3</sup> Neither the Regional merger nor 'cross-Regionalisation', it stated, should 'weigh heavily against the advantages of introducing a third national Programme'.

Haley was prepared to accept both recommendations, given that the composition of the Regional Advisory Committees, in the words of the White Paper, 'should be broadly representative of the general public of the Regions and members should be chosen for their individual qualities and not as representatives of particular interests'. At the same time, he asked Gerald Beadle whether there would be much of a local outcry in the West if the merger took place. Beadle, who saw the possibilities of the issue, replied that there had been little time to build up Regional loyalties or indeed a Regional identity. The regional loyalties of the West, however, even if only newly awakened—and Beadle was one of the awakeners—proved to be strong enough to lead to the defeat of the official proposal. Remarkably effective organization, clearly and unequivocally expressed at Westminster as well as in Bristol, Exeter, and Taunton, guaranteed not only the survival but the triumph of the West Region as a major force in British broadcasting.

As a result of leaks from inside the BBC, the proposed

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 6852 (1946), para. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 41 and Appendix 1.

merger was a matter of gossip in the local newspapers before the White Paper was published.<sup>1</sup> Victor Collins (later Lord Stonham), Member of Parliament for Taunton, was Frank Gillard's local MP, and the kind of co-operation which the two men established was extended and strengthened as members of the BBC's West Regional staff met other MPs. The local BBC Staff Association was told by Haley—after an interview—that such contact was permissible provided that BBC officials did not breach confidentiality, and men like Bill Coysh, the Assistant Programme Director, and Desmond Hawkins, the Senior Features Producer, were able to mobilize MPs of different persuasions, among them S. S. Awbery (Bristol), Lucy Middleton (Plymouth), Wilson Harris (Cambridge University), and N. A. Beechman (Cornwall). They became a remarkably tough pressure group, prepared to batter hard and relentlessly at W. A. Burke, the Assistant Postmaster-General, who had the difficult and unenviable task of dealing in Parliament with such contentious local issues within the general framework of broadcasting policy. The parliamentary campaign was supported by editorials in the provincial Press, telegrams to Ministers, and public meetings. 'The West Regional Programme is part of our lives', said the Mayor of Truro, while in the words of a letter to the editor of the *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser*, the merger proposal involved 'iniquitous proceedings'.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the Press support was two-edged. Thus, the *Bristol Evening World*, in supporting continued separation of the two Regions, claimed that many listeners in the West were uninterested in what might happen because they had been 'fobbed off with such poor quality programmes'. London had tightened the purse strings. It recalled that many sections of the western Press had been among the chief critics of West Regional programmes. What was at stake, therefore, was not the West Region as it was but what it might be. Listeners knew that the West could become 'a top-rank Region'.<sup>3</sup>

In Parliament itself the attack was direct, although there were differences of emphasis. Victor Collins raised the issues there for the first time on 4 July 1946 just after the White Paper appeared. No holds were barred. Thus, he pointed out—in line

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser*, 25 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *Bristol Evening World*, 5 July 1944.



with the mood of the times—that if Birmingham became the headquarters of a new amalgamated Region there would be a reduction in News and discussions on farming topics with consequent loss of food production,<sup>1</sup> an odd statement in retrospect, since it was to be the Midland Region, not the West, which would launch *The Archers* on the world.<sup>2</sup>

Burke, forced to defend the merger on technical grounds—shortage of wavelengths—was asked plainly by Goronwy Roberts how the decision could be squared with the declared policy of the Government to support and encourage Regional broadcasting. He found it very difficult to reply directly. Moreover, as the parliamentary battle proceeded,<sup>3</sup> he found it equally difficult to make much of the technical argument that the medium wavelength at present being used inside Britain for broadcasting to Europe was really necessary. West Country Members, well-briefed unofficially from BBC officials working the Overseas Services in Bush House, pointed out that medium-wave listening was not easy in Europe, while Wilson Harris even suggested seriously on two occasions that the Northern Ireland wavelength should be merged with that of Eire. Such lines of questioning seemed just as dangerous to the BBC establishment as to the Post Office or the Government. Nor were these the only embarrassments. Viscount Hinchingsbrooke asked persistently whether what had happened was not just ‘another example of ignoring consumer interests by monopolies’.<sup>4</sup> Another Member suggested that ‘all these questions and problems’ indicated the need for ‘an inquiry’ into the BBC as soon as possible.<sup>5</sup>

The battle was fierce but brief. Behind the scenes Herbert Morrison soon took over political management of the issue and talked to local Members of Parliament and local delegations. After he had satisfied himself about the strength of the feeling, he ensured that the West Region’s wavelength passed neither ‘to the Foreign Office’ (for external broadcasting) nor to the Third

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 424, cols. 2328–30, 4 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 108–9. The agricultural point was taken up again by another West Country Member (*Hansard*, vol. 425, col. 573, 11 July 1946).

<sup>3</sup> See *Hansard*, vol. 425, cols. 572–4, 11 July 1946; cols. 1063–1184, 16 July 1946; cols. 1365–6, 18 July 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 424, col. 2330, 4 July 1946.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 425, col. 574, 11 July 1946.

Programme. An ingenious way out was fortunately found. A committee of civil servants met Haley and Ashbridge to discuss the possibility of appropriating 'an ex-German wavelength', and at a later meeting on 6 August, at which Philip Noel-Baker and Ivone Kirkpatrick, seconded to the BBC's European Service during the war, represented the Foreign Office, it was decided that the BBC's German Service should take over a transmitter at Norden in occupied North-West Germany which was being used for the entertainment of British troops.<sup>1</sup> Although this was not quite the end of the matter, Haley was able to tell the BBC Governors on 15 August that it would now be possible to stop the merger.<sup>2</sup> A letter from the Post Office confirmed this soon afterwards, and a public statement was duly made that 'the West of England Region should be preserved as a separate entity'.<sup>3</sup>

The decision of the Cabinet not to carry out its recommendation was hailed as 'a triumph for the West Country',<sup>4</sup> and at a number of public meetings Beadle, backed by Gillard, congratulated 'West of England people' on 'the manner' in which during a 'serious crisis' they had 'served their own broadcasting service'.<sup>5</sup>

Only one reference to the struggle can be found in the West Region Programme Board Minutes. There was only one dissentient to a formal resolution passed in July 1946 that 'the action of Midland Regional Programme Director last week, in communicating direct with individual members of the West Regional Programme staff on a programme matter' was 'a gross breach of agreed procedure'. Moreover, his assumption that the proposed merger between West and Midland Region was bound to take place was 'highly improper in view of the fact that both the actions and published statements of the Lord President of the Council have made it quite clear that the matter is still under consideration by the Government'.<sup>6</sup> This resolution was carried within a few days of Victor Collins and the local MPs having their crucial meeting with Morrison at which

<sup>1</sup> \*Minutes of Meeting of 6 Aug. 1946 with Herbert Morrison in the Chair.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 15 Aug. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Townshend to Haley, 21 Aug. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Somerset County Herald*, 24 Aug. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the *Cornish Guardian*, 26 Sept. 1946.

<sup>6</sup> West Regional Programme Meeting, *Minutes*, 29 July 1946.

alternative action was decided upon.<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable in retrospect that throughout the struggle there was so little comment in the Midlands and so much in the West, although Edgar's deep sense of loyalty to the Corporation, the Director-General, and the Board of Governors was apparent throughout. Moreover, whatever the differences between the two Regions might be, both were moving in the same direction as far as their programme policies were concerned before and after the merger was shelved. The emphasis on 'taking the microphone to the people' and drawing directly upon local individuals and groups in all types of regional programming was reinforced as the proportion of regional programming time increased.<sup>2</sup>

In Bristol, the immediate effect of the decision to remain independent was an increase in programme allowance and a consequent increase in staff. The military spirit obviously persisted after the success of the local *Blitzkrieg*. A large-scale map of the West Country was duly mounted on plasterboard and fixed to a wall in the Region's new office. 'As the weeks pass,' it was stated, 'its face is steadily being obscured by ever-growing clusters of coloured pins which are constantly being pushed into it.' Every pin told a story. Each red one was a record of a visit by a BBC microphone to a town or village in the Region. Each blue one told of a broadcaster who had travelled from his home in the West to a BBC studio. Meanwhile, in the Midlands, 'microphones' were 'visiting' trawlers and blast furnaces, Nottingham's Goose Fair and Lichfield Cathedral (on its 750th anniversary), and establishing links with Birmingham, Alabama. *Listeners Answer Back*, an early 'access programme', travelled if not from Truro to Stoke, at least from Norwich to Shrewsbury, and in the heart of the Potteries a team of amateur actors and actresses from the five towns presented a serial adaptation of Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger*.<sup>3</sup> *Town Forum* was first broadcast in November 1946, with Jennie Lee as a member of the initial

<sup>1</sup> *Bristol Mirror*, 25 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> The same was to be true of the other Regions. Thus, when the North scheduled *Public Enquiry* for 1946, it stated that 'The Man-in-the-Street' was to be allowed 'to have his uncensored say on controversial topics of the day' (*BBC Year Book*, 1948, p. 92). Even in Northern Ireland the weekly quiz *Up Against It* became one of the most popular programmes in 1948 (*BBC Year Book*, 1949, pp. 43-5).

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1947, pp. 69-72.

team, and it did much to focus attention on local issues. There were early problems caused by the inclusion of national celebrities and of Midlands Lord Mayors—the latter, it was felt, would attract 'abstruse questions on local government'—but there were great successes, too, and the programme soon established itself.<sup>1</sup>

It was a sign of the success of such local efforts that a number of the most popular national programmes of the late 1940s and early 1950s had their origin in the Regions. Among them were *Have a Go* in the North, *Any Questions* in the West, and *The Archers* from the Midlands. *The Archers* was first conceived at a meeting in Birmingham's Council Chamber in June 1948 as 'a farming *Dick Barton*', and its initiator and producer, Godfrey Baseley, an Outside Broadcaster in the Midlands, had already produced a weekly farming magazine among his other commitments.<sup>2</sup> The scriptwriter was Edward J. Mason. It was first broadcast in the Midland Home Service during Whitsuntide week in 1950, but the series did not properly start until the beginning of 1951 when it moved into the Light Programme, at first in the mornings and then in the second quarter of the year in the evenings. It soon exceeded the *Dick Barton* audience, reaching 9½ million at the beginning of 1953.<sup>3</sup> From the start, it had been thought of as presenting an 'accurate' and 're-assuring' picture of country life in Ambridge, and it drew 'portraits of typical country people . . . following them at work and at play and eavesdropping on the many problems of living that confront country folk in general'. While it included regular doses of farming advice (about 15 per cent), it was deliberately aimed at 'the general listener, i.e., the townsman', and set out to keep a 'good balance between the purely factual and the more entertaining aspects of country life'.<sup>4</sup> The proportions, not rigidly fixed, were 60 per cent entertainment, 30 per cent information, and 10 per cent education.

<sup>1</sup> See D. Morris, 'Town Forum' in *BBC Year Book*, 1949, pp. 35–8, and also his interesting article on 'Without a Script' in *BBC Year Book*, 1952, pp. 46–8.

<sup>2</sup> G. Baseley, *The Archers, A Slice of My Life* (1971), pp. 59 ff.

<sup>3</sup> \*F. H. Littman, Assistant Head of Audience Research, to H. J. Dunkerley, 2 Nov. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*G. Baseley, Memorandum of 9 Aug. 1950. See also *The Archers' Story*, produced on the occasion of the 1,000th episode in Nov. 1954, and below, pp. 1013–16, for the later history of the programme.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, *The Archers* appealed to country people as much as to townspeople, including country people as far away as Cornwall and Northumberland. Indeed, the shifting fortunes of the Archer family began to be watched throughout the whole country as closely as those of the Dales;<sup>1</sup> more closely watched, indeed, at times, than those of the country itself. More has been written about it than any other BBC programme, and its themes and treatment were regularly reviewed by the highly competent and professional Archers team. They always emphasized its uniqueness. 'I have before my eyes constantly the horrible example of *The Dales*,' a later Head of the Light Programme was to write, 'because they are just another drama commitment, have no real life, technique, or character of their own.'<sup>2</sup>

*Any Questions* was to have an equally long future, but *Have a Go* belongs more specifically in spirit and technique to the immediate post-war world. Although these two highly successful series were very different programmes in content and style, they each involved an important element of direct listener participation and, unlike *The Archers*, they were each based on actual and not on simulated real-life settings in particular places far from the studios. Both secured very high ratings because they succeeded, as few BBC programmes ever had done before, in bringing the Corporation into touch with 'ordinary people'.

*Have a Go* was thought of in 1946 by Philip Robinson, a Programme Assistant at Leeds, in response to a request from the North Regional Programme Director, John Salt, for new ideas for a 'quiz programme with audience participation'.<sup>3</sup> The first title, suggested by Robinson, was *Have a Go, Joe*—he had first thought of *Quiz Bang*—and Wilfred Pickles, who had first broadcast as early as 1932, was booked as first Quiz master.<sup>4</sup> Pickles had been heard on the air frequently during the 1930s in *Children's Hour* and other Northern broadcasts and had established his reputation as a broadcaster during the Second World

<sup>1</sup> Its appeal in Scotland and Northern Ireland was only one third as strong as in the Midlands and West, although it attracted equally men and women, young and old, and rich and poor.

<sup>2</sup> R. Pelletier to H. J. Dunkerley, 16 Oct. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*North Region Registry File, undated memorandum, *Have a Go*.

<sup>4</sup> See his autobiography, *Between You and Me* (1949), pp. 73 ff., 120 ff., 132 ff., 174-5.

War, not only as an announcer with a Northern accent but as the genial star in many popular programmes of his own. The first trial recording of *Have a Go* was made in Bradford on 11 February 1946, and the first programme actually broadcast was recorded in nearby (but very different) Bingley five days later. From the start there was never any shortage of volunteers, and the sense of popular participation was immediate and warm. Very quickly the original idea of a light-hearted quiz had been extended, for Pickles knew how to bring out the personality of each contestant and to reveal the 'human stories'.

As early as July 1946 the critical decision was taken to broadcast the programme nationally on the Light Programme. 'It has thus become, entirely on its merits,' Robinson told his team, 'a national programme within the short space of six months.'<sup>1</sup> *Have a Go* had already by then become a catch-phrase, first shouted, perhaps, when cricketers were 'stone-walling' at the Headingley Ground in Leeds and at Old Trafford. Another catch-phrase from the programme was 'Ow do—ow are yer?', soon pronounced in every kind of provincial accent. The programme always started with community singing, led by Jack Dobson and accompanied by Jack Jordan and 'his musicians', and Pickles himself, the man at the centre, became a successful star partly at least because he fully understood the main reason for his programme's popularity. 'The people were on their own doorstep, so that the programme became a family affair. Everybody in the audience knew the volunteers, and that created a vivid partisan spirit.'<sup>2</sup> The verse at the end of the show included these lines:

'That's the show, Joe, tha's been and 'ad a go;  
Now tha can tell thi friends as well  
Tha's been on't Radio.'

*Have a Go* was local radio at its most popular—with the important difference that the audience soon became national. Pickles's personal fan mail soon leapt to fifty letters or more a day, and he had to engage two secretaries to deal with them. There was even a growing international element in its appeal and a world tour was contemplated in 1947. A Dutch businessman told Pickles that 'the programme was a firm favourite in

<sup>1</sup> \*Memorandum of 29 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *Between You and Me*, p. 176.

Holland . . . the most popular British radio programme', and it was from Khartoum and not from Halifax that a listener wrote to him, 'The BBC have got it into their skulls that we abroad like high-class stuff and do they dish it up!—but I, like the majority, never miss, if possible, *Have a Go*.'<sup>1</sup>

The best-known of all the catch-phrases from the programme spread throughout the country after Barney Colehan replaced Robinson as producer in 1947. (Robinson after that became Head of Outside Broadcasts in the North Region.) The phrase 'Give 'im the money, Barney' was on one occasion even elevated to the House of Commons.<sup>2</sup> Yet the programme did not stick to formulae and, like *ITMA*, went through many changes. Thus Violet Carson, who was eventually to become as well known as Pickles himself, particularly as Ena Sharples in *Coronation Street*, a later favourite programme on a then non-existent channel, joined the *Have a Go* team in 1947, and Mabel, Pickles's wife, appeared in 1953. That was the year when the direction and planning of the programme were transferred to London, and Stephen Williams became its producer. A year earlier the programme had ceased to be prerecorded. Nine special programmes had been arranged for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and the 250th edition in January 1955 was broadcast from Warley, near Halifax, where Pickles was born and from the Sunday School which he had attended as a boy.

For all the popularity of the programme, which caught the mood of the period—an age of austerity which still prized 'good fellowship'—there were occasional criticisms of *Have a Go* inside the BBC. Tastes differed, and there were some people who believed that while 'Wilfred as a purveyor of honest, homely fun' was 'unexcelled', his 'unscripted social conscience' was nothing but 'an embarrassment'.<sup>3</sup> Pickles himself has described some of the restrictions placed on the location of his programmes—hospitals were ruled out, for example, and crypts

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180. Pickles also noted Swedish interest (*ibid.*, p. 214): 'Your programme is doing more than any ambassador could do.'

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 464, col. 74, 26 April 1949. In a brief and brisk parliamentary exchange on supplementary allowances between the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Pensions and Lord Winterton, the latter revealed that he was *not* one of the listeners to the programme. He thought that the P.S., who had quoted the phrase, was calling him 'barney' and appealed to the Speaker for protection.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memoranda of 23, 30 Dec. 1948.

for tramps. He was aware, too, of occasional criticisms that he was 'advertising', even seeking to start a commercial broadcasting system of his own.<sup>1</sup> Like all broadcasters who build up a distinctive national reputation, he was meeting the kind of criticism that he was too popular, too powerful, even too 'Messianic'.

*Any Questions* depended on a combination not of an audience and one man's talents but of an audience and the different and contrasting specialized talents of a number of people. Yet each man or woman's contribution to the success of the programme had to be made within a team, and the composition of the team changed from week to week. The programme began 'in a modest way and almost accidentally' in the summer months of 1948, when the West Region, like the North Region before it, was searching for 'an unusual kind of inter-county quiz programme for winter listening'. The 'quiz idea' was dropped in favour of a 'Brains Trust', but a brains trust deliberately thought of as aimed at 'the masses' and aspiring to have 'an audience of millions'.<sup>2</sup> The first programme was broadcast from the Guildhall in Winchester on 12 October 1948 and the first question—from the woman Mayor of Winchester—set the style: 'What effect would it have if women were able to exert more power in professional politics and diplomacy?'<sup>3</sup>

Another immediate, direct and, through the years, continuing influence on the style of the programme was the very first chairman of the team, Freddie Grisewood, who had been asked by telephone by Frank Gillard to take on the job. 'We think we are on to a good thing,' Gillard told him. 'But, of course, you must know that it may not last for more than about six times.'<sup>4</sup> Grisewood's secret was that he was equally effective in handling the team on the one hand and the audience on the other. He was friendly, understanding, and always helpful; completely unlike Pickles in accent and style, he was like Pickles, however, in being able without fuss to catch the spirit of place at the point of broadcasting. Indeed, through the programme he

<sup>1</sup> *Between You and Me*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Gillard described the evolution of the programme in the *Radio Times*, 18 Sept. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> The first team consisted of Honor Croome, Naomi Royde Smith, John Arlott, and Jack Longland.

<sup>4</sup> F. Grisewood, *My Story of the BBC* (1959), p. 174.



converted this spirit of place (as he was also to do on *Gardeners' Question Time*) into a vital ingredient for a wider audience.

*Any Questions*, like *Have a Go*, was heard first on a Regional programme only—it was a fortnightly programme during its first year—and it was not until its second winter that it became a weekly programme with a day-time recorded repeat on all Home Services.<sup>1</sup> In its third winter it passed over into the Light Programme. There was a subsequent difference, however, in the fate of the two programmes. A major effort was made by the Light Programme in 1950 to extend *Any Questions* sessions to all parts of the country and was successfully resisted by the West Region with the help of its Regional Advisory Council. 'The ownership of a touring programme such as this,' Gillard told Chalmers, then the Controller, Light Programme, 'is enormously important in helping a Region to discharge its regional responsibilities.' And carrying the argument still further forward, he asked whether it would not be possible for each Region to confine its Light Programme promotions to its own Regional territory—not only *Have a Go* for the North but *Welsh Rarebit* for Wales, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Gerald Beadle, the Regional Controller, also took up the Regional cudgels when further pressed by Chalmers to yield a few programmes for broadcasting outside the Region. He could not undertake responsibility, he said, 'for so delicate and inflammable a programme outside my Regional boundaries'.<sup>3</sup>

The argument, with its social overtones, was an interesting one, and was not concerned simply with administration or personalities. Chalmers maintained that *Any Questions* would 'lose its vitality rapidly' if teams visited the same town more than twice. 'I am certain that for its health it should always seek new political climates. . . . The renowned Bristol spirit of adventure seems sadly lacking here.'<sup>4</sup> Gillard, who liked fighting, told his

<sup>1</sup> In the West Region (*Annual Report and Accounts, 1949-50*) it was bracketed with *Speak your Mind* as a 'forum for free impromptu discussion'. See also F. Gillard, 'The West Country Listener Speaks his Mind' in *BBC Year Book, 1950*, pp. 51-3.

<sup>2</sup> \*Aide-mémoire by T. W. Chalmers, 10 Nov. 1950, for the Spoken Word meeting on 16 Nov.; Gillard to Chalmers, 26 July 1950; Chalmers to Gillard, 27 July 1950. *Welsh Rarebit* was transferred to the Light Programme in April 1949, 'the first Welsh Variety show to gain and keep a nation-wide audience' (*BBC Year Book, 1950*, p. 102). *Noson Lawen*, literally 'A Merry Evening', was the Variety show in Welsh (see *BBC Year Book, 1949*, p. 40).

<sup>3</sup> \*Beadle to Chalmers, 21 Nov. 1950. <sup>4</sup> \*Chalmers to Beadle, 27 Nov. 1950.

Regional Controller that there were quite enough 'political climates' in the West Region by itself to ensure the continuing success of the programme and that Bristol had certainly not lost its spirit of adventure.<sup>1</sup> 'West Region', Chalmers retorted, 'possesses nothing like the political climate of Clydeside, Rhondda Valley or Middlesbrough!'<sup>2</sup>

Beadle's reference to the 'delicate and inflammable nature' of the programme pointed to a different, if related, set of issues. While Pickles faced all the problems of the star broadcaster who had built up a huge personal audience, particular *Any Questions* teams—and the producer behind the scenes—faced all the equally familiar problems of broadcasters, not all of them MPs, who talked freely about politics. They were always likely to alienate both a jealous, and in this area of broadcasting at least, a vigilant, Parliament and, even more jealous, the two main political party machines. In August 1950 Morgan Phillips, Secretary of the Labour Party, passed on complaints that Grise-wood was favouring Conservative speakers,<sup>3</sup> and the *Daily Herald* attacked as 'the real villain' of the piece 'that monstrous old fake, the so-called non-political expert'.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Colonel Wigg was complaining of persistent right-wing bias in the programme.<sup>5</sup> The idea of widening nationally the range of places from which the programmes were broadcast to ensure more 'representative' social coverage entered the argument at this point when the future of the BBC as a whole was being decided. It was to be one of the main 'Beveridge themes'.

So, too, was the question of the cultural identity of the Regions. The record under this heading did not depend exclusively on big programmes like *Have a Go* and *Any Questions*. In drama, the Regions claimed that they were making a dis-

<sup>1</sup> \*Gillard to Beadle, 5 Dec. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Comment by Chalmers on Gillard's note.

<sup>3</sup> \*Morgan Phillips to Haley, 21 Aug. 1950. There was also a letter from E. G. Gooch to Haley. There were Labour complaints not only about Grise-wood but about Conservative misrepresentations of coal statistics and the inclusion of Raymond Blackburn in the programme after he had left the Labour Party. See also a letter by Ritchie Calder to *The Times*, 27 Feb. 1954, and a *Times* leader, 'Fair's Fair', 4 March 1954. There were even complaints in 1953 and 1954 about the political activities of the Archers.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Herald*, 25 Aug. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*He attended a lunch with Simon in September 1950. (Barnes to Beadle, 13 Sept. 1950.)



a. From the Netherlands Government



b. From Danish State Broadcasting



c. From the Czechoslovak Broadcasting Corporation

3. Three post-war Presentations to the BBC



4a. *Any Questions*, October 1948. Major Lewis Hastings, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Ralph Wightman, St. John Ervine



4b. *In the News*, December 1950. W. J. Brown, Robert Boothby, MP, Dingle Foot, Michael Foot, MP, A. J. P. Taylor

tinctive contribution, as they did also in music. Indeed more was made of the latter than the former. The Northern Orchestra under its regular conductor, Charles Groves, reached a permanent strength of fifty in 1946 and arranged midday 'promenade concerts' in Manchester.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, the Midland Light Orchestra, with a new conductor, Gilbert Vintner, increased its strength to thirty-one,<sup>2</sup> and a year later a conference of choral conductors was held in Birmingham and combined choirs (including a miners' choir) performed Bach's *St. John Passion*.<sup>3</sup> Welsh choirs were supported by the BBC's own Welsh Singers,<sup>4</sup> and a new Welsh Orchestra was brought into existence in 1946 with Mansel Thomas as conductor; it had a special responsibility for encouraging Welsh composers.<sup>5</sup> The BBC Scottish Orchestra had been 'raised to symphonic strength' in 1946, when Ian Whyte was freed from administrative duties to become its first full-time conductor.<sup>6</sup>

Oldfield-Davies, who believed that the Welsh Orchestra was 'basic to our cultural contribution in Wales', has pointed to other programmes which in his view encouraged a 'cultural renaissance' in the post-war years. People worked hard with very little help at a wide variety of tasks. Philip Burton, who joined the staff of the BBC in Wales in 1945, gathered round him talented writers like Islwyn Williams, Henry Green, and Robert Gwyn, fostered new writers like E. Eynon Evans, a bus driver, and produced a very large number of feature programmes (among the earliest, *Fisherman of Milford* and *Three Ways Home*, the latter about the problems of returning servicemen).<sup>7</sup> In 1947, Dylan Thomas's *The Return Journey* was broadcast, subsequently to be 'rebroadcast more than any other programme from Wales';<sup>8</sup> it was the programme which led to the commission for him to write *Under Milk Wood*. In drama the range was catholic and stretched from *Hedda Gabler* to J. B.

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1947*, p. 67. It had hitherto had 43 players (\*Note by Director-General on BBC Orchestras, 19 June 1946). See also *Annual Report and Accounts, 1948-9* for the later formation of a Northern Variety Orchestra recruited on a part-time basis.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report and Accounts, 1946-7*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1947-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Report and Accounts, 1946-7*; Idris Lewis, BBC Welsh Music Director, 'A New Orchestra for Wales' in *Radio Times*, 1 Nov. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1947*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1946*, p. 90.

<sup>7</sup> This programme was repeated in all the Home Services.

<sup>8</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1948*, p. 89.

Priestley's *The Benighted* and W. J. Gruffydd's Welsh translations of *King Lear* and *Antigone*. A Welsh/English-speaking drama repertory company in Cardiff in 1946<sup>1</sup> ensured, as Oldfield-Davies put it, that 'for the first time since the princely Welsh courts of the Middle Ages men could earn their living by being entertainers'. In fact, many of the performers employed by the BBC in Wales were 'semi-professionals', paid less than professional performers in London, and the Welsh 'renaissance' had its critics as well as its supporters, some of them pressing, like their opposite numbers in Scotland, for a complete change of system.<sup>2</sup> 'It would be advisable now for Wales to weigh in with its campaign of aggravation and persuasion', Glyn Griffiths wrote in January 1949, 'to get a Welsh Radio Corporation.'<sup>3</sup>

From Scotland there had always been similar demands. 'If Haley regards Scotland as free . . . and . . . Dinwiddie thinks that everything in his radio garden is lovely,' the *Glasgow Bulletin* commented sourly just after Haley addressed a Press Conference in Scotland in November 1946, 'then we have got as far with Regionalisation as we are ever likely to get.'<sup>4</sup> *The McFlannels* were flourishing (a social documentary, some critics argued, as well as an entertainment)<sup>5</sup> and independent-minded Scotsmen were proclaiming loudly that they preferred Brahms to bagpipes,<sup>6</sup> yet the feeling that there should be a large-scale inquiry into the BBC had persisted after the Government's White Paper of 1946 had been published. Immediately after publication, the Saltire Society stated firmly that 'if it is insisted that [the recommendations in the White Paper] must be implemented despite the unfavourable reception they have had in Scotland, we would ask, first that the Charter should be renewed for a period of only two years and secondly that a full

<sup>1</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 March 1946. Michael Aspel, one of the earliest members, was to become a well-known television personality.

<sup>2</sup> *South Wales Echo and Evening Express*, 15 Dec. 1947; *Time and Tide*, 3, 10 July 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 1 Jan. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> *Bulletin*, 8 Nov. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> *Glasgow Evening News*, 26 Dec. 1947. 'The McFlannels reached the heights of achievement when it ceased to be humour and became social documentary.' See also the author, Helen W. Pryde's statement of purpose, 'to depict a decent working-class family' (Lecture at St. Leonard's-in-the-Fields Church Hall, Dec. 1947).

<sup>6</sup> *The Scotsman*, 8 June 1947. See also the official publication *This is the Scottish Home Service*, which had a favourable reception.

enquiry should be undertaken forthwith, so that *inter alia* the best means of establishing autonomy for Scottish broadcasting should be examined impartially.<sup>1</sup>

## 4. Reorganization

NOT everything in the pattern of broadcasting organization depended on the outcome of the public inquiry which Coatman had anticipated in the distant days of 1943 and which the Saltire Society was demanding three years later.<sup>2</sup> In 1943 A. P. Ryan, the intelligent, laconic, and at times iconoclastic head of the BBC's News Service, had affirmed that 'the BBC is on the whole more sure of itself today than it has been since the most vigorous period of Lord Reith's dictatorship'.<sup>3</sup> Yet Robert Foot, sole Director-General after Sir Cecil Graves's resignation in September had ended the brief diarchy, initiated a major reorganization,<sup>4</sup> and the Governors, in deciding to appoint Haley as Editor-in-Chief, obviously believed that further internal reorganization was necessary as well as a new approach to programming, whether nationally or through the Regions.

At an important meeting in August 1943, before Haley arrived, they envisaged a Central Executive—a Director-General backed by an Editor-in-Chief with a panel of two or three able men free from departmental duties—and they confirmed their desire for this new arrangement a few months later.<sup>5</sup> At least one of the Governors, Arthur Mann, the former editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, at the end of his journalistic career, continued to believe in the need for such a pattern after Foot had resigned and Haley had taken over as Director-General in March 1944. Only if it were adopted, he told his fellow

<sup>1</sup> *The Scotsman*, 15, 17 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 89 ff.

<sup>3</sup> \*A. P. Ryan, 'BBC Policy Control and Direction', 6 July 1943. Sir William Haley's Address at Ryan's Memorial Service gives a vivid account of Ryan's 'non-competitive' character and his diverse gifts. 'The more strongly he felt, the more briefly he spoke.'

<sup>4</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 552 ff.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 26 Aug., 14 Oct. 1943.

Governors in March 1946, could policies be properly framed and 'balance, pattern and purpose' given to programmes.<sup>1</sup>

Mann, who at the same time was advocating a radically new approach to the presentation of BBC News, obviously had the analogy of a newspaper very much in his mind both in 1944 and 1946.<sup>2</sup> Programme planners and editors inside the BBC, he believed, were pursuing their own ways, often without effective co-ordination or control, and important decisions affecting the choice of broadcasters, the allocation of programme time, and the direction of general policy were being taken at too low a level. Moreover, BBC officials were 'mostly men involved so deeply and conscientiously in departmental duties' that they lived in 'a world of their own' and were inclined to develop 'a bureaucratic contempt of outside opinion'.<sup>3</sup> In this context, Mann quoted an opinion of Graves that BBC officials were 'not always right in their judgement of the impact of their work on the listener. They are experts in their own job. They are not necessarily competent assessors of the public taste.'

This was not the first or last time in the history of the BBC that such criticisms of basic structure and processes were made, and in presenting them forcefully in March 1946 Mann did not absolve from responsibility even the Chairman of Governors, Sir Allan Powell, who had been appointed to his post by Neville Chamberlain before the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> 'I hold that the present Board under your Chairmanship,' Mann told Powell, 'has never approached this question of general direction with any true sense of the political, artistic and

<sup>1</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 25 March 1946. In a memorandum dated 14 Feb. 1944 Foot and Haley had not accepted Mann's proposals. They took note of the Governors' views about 'executive shape', but suggested a 'Central Executive' of eight—the heads of News, Entertainment, and the Spoken Word, and the heads of the five programmes—working with Controller (Engineering), Controller (Finance), and the Director of Staff Administration. 'Each one will have his responsible job to do, and they will meet together under us as frequently as may be found desirable to make their full contribution to the common pool of thought, knowledge and enterprise.' See also *The War of Words*, p. 718. The Governors accepted the memorandum in April (\**Minutes*, 20 April 1944), but Mann in a memorandum of 18 Feb. made substantial qualifications. Overriding authority should be in 'the hands of a compact body of men free from departmental duties and thus able to exercise judgement and direction over the departmental chiefs'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Yet he believed (Mann to Powell, 13 Feb. 1946) that radio was 'a more, not less elastic medium for the dissemination of news' than a newspaper.

<sup>3</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 4 March 1946.

<sup>4</sup> A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), p. 434.



psychological factors of the problem, with the result that we now find the D.G. so overwhelmed by his responsibilities that he is unable to give very important matters the careful attention that they need.' Mann also expressed doubts about the role of his fellow-Governors, quoting a judgement from an article by 'a quite intelligent radio critic' in a 'popular newspaper' that 'the BBC Governors are supposed to represent the public. They do occasionally serve as mouthpieces for repressive pressure groups, but I have yet to hear of their doing anything positive or useful for British radio.' This was a 'galling' verdict, Mann added, 'because practically every suggestion for improving programmes made by a Governor is resisted or ignored or treated with contempt by the executive'.<sup>1</sup>

Haley himself was directly criticized by Mann, although none of the other Governors agreed with this or any of his other criticisms. 'One man, however competent,' he said, 'is quite unable alone to exercise the heavy responsibilities attaching to the office of Director-General. . . . It is no reflection on the ability of Sir William Haley, who is a good organiser, to say that he cannot exercise proper supervision over programmes, or give adequate consideration to the many important problems which arise every day, and need to be dealt with at the highest level. . . . Sir William Haley has always set his face against the original Central Executive scheme.'<sup>2</sup> Again Mann quoted Graves—this time on Haley. 'I have a very high opinion of him . . . [yet] I also feel that unless his job can be reorganised, he will certainly break down—no one man can carry the direction of policy and detail of the BBC.'<sup>3</sup> In a further letter Mann was even more emphatic. If the Board had felt that Foot as Director-General was overworked when he had Haley at his side as Editor-in-Chief, how much more overworked must Haley be in 1946 when he had no Editor-in-Chief beside him?<sup>4</sup>

By the end of 1946 neither Mann nor Powell was left on the Board to carry this one-sided argument further forward. The term of office of the former came to an end on 3 April, and the

<sup>1</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 4 March 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 25 March 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 14 March 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 16 March 1946; Powell to Mann, 21 March 1946. Their final correspondence became very acrimonious (Powell to Mann, 28 March 1946).

latter was replaced as Chairman by Lord Inman, a member of the Labour Party, at the end of December. There were several other new Governors in 1947. In April, the term of office of Lady Violet Bonham Carter and of Dr. J. J. Mallon, Warden of Toynbee Hall, expired with that of Mann, and later in the month the blind Governor, Sir Ian Fraser, left also, to be followed by Harold Nicolson, perhaps the best-known of all the Governors, in July. Haley was soon working, therefore, with a new Board unfamiliar with the problems of the war-time BBC. He had broached the question of reorganization with Powell<sup>1</sup> before he left the chair,<sup>1</sup> but he now could make a completely fresh start.

His new Board included Barbara Ward, writer and broadcaster, the youngest Governor ever appointed—at the age of thirty-one—Geoffrey Lloyd, the Conservative MP, Air Marshal Sir Richard Peck, Dr. Ernest Whitfield (from July), another blind Governor, and the Dowager Marchioness of Reading, the outstanding war-time organizer of the WVS, who became Vice-Chairman of the Corporation after C. H. G. Millis retired with Powell in December. Following this promotion, John Adamson, a chartered accountant, joined the Board also.

Lord Inman remained as Chairman just long enough to have his name inserted in the *BBC Year Book* for 1947 and deleted in an erratum slip. Haley, who did not like him, had one meeting with him to discuss 'reorganization' on 21 January. The last meeting Inman chaired, not very successfully, was on 2 April, and three weeks later, somewhat surprisingly, he became Lord Privy Seal in Attlee's government. Lord Reith would have liked to succeed him—indeed, he had hoped for the chairmanship before Inman was appointed—and he had talked to Morrison about 'ministerial control, Board numbers, qualifications, pay, status and responsibilities of chairman'.<sup>2</sup> He was never in the running, however, and his successor, as he had guessed, was Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, a Manchester

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 23 May 1947.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. W. Reith, *Diary*, 3 Dec. 1945, 9 Dec. 1946, 4 June 1947. Reith talked to Nicolls on the first occasion on 3 Sept. 1946 and to Haley on the second. He visited Broadcasting House and talked to Lady Reading who told him he was 'too strong for Attlee'.

industrialist with Labour sympathies, who was to claim in his revealing book on broadcasting published in 1953 that he had had 'wide and long experience of administration'.<sup>1</sup>

It is characteristic of Simon that he decided to write this book—appropriately dedicated to Morrison—almost as soon as he was appointed Chairman, and that he carefully collected material for it throughout his five years of office. Haley had known him in Manchester and realized from the start that whatever else he did he would talk a great deal. Simon had already begun talking when he met Attlee on 23 May 1947. The Prime Minister, he noted, was 'vague about the relation between the Board and the Director-General' and had 'said something vague about the reorganisation of the BBC being necessary'. Simon did not like 'vagueness'. He was doubtless fortified, however, by Attlee's advice that he should not resign from the Labour Party but that he should 'perhaps avoid [the] more extreme line'.<sup>2</sup>

In the interregnum before Simon chaired his first meeting on 12 June, Haley prepared an important paper on 'The Executive Control of the BBC', which was privately considered by Governors on 15 May but which was not dealt with formally by the Board until a special meeting a month later.<sup>3</sup> Haley began by pointing out that he had been concerned about five interrelated main issues since the end of the war—the question of a successor or deputy to himself when his post became vacant or if he was ill or had to go abroad; 'the creation of a central executive body, or Control Board, to deal at the highest administrative level with all major problems of the Corporation'; 'the broad grouping of the organisational control of the BBC into a more logical and efficient pattern'; the reduction thereby of people directly responsible to the Director-General; and 'the strengthening of the administrative and business side of the Corporation'.

While the BBC was a 'going concern', the Director-General, he pointed out, was 'tied to his desk in Broadcasting House'.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, *The BBC from Within* (1953), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Papers, Note on Interview with the Prime Minister, 25 May 1947. His formal letter of appointment from Wilfred Paling, the Postmaster-General, was dated 29 May and he replied on 2 June 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 26 June 1947.

He had no 'General Staff' and all officials were, therefore, in theory at least, directly responsible to him. There were 'well over a hundred departments'. There was no continuing senior executive body which could keep under permanent review the whole of the Corporation's activities. The solution Haley offered, however, was not similar to that of Mann. It followed the lines proposed earlier by Foot.

BBC activities, he argued, fell into five 'groups'—Home Output, External Services, Spoken Word, Management, and Resources. Each of these activities should have a 'Head'. Together the Heads should constitute a 'Control Board' under the chairmanship of the Director-General. Within the first 'group', Home, Light and Third, Regions, Television, and Entertainment would all have 'separate Heads', but there would be 'one focal point for co-ordinating programmes, maintaining standards, allocating resources and so on'. Co-ordination should be treated as a major priority: 'a Programme Board should plan the internal programmes as a whole in the best interests of the home listener.' 'Spoken Word' should be separated, however, from the rest of 'Home Output' on two main grounds—first, the importance of the part broadcasting had to play in educating and informing the public and, second, in order to provide as Head 'the Director General's deputy in all matters affecting policy in the BBC's services'. Given the division, there would necessarily be 'a most intricate problem in the delimitation of responsibilities', but the problem would have to be squarely faced.

At this point someone—Ashbridge, then the Deputy Director-General?—wrote in ink in the margin 'Editor in Chief', the name of Haley's old job, to which the new post approximated, but clearly Haley's view of this appointment had less in common with that of Foot in 1943 than with that of Reith before the war.<sup>1</sup> The Director-General himself, Haley maintained, should be chosen, like his Deputy, 'primarily for his influence on output. It is what the BBC stands for, its values and standards and integrity, that are the paramount consideration.' The 'pro-

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 443 ff., for Reith's quest for 'an Output Controller, a kind of Editor-in-Chief'. Reith discussed these matters with Haley in the summer and autumn of 1947 when he made his peace, a somewhat uneasy one, with the BBC.

visional organisation sheet' which he had prepared—as Reith had prepared one before him—was less important than the 'principles' or 'broad conception' which lay behind it.

Within 'External Services', the European and Overseas Services, both grant-aided, should be merged, since there was no logical reason why broadcasting to Australia and Turkey should be in one Division and broadcasting to France and Russia in another. Management and Resources should be separated, however, and the former, in particular, should be strengthened, particularly on the business side. 'Whether the BBC, which willy-nilly is a vast administrative system, can be married to a business outlook in its financial and commercial affairs has still to be decided,' Haley added, but the whole question should be fully explored.

Throughout the paper Haley was dealing with posts and not with persons, and he recognized that 'outstanding qualities' would be needed in all the individuals chosen. He believed also that he was dealing at the same time with the question of 'the succession'. 'The posts of Spoken Word, External Services and Management would yield at least three possible candidates in training for the Director-General's post at any time.' Home Output was excluded, along with Television: Haley obviously did not see the centre of power there.

Following the private meeting of the Governors on 15 May, he revised his tentative division between the 'management' and 'resources' groups in order to meet the desire of the Governors to associate the commercial aspects of property, accommodation, and building with 'management' and to leave 'resources' as a technical complex. He also produced a fuller and longer note on the duties of the Head of Management, who would have interdivisional responsibilities as well as responsibility for the different main departments within his group—Finance, Accommodation, Staff Administration, Staff Training, Legal, Publications, Programme Contracts, and Secretariat. He would represent the BBC, therefore, in all business negotiations.

In spelling out these points Haley also stated a number of basic assumptions which had not appeared in his first paper. Two were made very clear. First, 'the Corporation must seek every available opportunity to reduce its numbers and release as many people as possible for more productive employment

elsewhere in the community.' Second, there would have to be 'some reversal' of Foot's policy of decentralization. A business organization subject to criteria of profit could afford to decentralize itself, but a public service, which lacked such automatic control, could not. 'It is natural that every part of its activity should seek to proliferate and expand in the sincere belief that by so doing it is serving the public better. Under a system of devolution this instinct is intensified.'

The second of these basic assumptions must be studied in its historical perspective. The period of BBC history from 1933 to 1942 stands out in retrospect as a period of 'extreme centralization' and that from 1942 to 1948 as a period of 'extreme decentralization'. It is somewhat more difficult, however, to describe what happened after 1948. A paper prepared for management training purposes during the 1960s referred to the period after 1948 as 'a mixture of centralisation and decentralisation, resulting in a situation lying somewhere between the two previous extremes'.<sup>1</sup> Haley put the issue a little more precisely. 'It is the responsibility of the Director-General to the Board of Governors to ensure that the sum total of all the various parts does not add up to more than the available whole'; presumably this meant in terms of resources and priorities. 'It will be the duty of the Director of Administration, centrally placed, to check through his fellow Directors or the divisional Controllers the efficacy of their expenditure of money and manpower, and particularly the efficiency and economy with which they expend them. Every effort must be made to do this without destroying the sense of responsibility of the divisional Controller. Above all, the central Director of Administration should not become a bottleneck.'

Haley did not refer specifically at this point to the role of Thomas Lochhead, who had been appointed Controller (Finance) in 1925 and was to stay in this post until 1959, but Lochhead was to prove as invaluable to him as he had been to Reith. Dealing with the grant-in-aid to external broadcasting posed just as many difficult problems as arguing about home licence fees. Haley was not at all happy about having to attend the Public Accounts Committee when the BBC accounts and

<sup>1</sup> \*\*'Training for Management, The Origins and Functions of Central Departments.'

report were before it, but he created a good impression when he first appeared in March 1948.<sup>1</sup>

There was an important addendum to Haley's paper, which related programming to resources and priorities. The relation between 'creative' and 'administrative' posts in the BBC had often provoked—and continued after 1948 to provoke—sharp differences of approach. Haley was specific on this point. 'Where programme expenditure is concerned . . . the Director of Administration's functions will refer only to business methods and not to programme matters.'<sup>2</sup>

Haley devoted a separate paper in June 1947 to the duties of the 'man in charge of the Spoken Word', 'the one post without which the Reorganisation can proceed immediately'. He would have delegated to him 'a great deal of the day-to-day responsibility for the carrying out of the Corporation's principles in this field' (someone who read the paper at the time scribbled in ink the word 'all' above 'a great deal'), and in the Director-General's absence he would act as his deputy. '“Spoken Word” would be responsible for News, News Talks, Talks (including Discussions), Documentaries, Religious and Schools Broadcasting and the editorial policy of publications.' Haley attached great importance to the internal significance of the post. 'All projects for the coverage of outstanding issues, whether it be a General Assembly of the United Nations, the transfer of power in India, a Production Drive at home, a financial crisis, a Foreign Ministers' conference in Moscow, will be planned by Spoken Word in consultation with News and Talks Controllers, Programme Heads and the Head of External Services. Plans will be drawn up in advance of long-term events. Greater flexibility will be sought within home programmes better to cover matters of immediate moment.'<sup>3</sup>

At their meeting on 26 June the Governors accepted Haley's

<sup>1</sup> \*Sir Frank Tribe, the Comptroller and Auditor-General, wrote to him on 20 March referring to the good impression, adding that he hoped such appearances would reduce the number of 'silly questions' in the House. Haley was determined (Letter to Barlow, 1 Nov. 1946) to resist any proposals to weaken 'the BBC's independence'. For a brief account of the evolution of the financial system, see B. Thorne, *The BBC's Finances and Cost Control* (BBC Lunch Time Lecture, 22 Jan. 1970).

<sup>2</sup> \*'Director of Administration, Functions', Note by Director-General, 18 Dec. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley, 'The Executive Control of the BBC', Appendix III, 18 June 1947.

main proposals, asking him to consult 'certain senior officials' of the Corporation and to report back to the Board. They asked him further to inform Sir Noel Ashbridge, who had been acting—very reluctantly—as Deputy Director-General since 1944, that this post would lapse and to invite him to take charge of Engineering and Research. Lord Simon, now in the Chair, and Haley were to find a candidate for the Board's consideration to fill the Management post, and Haley was to make recommendations to the Board about the other senior posts.<sup>1</sup> At the next meeting, Ashbridge's switch of jobs was ratified, and Nicolls, whose title of Senior Controller was to disappear, was invited to take charge of Home Output. At this same meeting it was announced that Ryan, Editor (News), who had been a key figure in the war-time BBC before and after Haley, would be leaving the BBC to join the staff of *The Times* in the autumn.

A little later, after three outside candidates had been interviewed, Air Chief Marshal Sir Norman Bottomley was appointed to 'the Management post' and Major-General Sir Ian Jacob, who had served as Military Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet, was promoted to take charge of all external broadcasting (never a main preoccupation of Haley) with the title of Director of Overseas Services. Bottomley, not an expert on 'personnel management', had established a war-time reputation as an extremely efficient organizer, and for a brief period late in 1956 and in early 1957 he was to serve as Acting Director-General. The daily conduct of staff administration was left to J. H. Arkell, who joined the BBC from J. Lyons & Co. and became Controller, Staff Administration, in 1949.

Jacob was to be the next Director-General of the Corporation. He had met Haley, who was two years younger than he, for the first time during the spring of 1944 when broadcasting preparations were being made for D Day, and had greatly impressed him, and it was after talking to Kirkpatrick that Jacob moved to the BBC in the autumn of 1947. Brisk, knowledgeable, and determined, he did not at that time foresee that he might be Haley's successor.

The autumn of 1947 was a bleak autumn of national economic crisis, when Attlee was calling for 'a national effort comparable to that we developed during the war'. He had told Simon at

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 26 June 1947.



their meeting that he was not happy about the way in which the Corporation had handled the unauthorized dockers' strike: it had actually allowed unofficial dockers' leaders to make statements. Haley's strong sense of responsibility led him to meditate on how the BBC should handle 'a national crisis', and he was clear that one further institutional move was necessary, the reconstitution of the General Advisory Council, which met for the first time in its new form on 29 October.<sup>1</sup>

Haley made sure that its new membership covered a very wide variety of representative interests—politics, Commonwealth affairs, the Press, science and the humanities—and also included a number of 'general' names. Lord Goddard refused the chairmanship, but it was willingly accepted by Lord Halifax,<sup>2</sup> a leading Conservative politician, who was to stand by the Corporation in many difficult days ahead. Appropriately, at the very first meeting of the new Council the members embarked at once on a general discussion of the responsibilities of broadcasting. The same theme dominated the paper by Simon on 'The Governors and Public Affairs'. It asserted the importance of the Chairman being 'above Party . . . during his tenure of office', but did not seek to extend such obligations to the Governors. They were not to speak in public on the affairs of the BBC except when specifically authorized to do so by the Board, but otherwise they were free to speak on any subject, however controversial.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the reorganization of 1947 there was no suggestion at any stage that either the external or the internal changes were exclusively concerned with greater efficiency. They had as their object, as Haley had always proclaimed, the articulation of the public service role of the Corporation. The economic crisis provided an issue for broadcasters to consider and not just the setting in which the discussions about broadcasting took place. Thus, at a special meeting of the Governors on 18 September, Haley emphasized that while the BBC should not pretend that there was political unity if the country was divided, 'it should also be possible to put across the truth that

<sup>1</sup> The first post-war meeting of the reconstituted Council under the chairmanship of Lord Macmillan had taken place on 13 June 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 2 April 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Lord Simon, 'The Governors and Public Affairs', 17 July 1947.

there was no way to salvation but through hard work'. 'If the Executive could be left gradually to intensify its "crisis" broadcasting as the crisis developed, and if the individual listener could be made to feel the mounting effect of the broadcasting, the BBC would be exercising the greatest leadership it could within its overriding duty to remain objective and to maintain its integrity. And greater production might well result.' The minute ends 'The Board endorsed the D.G.'s views.'<sup>1</sup>

As plans for reorganization were pushed forward, Simon spent considerable time interviewing prominent people outside the BBC, mainly but not solely in relation to the 'Management post', while Nicolls as well as Haley was involved in consultations about the Directorship of the Spoken Word. Sir Edward Bridges, Lord Layton, and J. C. Masterman were among those whose opinions were sought. The last of these had been approached by Reith when he was seeking in 1933 to introduce the new top post of 'Output Controller',<sup>2</sup> and his advice had always been deeply respected. The consultants did not find it easy to suggest suitable names, however, and even after Bottomley had been interviewed for and had been offered the post of Director of Administration—he took it up on 1 January 1948<sup>3</sup>—the post of Director of the Spoken Word was still left vacant. In Haley's first public promulgation of the details of this reorganization on 1 December, it was announced that all jobs were filled except this.

Ashbridge's new title was 'Director of Technical Services', and he, Nicolls, Jacob, Bottomley, and the missing fifth man were designated members of 'a Board of Management' under the chairmanship of the Director-General. J. B. Clark, previously Controller (Overseas Services), was to be Jacob's deputy—this meant stepping down in the hierarchy—and Harold Bishop was to remain as Chief Engineer, one of the few surviving original BBC titles. It was stated at the same time that the map of divisional boundaries would not be changed significantly and that there would be 'no widespread change in individual working'.<sup>4</sup> There was, in fact, a wholesale change in

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 18 Sept. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Golden Age of Wireless*, p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 30 Oct. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Promulgation by Haley, 1 Dec. 1947.

titles in January 1948, a complete reversal of current practice.<sup>1</sup> Previously the members of the key BBC Committee, the Control Board, a Reithian term, were known as Controllers, and the rank immediately below that of Assistant Controller was Director. Now, however, the title of Director was to be reserved for members of the Board of Management. Divisions and Regions were normally to be administered by Controllers. Edgar, Beadle, Coatman, Dinwiddie, Oldfield-Davies, and Marshall were all given this new title, and every month there was to be a Controllers' Conference in London which they and Haley attended. Home Programme Liaison Meetings, monthly or two-monthly, were also held.

The Board of Management, which met on Mondays, held its first meeting on 5 January 1948, when it was agreed that the different Directors would attend the meetings of the Board of Governors 'in turn', to deal with any points arising out of their written reports which they were to prepare on ten weeks of broadcasting. This was an important link between Governors and Management, as was the clarification about which Directors were to be responsible for 'outside contacts'. Television was mentioned for the first time at the Board of Management on 19 January, and on 5 April 1948 it was noted that the Board of Governors, in discussing artists' performing fees, had explicitly endorsed the principle that 'television was part of the broadcasting service'.<sup>2</sup>

When the 'reorganization' was discussed in the Press, some newspapers not surprisingly made the most of at least one title—that of Director of the Spoken Word. The *Evening News* found fun in its Mandarin connotations.<sup>3</sup> 'Is he to be a dictator of English, a word-perfect paragon?' asked a Scottish newspaper, while a Yorkshire comment was that it was hoped he would be bilingual.<sup>4</sup> An Edinburgh newspaper found the title not 'high flown' but 'pleasing', pointing out that, nonetheless, the name of the new DSW had not yet been spoken.<sup>5</sup> 'The Word can easily give birth to a Junior Word,' wrote one radio

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management Paper, 16 Jan. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 5, 19 Jan., 5 April 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *Evening News*, 2 Dec. 1947. 'Your Transcendence,' said the scribe, 'what about the Rotator of the Ultimate Knob, and the Chief Diffuser of Obscure Sublimity?'

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Dispatch*, 2 Dec. 1947; *Yorkshire Evening Post* 3 Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 Dec. 1947.

journalist, 'an Assistant Word, a Verbal Administrative Assistant as well as an infinity of Unprintable Words.'<sup>1</sup>

The 'hierarchical structure' of the BBC was vulnerable to criticism as it had always been, and there were inevitable complaints that while openings for internal promotion were inadequate, outsiders were being chosen for top posts.<sup>2</sup> The *New Statesman* thought that the net effect of reorganization would be to make the development of new ideas 'slightly more difficult than before'. 'In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God. . . . We now wait with some apprehension to learn who is to play the part of the Almighty.'<sup>3</sup>

Opposition to introducing 'amateurs' from outside into the executive—'mere supercargo', one critic called them<sup>4</sup>—was sometimes coupled with the suggestion that, given that fresh blood should be brought into the BBC from time to time, the proper place for the fresh blood was surely the Board of Governors.<sup>5</sup> A BBC spokesman pointed out after the reorganization, however, that, just as before, 'the functions of the Directors would be entirely separate from those of the Governors'. The new Board of Management would be answerable to the Director-General and he, in turn, to the Board of Governors.<sup>6</sup>

This arrangement, accepted as it had been by the Governors, was to be reflected in Simon's book on broadcasting which sharply separated what he called the 'external' and the 'internal' constitution of the Corporation.<sup>7</sup> 'On policy and other major questions,' Simon wrote, 'recommendations are made to the Governors by the Board of Management: on all else it takes decisions. It is at the Board of Management level, therefore, that all really vital matters other than financial are discussed by the Director-General and his leading officials.' The recommendations made to the Governors were 'clear and definite'. And at this point Simon also took up the amateur/professional

<sup>1</sup> *Our Time*, Dec. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; letter by E. G. D. Liveing, a former BBC official, to *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1947; *Daily Mirror*, 8 Dec. 1947. The *Sunday Times*, however, praised the appointments, approving of Haley's going to the Fighting Services for 'talent' (7 Dec. 1947). For related criticisms see T. Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (1977).

<sup>3</sup> *New Statesman*, 6 Dec. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> *Our Time*, Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1947.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 2 Dec. 1947.

<sup>7</sup> *The BBC from Within*, pp. 29-77.

analogy. 'This is in accordance with the British tradition that there should be amateurs with top political responsibility and that they should have the best professional advice.'<sup>1</sup>

Critics in 1947 thought that such an arrangement was too 'tidy'. The danger was not that the Governors would be idle but that initiative at divisional level might be discouraged by 'too rigid a direction from above'.<sup>2</sup> 'It is the Producers who provide the programmes you hear and they are the bottom of the pile.' The pile was a four-decker sandwich with the Governors providing the dressing at the top. A more useful reform would have been to introduce Assistant Producers.<sup>3</sup> There was occasional doubt, too, as to whether Simon as Chairman of the Board always followed his own precepts. He and his wife liked to talk to executives separately at their flat in Marsham Court, and he spent far more time than previous Chairmen had done in his office inside Broadcasting House. His black book in which he wrote comments on people and issues was known to everyone at the top of the hierarchy and to many people lower down. Haley noted that while it was 'gratifying and warming' to know how much the Chairman cared, senior administrators were sometimes mystified by the double interrogation by Lord and Lady Simon. His own relations with Simon were always correct, but Simon found him 'icy'. He admired Haley's 'superb' intellect, but regretted his 'granite resistance to almost everything I suggest'.<sup>4</sup>

The *New Statesman* was one of the few newspapers or periodicals to refer to television in its comment on the reorganization, pointing to the fact that Maurice Gorham, the Head of Television, had resigned and that his place would be taken by Norman Collins. Yet it scarcely took a positive line. It regretted the switch of Collins from the Light Programme on the grounds that he had built up 'the largest radio audience in the country'

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Post*, 2 Dec. 1947; *Truth* (5 Dec. 1947) argued, however, that the Director-General should take his orders from the Governors and pass them to subordinate directors for execution. 'It is obvious that in practice the Board of Management will run the show and the Governors amuse themselves at their fortnightly meetings with more general matters.'

<sup>3</sup> *Our Time*, Dec. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Lady Simon, 7 Nov. 1950, quoted in Mary Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester* (1963), p. 129. Haley's note on the Marsham Court meetings was a contribution to Simon's eightieth birthday book.

while managing at the same time 'to include in it much that the experts regarded as far too sensible for mass listening'. Television would offer him less of an opportunity. Nor, it might have added, did the Television Engineering and Programme Liaison Committee, which met once every three weeks, have quite the same prestige as the monthly or bi-monthly Home Programme Liaison meetings.<sup>1</sup>

In retrospect, the two points above all others which stood out in the 'reorganization' were the continued integration of television within the total system and the fact that television as such was not to be represented in Haley's inner cabinet. Haley was conceiving his reorganization, therefore, almost entirely in the terms of past and present and not those of the future. There had been a brief but enthusiastic reference to television in his earlier paper on 'Executive Control of the BBC', but it was not until October 1950, during the last stages of the delayed public inquiry into the future of broadcasting, chaired by Lord Beveridge, that the key decision was taken to raise Television from the status of a Department under a Controller to that of a Service under a Director. And when the change was made at last, there was a critical and controversial resignation, that of Norman Collins, which brought the whole issue of the future of television before the public. In 1947 Collins accepted the key television post within a structure which emphasized the subordination of television, and three years later, when that structure was at last changed, he left the Corporation when he was not made Director and began to play a leading role in challenging the BBC's television monopoly.<sup>2</sup> Had he been appointed to the Board of Management in 1947, the history of British broadcasting as a whole might have been very different.

As it was, Haley envisaged television output as a part of the total output of the 'Home Service' of the BBC, and there was only one reference to it in a paper he prepared on the Director of Home Broadcasting's functions. 'Television', the last sentences in this paper ran, 'is in a special position in that its

<sup>1</sup> In October 1951 the TE and PLC was renamed the Technical Development Committee, and on 1 April 1952 the HPLC became the Home Sound Programme Liaison Meeting.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 452-6.

supply Departments are largely within the Division. But in the field of News and Talks, the Director of the Spoken Word's responsibilities will be the same as elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

It was in keeping with the times that this important paper, one of the first to be considered by the new Board of Management, provoked the sharpest opposition, not from the small television world in Alexandra Palace but from Nicolls and Wellington, both of them key figures in sound broadcasting, in Broadcasting House. Nicolls told Haley frankly that while there was not much in the paper to which he could 'actually take objection', 'there is a great deal that I don't like very much'. He objected in particular to the references to the new Director of the Spoken Word. His authority was not to be 'functional' outside the News and Talks Division, but he was to have 'a general responsibility for the broad policy of the Corporation's coverage of public affairs and for the adequacy of its use of the Spoken Word in all fields'. Haley's effort to clarify relationships seemed to Nicolls to pose new problems. There was a clause, for instance, stating that if the Director of the Spoken Word felt that the policy of the Corporation could not be carried out by the decisions made by the Director of Home Broadcasting and the Director of the Spoken Word he would refer the matter to the Director-General for decision, although it was counterbalanced by a second clause which followed immediately, 'but generally speaking it will be for D.S.W., on behalf of D.G., to lay down the broad principles upon which the various matters covered by the Spoken Word will be dealt with, and D.H.B. and the Programme Controllers will be responsible for the best means of giving effect to them'.

Nicolls, who knew more about the BBC hierarchy than anyone else and did more than anyone else to perpetuate it, was obviously deeply worried about his own place in such a set-up, and he cannot have been satisfied with Haley's reply that he hoped that no one was going to be 'legalistic' about functions.<sup>2</sup> Their relations invoked reserve on both sides. Wellington, for his part, questioned the statement of powers of the Director of Home Broadcasting. A further clause in Haley's paper read: 'The relationship between D.H.B. and the

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by the Director-General, 29 Dec. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 24 Dec. 1947.

Programme Controllers must be considered under two heads. *De jure*, D.H.B.'s authority in this regard is absolute. *De facto*, he must delegate to each Programme Controller to a considerable degree. D.H.B.'s primary concern will be for the effect of the whole.' The policy of the BBC, Haley went on, was to co-ordinate output in order to achieve 'the maximum service to the listener', and DHB had to ensure that each Programme Controller is conducting his programme to this end. He also had to seek to achieve 'better integration of Regional output into the National Services (including where necessary raising Regional quality)'. In all such matters, however, he should be the final arbiter of and influence upon programming, rather than the architect of the programmes themselves. 'The range of his authority limits the details into which he will be able to go.'

In seeking to clarify relationships Haley was inevitably raising doubts, the kind of doubts which had been raised in sections of the Press when the outline of the changes was published. 'If D.H.B.'s concern with co-ordination and with the integration of Regional output is taken to the point of ordering the inclusion of this or the exclusion of that from a Home Programme,' Wellington told him, 'nothing valuable remains of the powers of a Programme Head.'<sup>1</sup> Haley's approach suggested a far greater degree of centralization than before. Hitherto, 'the essence of Programme Headship' had been that a Programme Head had been 'entitled to go his own way subject to dismissal if, in any long-term view, the results he achieves are unacceptable to you'. If DHB were to preside over a new Programme Board of Divisions or Departments, then this would contradict fundamentally Haley's own proposition that programme Heads should exercise autonomy. 'No authority can be left to Programme Heads (or, I venture to suggest, to C (Entertainment)), if they are to sit down to discuss programme proposals with producing departments under a chairman who may rule in favour of a Gilliam against a Barnes.'

Wellington suggested that DHB should be a chief of staff concerned with BBC strategy and not with the direction of individual programmes and that he should act through Controllers and only through them. He should not make direct contact with Heads of Production Departments or with pro-

<sup>1</sup> \*Wellington to Haley, 30 Dec. 1947.



ducers because to do so would destroy the authority of his Controllers. Such a conception of DHB's responsibilities was not very far from Haley's conception of the responsibilities of the Director of the Spoken Word.

Many of these organizational problems posed in December 1947 were apparently made easier when an internal appointment was at last made to the key post, as envisaged by Haley, of Director of the Spoken Word. In February 1948 gossip was stilled when Haley announced the appointment of George Barnes, the Controller of the Third Programme, to this position.<sup>1</sup> Barnes had been with the BBC since 1935, starting as an Assistant in the Talks Department, and he was to become the first Director of Television, causing Collins to resign in 1950. The history of 'reorganization' cannot be divorced from the history of these two personalities, for it was of the utmost importance that at two critical moments Haley put his trust in Barnes. It was not just that he believed that Barnes was intelligent and cultured: he believed also that, as he put it, 'within that willowy figure' there was 'a blade of steel'. In the view of others, however, Barnes had great limitations: it seemed to his critics that he always disliked the job he was doing and felt that he should be doing something else. Nicolls, in particular, watched his rise with alarm, as did Beadle and many of his fellow Regional Controllers. Haley, who knew of all this, thought that the suspicions of Nicolls created a more real source of friction inside the BBC than any possible friction between Collins and Barnes. But he trusted Barnes's integrity and listened to his judgement. His instinct was to stay aloof from all personal rivalries. Long after he had left the BBC he wrote to Ryan that his strongest desire as Director-General had been 'to let everybody get on with their jobs undisturbed by me or anyone else until it became inescapably necessary to interfere'. This had entailed a lack of personal contact, but it followed from his determination 'to put myself up as a shield between the Governors and the staff'.<sup>2</sup>

All this suggests that it is necessary to consider what was

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 5 Feb. 1948; *The Times*, 7 Feb. 1948. For an example of Press comment in the interim, see *Daily Herald*, 8 Jan. 1948. A revised reorganization chart was prepared in March.

<sup>2</sup> Haley to Ryan, 11 Dec. 1969.

happening in 1948 in long-term perspective. The Corporation was already far removed from the Reithian model. An increasingly moody Reith, peering in from outside and dreaming he was inside, might welcome the renewal of 'old contacts' in the Corporation, but by the end of 1948—in one mood—he was feeling 'sick of the BBC and all its works'.<sup>1</sup> Reith, of course, was looking backwards. To complete the long-term perspective it is interesting also to note a brief comment in the Board of Management's minutes in the same year stating succinctly that 'Carleton Greene's present job in Germany would be finishing shortly'.<sup>2</sup>

The short-term problems centred mainly on the role of the new Director of Administration, Sir Norman Bottomley, particularly in relation to the deployment of manpower. The BBC was just beginning to face inside its own organization the trade-union problems which it was reporting (somewhat inadequately) in the country as a whole. BBC employees included trade unionists from unions as different as Equity and the Musicians' Union on the one side and the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Electrical Trades Union, and the Transport and General Workers' Union on the other. There was also a small but active group of members of the Association of Cine Technicians. Yet the main employee body with which the BBC had to deal was still not a trade union but the BBC Staff Association which had been founded—after long delays—in 1940 and which in June 1945 incorporated another war-time body, the Association of BBC Engineers. The first secretary of the Staff Association was Sidney Budd and the first chairman of the amalgamated body an engineer, Dennis Horsford; and among the people present at the first formal meeting were Lynton Fletcher, a veteran of the old British Broadcasting Company, S. J. de Lotbinière, and Patrick Gordon Walker, representing Bush House.<sup>3</sup> On 2 April 1946 a full-time General Secretary was appointed, T. L. Littlewood, who was not himself a member of the Corporation's staff, and Audrey Felgate, who had worked as Assistant Sec-

<sup>1</sup> Reith, *Diary*, 29 Dec. 1948. The message is printed in C. Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (1975), p. 462.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 31 May 1948. For the work of the future Director-General, Hugh Carleton Greene, in Germany, see below, pp. 152-3.

<sup>3</sup> There are some interesting reminiscences in *ABS Bulletin*, May 1965.

retary with Budd and his successor, Tom Hobson, remained in her post. The Association went on to achieve a fully independent status at its annual council meeting in June 1947. It claimed to represent all grades and categories of broadcasting staff, but in September 1949 it still had only 46 per cent of the Corporation's staff as members.

Not surprisingly, the TUC and the Government were watching the staff situation inside the BBC with increasing interest and concern. It was a subject which interested Haley less than other issues when he 'reorganized'. Yet it was to figure prominently in the discussions of the Beveridge Committee.<sup>1</sup> Its subsequent history deserves a separate monograph. As late as its silver jubilee in 1965 it was still complaining that its membership had never risen much above 50 per cent, but already for two years it had been affiliated to the TUC. The first main landmark did not come until after the period covered in this volume—its re-registration in 1956 as the Association of Broadcasting Staff.<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Overseas Broadcasting

IT HAD been a matter of intermittent argument since the middle years of the Second World War as to what the post-war scope of the BBC's overseas services should be. They continued—even after 1947—to be financed not out of licence money but from a separate grant-in-aid, and they were always subject, therefore, to possible governmental pressure. As early as March 1943 Foot's notes on the future of broadcasting were extended at a Controllers' Meeting—Controllers really were controllers then—to include 'a further question on the extent

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 318. There is a useful summary of this history in the BBC Staff Association's evidence to the Beveridge Committee and the evidence of the unions (Cmd. 8117 (1951), pp. 459-520). See also E. G. Wedell, *Broadcasting and Public Policy* (1968), pp. 184 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Handbook*, 1957, p. 96. This was the first official reference. 'A comprehensive system of consultation has been built up over the years with the Association of Broadcasting Staff, and this is being developed in so far as the other unions are concerned.'

of the BBC's responsibility for broadcasting activities outside Britain'.<sup>1</sup> The consensus of opinion was that the BBC should continue to provide a wide range of foreign-language services and that after the war the main theme in external broadcasting should be 'the projection of Britain', a term coined during the 1930s by the BBC's first Controller of Public Relations, Sir Stephen Tallents, before he joined the Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

Within the pattern, however, special emphasis was placed on the Commonwealth, as it had been between 1932, the start of the BBC's Empire Service—before the word 'Commonwealth' was generally used—and 1938, the year of the first BBC broadcasts in foreign languages. This emphasis was apparent at the first Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference assembled in Broadcasting House even before the war ended—in February 1945—when there was much talk of exchange of information, of news, of programmes, and of staff.<sup>3</sup> 'What the people of the Dominions owe to the BBC they recognise to be inestimable,' wrote Tahu Hole, a New Zealander, who had recently been appointed BBC Overseas Talks Manager and later was to head its News Division. In an article in 1945 called 'The Indispensable Girdle of the Commonwealth', he claimed that the BBC had given the Commonwealth a 'new concept of unity'.<sup>4</sup> The unity, however, was not the loose unity which was to emerge later. The 'Colonies' were still separated from the 'Dominions' in the *BBC Year Books*,<sup>5</sup> and during the immediate post-war period there was little intimation in the BBC, or elsewhere,

<sup>1</sup> \*Controllors Meeting, *Minutes*, 19 March 1943.

<sup>2</sup> See Sir Stephen Tallents, *The Projection of England* (1955; first published 1932). Scattered and sometimes undated war-time documents exist on different facets of the policy of 'projecting' Britain, a policy which can be traced in pre-war cinema documentary. A place was to be reserved not only for projecting British political institutions but British science and technology, and Britain's 'modest information policy' in relation to the latter was contrasted both with that of Germany, the enemy, and the United States, the ally. The most interesting meeting on the need to project post-war Britain inside Europe took place on 3 May 1944.

<sup>3</sup> See *BBC Year Book, 1946*, pp. 97–8. Work had also been carried on throughout in the Technical Sub-Committee presided over by Harold Bishop.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1945*, pp. 84–6. The phrase 'a girdle around the earth' was used also in relation to Commonwealth civil aviation, another of Lord Reith's concerns. See *The Round Table*, June 1960, pp. 249 ff.

<sup>5</sup> In the description of the work of the overseas services in the *BBC Year Books* for 1945 and 1946 the Dominions figured first, followed by India, the Colonies, the USA, the Far East, the Near East, Latin America, the General Forces and the European Service, in that order.

that the movement towards the independence of the Dominions would be swiftly followed by 'decolonialization'.

Nor was there any clear recognition that Europe might be 'an alternative' to the Commonwealth, as Noel Newsome, the energetic, far-sighted, and sometimes controversial war-time Director of European Broadcasts, had wished. By March 1945, two months before VE Day, the total daily broadcast hours to Europe—50 in June 1944—had already fallen to 43. Haley himself on at least one occasion objected to the BBC further 'spawning' in Europe<sup>1</sup>—he was referring to Eastern Europe—but there was a withdrawal in the West also. Haley had been unhappy that a meeting called by Newsome in May 1944 to discuss 'Post-Armistice broadcasting to Europe' had not produced 'an overall proposal', setting out details of the relevant logistics—he feared that there would be far too heavy expenses—and he created a new committee with Harman Grisewood, who took over control of the European Service when Ivone Kirkpatrick left, H. J. Dunkerley, and Douglas Ritchie—the war-time Colonel Britton—as members. Its task was to examine more closely the problems of external broadcasting. The committee quickly became involved in questions both of finance and of technology, with one of the main difficulties being identified as the lack of a long wave to serve broadcasting to post-war Germany.<sup>2</sup> Haley had forecast the demand for such a wavelength soon after D Day,<sup>3</sup> but as he concentrated increasingly between then and the end of the war on the development of domestic broadcasting in Britain, he recognized that there would have to be awkward choices in relation to external broadcasting. It was the choice between domestic and external development which preoccupied him, not that between Commonwealth and Europe.

As the different Allied governments returned to their own countries in Europe, therefore, the BBC's foreign-language programmes for Europe were not only cut, but transformed in content to services of an essentially British character, with the

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), p. 684.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by J. B. Clark, 30 May 1945; Report of a Meeting at the Foreign Office, 26 July 1945. In the course of these negotiations the Post Office was thought to be showing itself particularly difficult.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Bracken, 20 July 1944; Bracken to Haley, 31 July 1944.

object of portraying the British way of life for Europeans.<sup>1</sup> The first important reorganization of the European Service took place in April 1945 with the streamlining of the News Department<sup>2</sup> and the substitution of grouped services for the separate and highly independent national services; and at the end of July many of the best long and medium wavelengths were handed over in order to restore peace-time domestic broadcasting. By the end of 1945 (as Harold Wilson, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works, told Vernon Bartlett in reply to a parliamentary question in the House of Commons) the number of executive staff concerned with the daily European broadcasts had fallen from 495 to 453. Wilson said that he would take up 'in the proper quarter' an allegation that 'these officials are much more timid about presenting the British case than they were during the war'. He would also take up, he said, a further demand that as wide publicity as possible should be given to 'the great varieties of British democracy'.<sup>3</sup>

The reduction in wavelengths, in the number of hours broadcast, and in staffing—some of the ablest and most energetic staff were allowed to leave first—was criticized in some quarters outside the BBC on the grounds that it would 'weaken the dissemination of truth'; and Kirkpatrick himself was uneasy about what was happening, not least when he received a curt note from his new employer, the Foreign Office, telling him that his years of war service with the BBC would not rank for pension or gratuity.<sup>4</sup> Among the journals which complained most was *Tribune*. 'The War', it argued, 'made obvious the imperative need for direct communication between peoples,

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1945*, p. 111. A forgotten plan for a 'Radio Europe' to hold the Continent together had been put before various Allied governments during the war by a small group which included P. P. Eckersley, the first Chief Engineer of the BBC. The British Government was the first to turn it down (*News Chronicle*, 9 Oct. 1945).

<sup>2</sup> \*D. E. Ritchie, Memorandum of 12 Sept. 1945. As late as 21 April 1945 Geoffrey Kirk, Director of the Communications and Broadcasting Division of the Ministry of Information, had told Harman Grisewood that they continued to find 'the reaction of European audiences' to the BBC extremely important to them. There were complaints around this time that the BBC was seeking to 'clip the edges' off liaison between the BBC and the Ministry of Information (Clark to Haley, 27 April 1945).

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 418, cols. 692-3, 29 Jan. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Morning Advertiser*, 8 Aug. 1945; I. Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle* (1959), p. 168.

and the BBC did much to supply that need. But what now? Is this link between ourselves and the peoples of Europe still needed? Certainly it is—more than ever. It is desperately necessary that Britain—Labour Britain—should be understood by the people of Europe and should retain or win their friendship and sympathy. The official language of diplomacy from government to government is not enough. . . . We cannot afford to throw away this vitally important weapon of democracy.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult not to accept *Tribune's* comment that the policy followed immediately after the end of the war—mainly on financial grounds—was 'short-sighted'. In consequence, an opportunity was lost, by the country more than by the BBC. When Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, was complaining, as he did so often in 1945, about 'improper' election procedures in Eastern Europe, his complaint was made at a time very soon after all early morning broadcasts to Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia had suddenly been stopped.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, when France under General de Gaulle (not to speak of Belgium, Holland, and Norway)<sup>3</sup> was very much in need of regular and imaginative political and social exchange with Britain, the resources deployed in British broadcasting to France were smaller than they had ever been since 1939. In daily broadcasts to France, however, there were, at least, detailed reviews of the day's newspapers, along with two surveys of parliamentary debates each week and regular panels of commentators, including a Brains Trust, *Six autour d'un Micro*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 31 Aug. 1945. *The Times* had an important article on the subject on 10 Sept. 1945, 'Broadcasts to Europe'. 'Europe is no longer occupied by an enemy. But the importance of spreading the British point of view and of disseminating undoctored information will remain; and this importance will be multiplied wherever a new censorship may be established.' See also B. Ifor Evans, 'Publicity for Britain' in *The Spectator*, 19 Oct. 1945, and a leader on 'Foreign Broadcasts' in the *Birmingham Post*, 8 Nov. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 419, cols. 5-6, 11 Feb. 1946 reports a question by Patrick Gordon Walker on broadcasting to Eastern Europe, 'particularly for broadcasts in the German and Polish languages'. He also raised the question of broadcasts in Russian (see below, pp. 148-9). Hector McNeil in reply referred to the importance of such broadcasts, but talked of difficulties with wavelengths and power.

<sup>3</sup> Broadcasts to Norway were quickly reduced from five to two.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1946*, pp. 119-20. *BBC Year Book, 1947*, p. 104, quoted the results of an inquiry undertaken by the French Institute of Public Opinion showing that 17 per cent of the French population still listened to BBC broadcasts. *Six autour d'un Micro* had regular performers like William Pickles and distinguished visitors who included Vernon Bartlett, Lennox Berkeley, and Denis Saurat.

There may have been little wrong with the objects of post-war BBC external policy as defined in 1945 within the BBC or with the ability of most of the people seeking to realize them. What was wrong was scale. News was rightly given a central place, for it was clearly recognized that the success of a deliberately limited broadcasting exercise would continue to depend on providing not only 'an up-to-date, lively and thoroughly reliable News Service' but on supporting it with 'background information and by comments indicating Britain's attitude towards the problems of the day'. 'Effective ways' were to be found of 'telling Europe about ourselves, our characteristics and our institutions, so that our listeners can understand us better.'

It was recognized within this context that the ways would entail paying full attention to geographical, political, and economic factors in the different receiving countries as well as education and languages,<sup>1</sup> and that the direction of Britain's own foreign policy could not be ignored. During the late stages of the war Cyril Radcliffe, from the vantage point of the Ministry of Information, had told Haley that whether or not the BBC followed 'policies' towards different countries—and Haley had said that it would not—'political policies are likely to be attributed to it by the people or authorities in the country at the receiving end'.<sup>2</sup> The statement had certainly not lost its point in a 'Labour Britain'.

Despite this last consideration, there was ample scope for BBC initiative in adapting itself to the new situation in 1945, as the control systems of PWE, the Political Warfare Executive, working through directives, were relaxed one by one even before the end of the war.<sup>3</sup> The Far Eastern position, in particular, took some time to be clarified, however, for the Japanese War did not end until the late summer of 1945 and it had been expected

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Ritchie, 1 Oct. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Radcliffe to Haley, 19 Dec. 1944, in reply to Haley to Radcliffe, 13 Dec. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> *The War of Words*, p. 683. France was the first country to be affected (Ministry of Information Paper, 9 Jan. 1945); Radcliffe to Haley, 12 Jan. 1945 (Ministry of Information Papers). Finland followed on 30 Jan., Romania and Bulgaria on 28 Feb., Belgium on 22 March, Yugoslavia on 3 April, and Hungary on 2 May. The list after the war was Luxembourg (6 May), Albania (23 May), Czechoslovakia (23 May), Holland (23 May), Denmark (29 May), Burma (15 Oct.), Poland (21 Jan. 1946), and Greece and Italy (1 April 1946). The Governors of the BBC noted in May 1946 (\**Minutes*, 16 May) that the 'termination of the P.I.D. control was now complete'.



to last for a far longer time. J. B. Clark, the experienced head of the BBC's Overseas Services, explained in April 1945 that the Far Eastern directives of PWE were too 'dictatorial' in tone as compared with PWE directives concerning European countries, which were at that stage of the war always discussed in draft with the BBC.<sup>1</sup> Relations with the Foreign Office improved after John Morris became Far Eastern Service Director on 1 May 1945 and Donald Stephenson, who was just back from New Delhi, became Eastern Services Director; at the same time, both the service and the drafting and approval of directives were transferred to Bush House.<sup>2</sup> Yet the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department (PID) did not notify the BBC of the Allied Proclamation to Japan, drawn up at the Potsdam Conference of the Great Powers on 26 July, until the following morning—forty minutes before a transmission in Japanese was due. By contrast, the Americans had prepared elaborate publicity arrangements—and they made the most of them. They had not agreed to allow the powerful medium-wave transmitter at Saipan to be used for relays of BBC broadcasts in Japanese.<sup>3</sup>

The immediate reaction of the Treasury to the end of the Japanese War (and the end of American Lend-Lease) was that expenditure should be cut, particularly dollar expenditure,<sup>4</sup> but later in the year the Foreign Office gave its blessing to broadcasts in Japanese and general guidance about what they should include. It was hoped that programmes would include 'objective news', but that there would be a fair amount of music also. Given that the Americans had 'technical superiority', British programmes, it was pointed out, would be likely to be listened to by the small number of Japanese who owned short-wave receivers. It was added, however, that to have BBC programmes relayed on Japanese medium wavelengths had not been successful and that for 'imperative reasons of economy' transmission of the programmes in English from San Francisco, which had been arranged during the war, would have to cease

<sup>1</sup> \*Clark to Rendall, 9 April 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Rendall to Bowes-Lyon, 24 Feb. 1945; Notes of a meeting to discuss the Extension of Far Eastern Broadcasts, 7 June 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*(Undated) Paper, probably of June 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley wrote to Bamford at the Ministry of Information on 10 Oct. 1945 detailing cuts.

on 31 January 1946.<sup>1</sup> With so much talk about economy, the BBC was deeply concerned about its staffing problems, and for this and other reasons made arrangements for Morris to visit the Far East.<sup>2</sup> Yet there was increasing freedom from government. In 1946 PID control ceased, and it was planned that the Service should move back to 200 Oxford Street.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent build-up not only of the Japanese Service but of the Chinese and other Asian services owed an immense amount to Morris, and it was a striking tribute to the BBC approach to the constitutional and political side of broadcasting that Japanese non-commercial radio, organized through NHK, the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation, was modelled on the BBC.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the war against Japan ended earlier than most people had expected—the interval between VE Day and VJ Day was only a hundred days—did not encourage continuing public discussion in 1945 of the influence of the media on Britain's relations with the rest of the world. Nonetheless, there was some such discussion later in the year—following the statement by Attlee that the Ministry of Information would be wound up.<sup>5</sup> While few regretted the disappearance of what had always been thought of as a necessary, but basically undesirable, war-time expedient, there were immediate complaints that Attlee's explanation of what was to take its place in the future was 'vague in the extreme'.<sup>6</sup> 'It was a case of "the Minister is dead; long live the Ministry";' *Time and Tide* complained. 'There will be no Minister of Information, but there will be a Department of Information.'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Major-Gen. K. W. D. Strong to J. B. Clark, 29 Oct. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Clark to Haley, 10 Oct. 1945; Clark to Strong, 15 Nov. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 10 April 1946. Nominal control was formally renounced in December (O. A. Scott to Haley, 4 Dec. 1946).

<sup>4</sup> See E. D. Robertson, 'British Broadcasting for Asia', Anniversary Lecture to the Royal Central Asian Society, 13 June 1970. NHK decided on its policies for a 'democratisation of its administrative system' as early as October 1945, but a new broadcast law was not introduced until June 1950. For the Japanese public corporation organization and its operations, see *The History of Broadcasting in Japan* (Nippon Hoso Kyokai, 1967), especially pp. 154–91. For BBC broadcasts to China, which had originally been introduced during the war at the request of the Foreign Office, see *The War of Words*, pp. 497–504.

<sup>5</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 417, cols. 916–18, 17 Dec. 1945.

<sup>6</sup> *The Spectator*, 21 Dec. 1945.

<sup>7</sup> *Time and Tide*, 22 Dec. 1945. The same reference was used in an article in the *New Statesman*, 'Après M.O.I.', 22 Dec. 1945. 'The King is dead. Long Live the King.'

As far as 'the statement of Britain's case abroad' was concerned, there was widespread agreement that only 'free agencies' could state its case,<sup>1</sup> if only on the grounds, as Ernest Thurtle, the last Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Information in the Coalition Government, had put it, that 'to talk in peacetime of a British point of view was an oversimplification. It would be a number of conflicting points of view.'<sup>2</sup> Even *The Economist*, which suggested that 'foreign publicity' should be undertaken by a new single corporation which would absorb the British Council, the foreign services of the BBC, the Crown Film Unit, and the residual functions of the Ministry, urged that there should never be 'too stifling an administrative embrace'.<sup>3</sup>

The Government added little to its clarification of the future relationship between the Foreign Office and the BBC when Attlee made a further statement in Parliament in March 1946, three weeks before the Ministry was actually to be dissolved.<sup>4</sup> By then, however, the Foreign Office was in a position of immense strength in relation to external broadcasting, backed as it was by the Treasury in determining the level of grant-in-aid. There were individuals, indeed, it was said, who were 'toying' with the idea of persuading the Foreign Office to take over external broadcasting altogether.<sup>5</sup>

During the war itself, there had been strong Foreign Office representation in the war-time Cabinet Committee on the future of broadcasting, although while the committee was meeting important memoranda were also prepared by the India Office, the Dominions Office, and the Colonial Office.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 18 Dec. 1945; *Sunday Chronicle*, 3 Feb. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening Standard*, 27 Sept. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> *The Economist*, 22 Dec. 1945. Kingsley Martin, who was unsympathetic towards the BBC at that time and had earlier shed a tear in the *New Statesman* for the MOI, hoped that some 'unified war-time controls' would be maintained in order that overseas broadcasting should not 'languish under the BBC hierarchy'.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 420, cols. 520-3, 7 March 1946.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, 'Broadcasting and Propaganda' in *Time and Tide*, 28 Oct. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> Because of what he called 'the value of the Prime Minister's broadcasts in holding the Empire together', L. S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, had suggested that the proceedings of Parliament should in future be broadcast (War Cabinet Papers, B (44), 9, 5 July 1944). See below, p. 571. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, for his part, had urged the need for 'the repeated projection on the minds of listeners overseas of British culture and ideas'. Broadcasting, he went on, was 'an instrument of advanced administration' (B (44) 16, 14 Sept. 1944).

Following these far-reaching interchanges, the eventual conclusion reached at a meeting at the House of Lords on 24 April 1945, when the single subject was 'broadcasting to foreign countries', had been that such broadcasting should be reduced to a 'comparatively small scale'.<sup>1</sup>

This was the framework within which the Labour Government chose not only to operate but to think, but Attlee made two statements in his preliminary speech of 7 March 1946 which left the issue open. 'The BBC is responsible for anything the BBC does itself' sounded straightforward enough, but it was qualified almost at once with a subsequent statement that 'any matter of propaganda or anything of that kind is a matter for the Foreign Office. The BBC themselves are not responsible for that.' Nor did Attlee say anything in this speech about the costing of external broadcasting in the future. The amount spent on the European Service was currently estimated at a third of that spent on the British Council.

Of course, far more than finance was involved. There had been an awkward argument behind the scenes, for example, in the autumn of 1945 about British broadcasting to Spain and Portugal. The British Ambassador in Lisbon had complained that the BBC seemed to be carrying on a propaganda campaign against the government of Portugal through its *Voz de Londres* and that somewhat similar complaints were being received from Spain. Harman Grisewood as Acting Controller of the European Services had found it necessary to 'apply strictly' to Spanish and Portuguese broadcasts 'the normal practice . . . that we ourselves do not initiate comment on the internal affairs of a foreign country'.<sup>2</sup> Given movements of public opinion in Britain itself in 1945 and 1946, however, this was obviously difficult territory on which to tread, particularly when several senior members of the staff of the Spanish Section were suspended or dismissed.<sup>3</sup>

Significantly, perhaps, Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary got nearer in May 1946 to a definite parliamentary statement than Attlee had done. When left-wing MPs complained that the

<sup>1</sup> War Cabinet Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, *Minutes*, 24 April 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Grisewood to A. R. Birley, 16 Oct. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> Private note to the author by Helen F. Grant, July 1967, who was dismissed on 16 October. She refused to take up alternative employment with the BBC. From 11 October all BBC political commentaries to Spain and Portugal ceased.

BBC's European Service was staffed by 'anti-Republican Roman Catholics' and asked why a particular controversial article on the Franco regime by Sir William Beveridge had been broadcast in Spanish, he replied tartly, 'Really, the Foreign Office is not going to establish a censorship of the BBC, neither will I ever indulge in it. I do expect the BBC on matters of general policy, for which His Majesty's Government are responsible and which we have issued, to have regard to that policy; but I am not going to interfere with anybody expressing his views one way or the other.' In reply to a Supplementary Question from William Warbey, the left-wing Labour MP for Luton, as to whether the Foreign Office had ordered the BBC to say nothing in Spanish offensive to the monarchy, he replied, even more tartly, 'that it is not true. It just comes from a warped mind.'<sup>1</sup>

The *New Statesman*, which was very critical of Bevin's foreign policy, was grossly simplifying when it claimed that 'no foreign listeners regard the BBC as other than a Government-controlled agency, and nothing will convince them otherwise'.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the lesson of the 'war of words', it was not this. The thousands of friendly letters received from abroad by the BBC proved this, taken by themselves, far more than any statements from those whom Kingsley Martin, the editor of the *New Statesman*, dubbed 'the Hierarchy'. They continued to come in even though, as Noel Newsome put it in Churchillian language, 'the lion was now whispering' whereas during the war he had been roaring.<sup>3</sup>

One of Newsome's old colleagues, Douglas Ritchie, produced a memorandum on 'political guidance and the News' in July 1946 in which he suggested that during the war the BBC had 'ignored' those PWE directives which 'hindered it from its basic purpose of broadcasting a truthful and objective news

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 423, cols. 312-13, 22 May 1946.

<sup>2</sup> The *New Statesman*, 23 March 1946, 'Mouthpiece or Choir'. In a letter to *The Times*, 12 Sept. 1945, A. L. Kennedy, formerly Diplomatic Correspondent in the BBC's European Division from 1942 to 1945, had suggested that foreign broadcasts which were 'officially inspired' should be designated 'BBD, British Broadcasting Division of the Foreign Office or the Ministry of Information or both'. See also articles by him in the *Sunday Times*, 7 Oct. 1945, and the *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1945. The *Evening Standard* (27 Sept. 1945) urged full BBC freedom to broadcast overseas.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 14 Dec. 1945.

service'. In peace-time, therefore, it should follow Haley's dictum that 'our main duty is to the truth'.<sup>1</sup> The different foreign services should not be 'split up to angle this piece of news to one country and that piece of news to another. . . . Integrity does not lie that way.' The Italian Service, for example, should not say one thing on Trieste and the Yugoslav Service another. Leaving principle on one side, there was too much 'eavesdropping' by European listeners to programmes 'intended for others' for that to be feasible.<sup>2</sup> Donald Edwards, Head of the External Services News Department, ensured that this policy was followed.

Newsome himself had advocated in the autumn of 1945 that the Security Council of the United Nations Organization should create its own Information and Broadcasting Service<sup>3</sup>—a very similar proposal to that advanced by Attlee during the war<sup>4</sup>—but in 1946, when the Cabinet was considering the future pattern of broadcasting, it was clear that there was not sufficient unity in the United Nations to allow for a common programme.<sup>5</sup> After all, war-time perspectives were receding, and even the negative idea of the United Nations stopping 'all broadcasting emissions injurious to the interests of other members of the United Nations' no longer seemed feasible.<sup>6</sup>

One new departure more in keeping with the changing circumstances of the times was the beginning of broadcasts in Russian. In March 1946 the Assistant Postmaster-General, Wilfrid Burke, was asked by Ernest Thurtle, formerly a junior minister of the war-time Ministry of Information, whether, and

<sup>1</sup> \*Ritchie to Jacob, 25 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> These statements were from a speech to the Sixth Imperial Press Conference, 29 June 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 23 Sept. 1945, 'World, Nations and News'. When the United Nations eventually set up its Radio Division, it was staffed with a strong nucleus of people from the BBC's war-time European Service: it was led first by V. Duckworth Barker and later by W. Gibson Parker. Despite 'quota' rules, the Division also included Hugh Williams, a New Zealander, and Hans van Stuwe, who had dual British/Dutch nationality.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> \*Nonetheless, the BBC relayed certain United Nations broadcasts to Europe later in 1946 (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 Nov. 1946), and in 1947 the Governors agreed to relay a daily half-hour report of United Nations proceedings edited by the United Nations Organization, provided such a relay was broadcast by 'other European broadcasting institutions simultaneously' (*ibid.*, 23 Jan. 1947).

<sup>6</sup> It was put forward in Parliament by Wilson Harris, the editor of *The Spectator*, in March 1946 (*Hansard*, vol. 420, cols. 37-8, 4 March 1946).

if it decided yes, when, the BBC proposed to broadcast in Russian 'the British point of view regarding Persia, Greece, Indonesia and other issues' in the same way as the Russian point of view on such matters was broadcast in English from Moscow.<sup>1</sup> The question was taken up also by Geoffrey Lloyd, Viscount Hinchinbrooke, and C. S. Taylor, and Burke replied that the Soviet government had relaxed its earlier restrictions on listening and that a new BBC Russian Service would soon be on the air. Already, behind the scenes, in February Ivone Kirkpatrick, who knew Bush House so well, had encouraged the BBC to start these broadcasts in Russian,<sup>2</sup> and Haley had them organized by Gordon Fraser within a month of receiving the request.<sup>3</sup>

The first programmes, which included a talk about the European Service of the BBC, were broadcast on 24 March 1946.<sup>4</sup> They included items of a very diverse nature, starting with a 'Dawn Bulletin', and very soon it was claimed that they were attracting large numbers of listeners.<sup>5</sup> Letters were received from places as far north as Archangel and as far south as Stalinabad, and some of them were enthusiastic enough for *Krokodil* to coin the phrase 'to go BBC-crazy'.<sup>6</sup> The proposed object of the new service was to build up a large and friendly audience,<sup>7</sup> and when members of the Supreme Soviet visited London in 1947 they attended a studio transmission and met announcers whose voices they had heard at home.<sup>8</sup>

There was perhaps less encouragement for programmes designed for the other great war-time ally, the United States, although Haley in January 1945 had stated firmly that 'the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 420, cols. 1693-4, 19 March 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkpatrick had considered the idea of staying with the BBC after the war. See H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (1968), p. 154. He envied the Regional Controllers, whom he described as 'the pipe-smoking men up from the country'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Kirkpatrick, 22 Feb. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> The opening words were 'Govorit London' ('London Calling'). See *BBC Year Book, 1947*, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ernest Bevin to Sir A. Powell, 7 May 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Esslin, 'The Listener in Occupied Europe and Behind the Iron Curtain' in *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953. Ernest Bevin sent a letter congratulating the BBC on the Service (\*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 May 1946).

<sup>7</sup> \*Ernest Bevin to Sir A. Powell, 7 May 1946; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 Nov. 1946.

<sup>8</sup> Tangye Lean, 'Broadcasting to Eastern Europe' in the *BBC Quarterly*, Winter 1949/50, pp. 201-2. For the later history of the broadcasts, see below, pp. 511-16.

projection of Britain' to the United States could not be left to shortwave listeners overhearing 'a special service to Canada'.<sup>1</sup> During the first half of 1945 the regular rebroadcasting of BBC programmes in the United States reached a peak, with well over 400 stations (43 per cent of all American stations) broadcasting 11,500 station hours a month and with 21 per cent of all United States adults with radio sets actually listening.<sup>2</sup> It was impossible to maintain such figures, however, and with an increasing pressure on advertising time in the United States and a concomitant reinforcement of 'commercialism' the audience sharply declined in size during the last six months of 1945, to rise again slightly in 1947. The most popular items directly broadcast on shortwave or rebroadcast by American stations focused on 'acquaintance with the British' rather than on 'knowledge about Britain'.<sup>3</sup> There was no longer the same scope for programmes like *Here Comes the Bride*, the title of which speaks for itself, but *Transatlantic Quiz* remained popular—it was carried by the whole of the CBS network—and in 1947 programmes like *Freedom Forum*, renamed *London Forum*, were taken by eight United States stations (and fourteen in Canada).

If the Russian broadcasts gave, however indirectly, a picture of 'freedom' in post-war Britain, the broadcasts for America emphasized 'hardship'. During the later 1940s current problems of challenge and response were always treated within a context of austerity—the end of Lend-Lease, the 'dollar crisis', the 'fuel crisis', the export drive, and *Britain Can Make It*.<sup>4</sup> The General Overseas Service, too, the descendant of the old General Forces Programme—the latter title disappeared in January 1947—lost some of its lightness in 1947 as 'canteen listening' diminished. Yet *ITMA* and *Merry Go Round* were there to accompany *Production Prospect* and *Window on Britain*.<sup>5</sup>

One question asked in Parliament in 1946 concerned American commentators broadcasting from Britain. They had been very welcome during the war, but Tom Driberg now wanted

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 18 Jan. 1945, 'Post-War Broadcasting to and from America'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Internal Memorandum, 'Rebroadcasting of BBC Programmes in North America in 1945', 21 Dec. 1945. Over one-third of American adult radio listeners knew what the initials 'BBC' stood for.

<sup>3</sup> \*J. W. MacAlpine, the North American Service Director, 'The BBC's North American Service', 25 Sept. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1948*, pp. 107-8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-13.



to know why Russian commentators were not given equal facilities. 'I am sure that the BBC would be very glad to make the same arrangements with Russia as they have been able to make with America,' Burke replied. 'Indeed, they have been trying to do so for some time.' Driberg had referred to 'extremely violent anti-Soviet broadcasts which might be interpreted as an Anglo-American anti-Soviet line-up on the air'.<sup>1</sup> He was obviously anticipating issues which were to become more prominent a year later when 'the cold war' hotted up. So, too, were the Governors, for when they were told in October 1946 that the United States was proposing to broadcast in Russian, they expressed themselves 'anxious to keep these broadcasts separate from our own'.<sup>2</sup>

Broadcasting in 1945 and 1946 to the ex-enemy, Germany, deserves a volume to itself. In May 1945—with the war just over—J. B. Clark, then serving as the Controller of the European Services, already felt that as far as this broadcasting was concerned, 'political guidance' seemed to be lacking.<sup>3</sup> Whatever might be done in the way of news or talks, Haley told him, all other programme constituents would have to be 'borrowed' from other BBC programmes. 'It is absolutely essential to understand', the Director-General wrote, 'that music, light or serious, will . . . have to be obtained from other BBC broadcasts. Our resources cannot contemplate special performances for Europe; nor will finances stand it, and finally it is hardly in accord with our long-term policy, cf. my Cabinet Committee paper.'<sup>4</sup> Clark had suggested a sizeable diet of music, with weekly cultural programmes and a magazine programme including items on sport, art, and literature. He had also advocated making full use of German prisoners-of-war in Britain.<sup>5</sup>

Policy directives continued to be drafted by the German and Austrian Division of the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department, and at first there was daily liaison by telephone with Hamburg, the only place in the British Zone where there

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 419, cols. 1748–9, 26 Feb. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 17 Oct. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*J. B. Clark to Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, 25 May 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Appended Note, 30 May 1945.

<sup>5</sup> \*Clark to Bruce Lockhart, 15 May 1945. Use was, in fact, made of anti-Nazi prisoners-of-war. The last of them were repatriated in April 1946 (*Hansard*, vol. 422, col. 47, 30 April 1946).

was workable broadcasting equipment at the time of the occupation.<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 1946, however, the Control Office took over from PID and the 'directives' became mandatory.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the development under British auspices of German domestic radio, *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk*—Rex Palmer, a veteran British broadcaster, was its first Controller<sup>3</sup>—was seen as relieving the German Service of the BBC from some of its 'extensive commitment' to its German audience.

As early as May 1946, a considerable amount of responsibility had been transferred to Germans within NWDR, working in 'small, uncomfortable and often very cold offices',<sup>4</sup> and hopes were expressed that as NWDR acquired full independence—possibly within as little as two years—it would follow the public corporation pattern of the BBC.<sup>5</sup> While the Americans in the American Zone of Germany created or encouraged a large number of small local radio stations, some with commercial backing, and the Russians in their Zone regarded radio as an instrument of Communist propaganda, in the British Zone the aim from the start was to foster 'a massive monopoly, conscious of its standing and responsibility as an impartial independent public service'.<sup>6</sup>

The detailed story of what happened in Germany falls outside the scope of this volume. Yet the fact that Hugh Carleton Greene, later to become Director-General of the BBC, soon replaced Palmer as Controller<sup>7</sup> was of crucial importance in

<sup>1</sup> William Joyce delivered his last broadcast from the Hamburg station, and a recording of it was kept there. Between the last Nazi-controlled broadcast and the first British-controlled broadcast on 4 May the interval was only 24 hours.

<sup>2</sup> \*Strong to Haley, 5 Dec. 1945; Strong to Sir A. Street, 14 March 1946.

<sup>3</sup> For earlier phases in Palmer's life, see A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), p. 211. The draft details of the initial organization of NWDR were set out in a memorandum of 24 Nov. 1945, 'Respective Functions of BBC German Service and NWDR'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Major-General W. H. A. (Alec) Bishop, the Chief of the Information Service Group of the Control Commission, to Haley, 10 May 1946. Bishop described the BBC as 'the chief source of our inspiration' and hoped that a few senior BBC officials would go out to give advice in Germany.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by H. Carleton Greene, 10 July 1950.

<sup>6</sup> H. Carleton Greene, 'The Organisation of Broadcasting in the British Zone of Germany' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. III, no. 3, 1948, p. 130.

<sup>7</sup> \*On the first steps leading to Greene's secondment in August 1946 there is an important letter from Bishop to Haley, 11 July 1946. Greene was replaced in London by Lindley Fraser, ex-professor and distinguished war-time broadcaster to Germany. Patrick Gordon Walker had worked as Assistant Director until he left to fight and win a by-election at Smethwick in September 1945.

relation to his own career and to that of NWDR, which eventually acquired a Charter of its own on 1 January 1948. Greene had been serving as Head of the BBC's German Section, and from the start of his new assignment he set out 'to reach a synthesis between the best in British and German broadcasting systems'.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the German Service of the BBC, 'like any other broadcasting service', set out (with the help of a 'letter-box programme') to gain the goodwill of its audience by providing what listeners could regard as a useful and lively service.<sup>2</sup> In its beginnings it included one-fifth news and two-fifths talks and short topical features, including 'discussions intended to reintroduce Germans to the values and traditions of West Christian civilisation'.<sup>3</sup>

A phrase of this kind shows how narrow the dividing line was in 1945 between aspects of external broadcasting and 'propaganda', although it was very soon admitted that 'the average German' was probably suspicious of *all* sources of information, spoken as well as written.<sup>4</sup> Nor was this simply a problem of broadcasting to ex-enemies, and very recent ex-enemies at that. The idea of 'projection of Britain', particularly to European countries, carried with it similar dangers, and raised also the question of how many listeners would be prepared to listen to 'projection' programmes—once the first experiences of 'the return to European peace' were over. Swedish audiences, for example, were said to have fallen considerably in 1946.<sup>5</sup> Likewise it was noted of the Balkans in the same year, after Gordon Fraser had taken over the control of the newly named East European Service, that while during the war resistance movements had listened to the BBC 'as a duty, as a drill', once the

<sup>1</sup> \*H. Carleton Greene, Note of 10 July 1950. He added that 'the advice of Dr. Bredow, the father of German broadcasting, was often asked for and always freely given'. Greene remained as Director-General of NWDR until 15 November 1948 when he handed over to Dr. Adolf Grimme. He retained the title of Honorary Adviser, however, for the next two years, and it was not a sinecure. For his own account of this period, see his *The Third Floor Front* (1969).

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum of 24 Nov. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid. See also *BBC Year Book, 1948*, pp. 117-18. *BBC Year Book, 1946*, p. 130, describes the last of the war-time *Kurt und Willi* series. It ended with Willi saying to Kurt amid the chaos of Berlin, 'I must go out now and see if there is any news'.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1948*, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1946, p. 124. Note, however, *ibid.*, 1947, p. 119, where there is a quotation from a letter from Romania saying that 'listening to the BBC is as widespread as it was during the war'.

war ended 'listening ceased to be . . . a necessity and listening decreased'.<sup>1</sup> One of the encouraging features just after the war, however, was a 'hook-up' with Prague on Czechoslovakia's National Day, 28 October.

The Government made up its mind at last during the summer of 1946—still many months before the 'cold war' really heated up—about what it wished the BBC to do. Its White Paper on Broadcasting (Cmd. 6852), issued on 2 July,<sup>2</sup> stated that the Corporation should 'remain independent in the preparation of programmes for overseas audiences, though it should obtain from the Government Departments concerned (these were not specified) such information about conditions in these countries and the policies of His Majesty's Government towards them as will permit it to plan its programmes in the national interest'.<sup>3</sup> It also accepted the principle that 'great care should be taken to ensure the complete objectivity of the News bulletins which will form the kernel of all overseas broadcasting'. 'The Corporation's reputation for telling the truth must be maintained and the treatment of an item in the overseas news bulletin must not differ in any material respect from its treatment in current news bulletins for domestic listeners.'<sup>4</sup>

More important, however, in relation to the actual conduct of external broadcasting were key changes of responsibility made within the BBC itself. After Sir Ian Jacob became Director of Overseas Services—'the ideal man', Haley called him<sup>5</sup>—all BBC transmissions not intended for listeners in Great Britain were placed under unified direction. The new regime found an immediate general role for J. B. Clark, the doughty and experienced advocate both of BBC independence and 'telling the truth in radio';<sup>6</sup> and when Harman Grisewood left the European Service,<sup>7</sup> it found a specific role too for

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1946, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 6852, para 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 59.

<sup>5</sup> H. Grisewood, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>6</sup> For Clark's earlier career, see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 385, 396–7, 641–8, and *The War of Words*, pp. 341–3, 682–3, 688–9. I chose deliberately to dedicate the third of my volumes to him, for there has been no single individual inside the BBC who has done more to establish its reputation both for reason and integrity.

<sup>7</sup> He had been acting head of the European Service since July 1945, assisted from October 1945 by Tangye Lean and H. J. Dunkerley, and on his move from the European Service he became Acting Controller (Talks). At their meeting of 27 June 1946 the Governors thanked Grisewood for his work for the European Service.

Tangye Lean, who became first Editor, European Services, and then Controller, in 1949.

Jacob recognized that titles mattered as much in Bush House or at 200 Oxford Street as in Broadcasting House. 'The recent reversal of the status of Director and Controller here,' he wrote in 1948, 'and the absence of anyone of Controller status in the whole of the Overseas Services, has given rise to speculation abroad, and to a feeling that the Overseas Services are regarded as the poor relations of the domestic services in which there are ten Controllers.' In March 1948, therefore, R. McCall, Assistant Controller, Overseas Services, also became a Controller: he was to serve in this post until 1952.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob did much to strengthen the BBC's position on all fronts, and from the start his presence was strongly felt. His first 'directive', issued on 29 July 1946, stated economically that 'apart from the reputation of the BBC for impartiality and truth in presenting the news', there were 'two other British interests involved'. 'In the first place, it is the British view that the spread of truth and the full ventilation of facts are highly desirable in themselves. . . . Britain has to struggle against calumny and insidious propaganda poured out by upholders of a different way of thinking. Our part in counteracting this is not by refuting it, but by seizing and retaining the initiative.' In the second place, the 'full and impartial news bulletin' was 'the largest single factor in attracting an audience before whom the British case on current affairs can be laid and to whom the British way of life can be explained'. It followed from this definition of 'interests' that there should be no 'suppression of items of news' which were 'inconvenient from a short-term political standpoint'. There were only three reasons which should be used to 'cause the rejection of a news report'—first, if military security would be prejudiced, and this was 'unlikely in peace-time'; second, if serious damage to British foreign policy would result from publication (and any such rejection could only be made on his authority); and third, if the news report was 'both mischievous and unsubstantiated'.

News, Jacob reiterated, should be world news; there should be no 'angling for individual countries'. 'The only adjustment

<sup>1</sup> For his move to Television as Assistant Director of Television Broadcasting, see below, p. 987.

permissible is that rendered necessary to arouse the maximum local interest, and this should not be such as to destroy the comprehensive scope of the bulletin.' Outside the presentation of news, the Service Directors were 'entirely responsible for the contents of their programmes'. While they should seek to 'project' British 'activities and the British way of life and thinking', they should not be swayed by 'day to day fluctuations in political policy'. 'Conflicting opinions which have serious backing in this country should be allowed expression in proportion to the weight of this backing.' When Service Directors visited the Foreign Office, 'they should seek to learn all they can, they should listen to the views expressed, but they should not act on guidance received directly from Foreign Office departmental officials without testing it by our long-term standards, referring as may be necessary to me.'<sup>1</sup>

While relations between BBC and Foreign Office were for the most part friendly and close, it was sometimes difficult to maintain exactly the right balance with agencies associated with the Foreign Office. Thus, in a memorandum of August 1946, the month after the publication of the White Paper (Cmd. 6852), Donald Stephenson, the Director of the Eastern Services, complained that at a meeting of the Middle East Publicity Department he had found it hard to impress on the non-BBC members that 'while we would always do our best to interpret British Government policy in our broadcasts, we nevertheless reserved absolute discretion in regard to content and presentation'.<sup>2</sup> The fact that 'junior officials' came and went in the Foreign Office did not make for continuity, and the BBC had already accumulated more relevant experience than the Publicity Department.<sup>3</sup>

The White Paper itself was unequivocal in its language and its argument. 'The Overseas Services of the Corporation should continue to be conducted in the most effective manner possible, consistent with economy in money, manpower and wave-

<sup>1</sup> \*Statement of Policy for the European Service, 29 July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Stephenson to Clark, 8 Aug. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Stephenson, Memorandum of 19 Nov. 1946. There were problems on one occasion also with the Australian Government, when the Resident Minister asked for the deletion of references by Joad in a repeat of a *Brains Trust* to the cultural superiority of Europe over the British Dominions. The Governors refused (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 12 Dec. 1946).

lengths.' At the same time, the European Service would continue to need at least two medium wavelengths. 'There are clear indications, at present, that other powers intend to continue to use the broadcasting medium to put their points before the European audience, and we cannot afford to let the British viewpoint go by default.'<sup>1</sup>

The pattern of Overseas and European broadcasting in the autumn of 1946 is set out in the tables which follow:

BBC OUTPUT FOR OVERSEAS

OVERSEAS SERVICES	Broad-casting hours (GMT)	Change in hours since May 1945	News/ topical content	Cultural Talks/ Features	General Talks/ Features	Enter-tainment	Pro-portion of pro-grammes specially produced for the Service
			Percentages of total output				
<i>General Overseas</i>	Round the clock	+1½	22	4	5	69	52
<i>North American</i>	1300-0245	-2½	20	7	12	61	22
<i>African</i>	1530-2100	—	21	8	31	40	26
<i>Pacific</i>	0600-1000	—	19	10	24	47	66

Direct broadcasting, as described in the table, was supplemented, however, by a considerable volume of rebroadcasting. Thus, twelve Australian stations rebroadcast an aggregate of 114 hours a week (from three BBC services) and six New Zealand stations rebroadcast an aggregate of 81. South Africa had five stations rebroadcasting 16 hours. There were nine wired diffusion systems in countries as scattered as Barbados, the Falklands, and Nigeria, which rebroadcast between them 521 hours, and a large number, twenty-one, of British Forces stations overseas relied almost exclusively on the BBC. Publicity about programmes was provided not only in *London Calling* but by letter and cable, and there were excellent relations with the Press.

In addition to this heavy broadcasting programme in English,

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 6852 (1946), paras. 58-60.

there were 152 hours of programming in nineteen languages other than English. The foreign-language output had been regionalized for the Eastern Services and the Far East and Latin America, and there had actually been an increase in the numbers of hours broadcast in Spanish for Latin America since the end of the war. Services to Iran, Indonesia, and Malaya were also extended late in 1946.

The programmes of the Latin American Service were refreshed after visits around the Continent in 1945 and 1946 by T. P. Gale (from the Mexico Office), R. J. Baker, and J. A. Camacho, and their conclusion was that there had been no evidence of a 'decrease of interest in broadcasts since the end of the war' and that 'interest in British things' had been 'awakened' and needed only to be 'maintained'.<sup>1</sup> The *English by Radio* programmes were particularly successful, as were the School Broadcasts, and the London Transcription Service was 'as helpful in Latin America as it was in Europe'.<sup>2</sup>

The weekly output of the European Service was down on the immediate post-war figure, with 'free' foreign programmes like *Radio Polskie* among the immediate casualties of peace.<sup>3</sup>

#### BBC OUTPUT FOR EUROPE

	1 Sept. 1939	31 May 1945	30 June 1946
Hours/Minutes broadcast	12.05	32.30	32.00
Number of foreign languages	5	20*	21*
Percentage of News/Topical Material	57	82	65
Cultural Talks/Features	—	12	14
General Talks/Features	—	4	10
Entertainment	36	2	11
Percentage of Talks specially prepared for the Service	none	68	81
			There was also a 45-minute relay of a religious service from Home Service

\* Includes Luxembourg patois.

<sup>1</sup> \*Undated Note of 1945, 'British Broadcasting to Latin America'.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1947*, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1946, p. 125. The last programme was on 5 July 1945.



Some war-time programmes like the Dutch *London Rambles* ceased in 1946,<sup>1</sup> but interesting new programmes were initiated. There were also new peace-time pursuits like 1947 interviews for Danish listeners with Celia Johnson and Emeric Pressburger, who was filming a Hans Andersen story.<sup>2</sup>

There was one other branch of the BBC's services which reflected, perhaps most of all the services, the post-war changes and pressures on finance. The Monitoring Service, located at Caversham, had been inaugurated at the outbreak of the war in order to intercept and to analyse broadcast transmissions in telephony and telegraphy from enemy and neutral countries;<sup>3</sup> and as early as July 1945 the Treasury had already asked, through the Ministry of Information, whether 'an economy in our European Monitoring Service' could not be immediately introduced.<sup>4</sup> Haley himself had raised the issue with Bracken in February, explaining that 'a smaller and less elaborate organisation' should be envisaged.<sup>5</sup> A meeting was called in that month at the Ministry of Information, and a plan for saving £94,000 a year in a nine-month period was agreed upon.<sup>6</sup>

The Service was organized in two main departments, the Reception Department and the Output Department, and at its peak the Reception Department alone employed 350 people, many of them writers, some of them men and women with distinguished (and varied) careers before them. By the autumn of 1946, however, the number of people in the Department was down to 175, and they were now monitoring in 22 languages, as against a peak of 32. In the Output Department, which

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1947, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1948, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> See *The War of Words*, especially pp. 15-16, 44, 187-91, 278-9, 488. The Czech Government continued to receive information from the Service in 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*M. A. Frost, Head of the Service, Aide-mémoire of 11 July 1945. Sir Alfred Beit had asked a parliamentary question on the subject: Could not the Service be reduced? (*Hansard*, vol. 411, col. 210, 30 May 1945.) The issue was also taken up in the *First Report of the Select Committee on Estimates*, Session 1945-6, 17 April 1946, no. 158. The Cabinet Committee had made no recommendations on the subject (Bamford to Haley, 12 March 1946).

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Bracken, 9 Feb. 1945: 'We have always regarded this as a service that the Corporation undertook at the request of your Ministry.' Bracken replied cautiously on 26 Feb. 1945, saying (rightly) that it was not easy to estimate future conditions or the demand for monitoring reports.

<sup>6</sup> \*Frost, 'The BBC Monitoring Service, Post-war Review', 29 March 1946.

included an Information Bureau and an Editorial Section, numbers had fallen less rapidly, and the staff was still 120 compared with the peak figure of 150.<sup>1</sup>

There were considerable difficulties in maintaining the staff 'owing to lack of decision about the future of the Service',<sup>2</sup> but the record of achievement remained impressive, and the clients of the Service included Government Departments, foreign governments, and the BBC itself. The Editorial Section was responsible for a daily Monitoring Report, a short document of six pages, and a *Daily Digest of World Broadcasts* which ran to 120 pages. It was decided during the autumn of 1946 that the *Daily Digest* should be replaced by a series of regional reports, but it was recognized at the same time that any resulting economies would be offset by 'an increased demand for an improved service by the European Division of the BBC'.<sup>3</sup> A special analysis section was proposed to 'scrutinise the intercepted material' in order to assist BBC programme makers.<sup>4</sup>

The Service continued in 1947, reorganized along these lines, although very soon 'cold war' conditions were to give it a somewhat different dimension. There had been no anticipation of such conditions when the first post-war planning paper had been prepared in August 1944, although the term 'quasi-normal world peace' had significant undertones and a Ministry of Information comment of May 1945 suggested that there might be a post-war period of considerable 'disturbance' in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid. The first paper dealing with post-war development by C. E. Wakeham was dated 16 Aug. 1944, and called 'Monitoring Service—Post-War Planning'. It envisaged a three-phase change in operations: Stage I: 'Cessation of Fighting in Europe'; Stage II: 'Cessation of War in the Far East'; Stage III: 'Quasi-normal World Peace'. R. A. Rendall sent it to Haley on 14 Sept. 1944. Haley replied at once (19 Sept. 1944) that he felt that the BBC would need 'for its normal peacetime News services a relatively small monitoring system'. This remained Haley's position nearly a year later (Letter to Rendall, 31 July 1945).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of 22 Oct. 1946, 'The BBC Monitoring Service'. A 'decline in morale' had been forecast in the paper by Frost on 11 July 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*'The BBC Monitoring Service', Note by the BBC, 22 Oct. 1946. Verbatim reports in French and German had been reprinted regularly throughout the war both for the European Service and PID.

<sup>4</sup> \*The paper of 16 Aug. 1944 had envisaged 'a small BBC Monitoring Service, reorganised purely from a news angle, staffed with journalistically trained monitoring personnel'.

<sup>5</sup> \*Wakeham to Rendall, 26 May 1945.

It was only after the return even to 'quasi-normalcy' was in doubt and after the 'disturbance' was obvious enough to everyone, that the whole working environment not only of the Monitoring Service but of the BBC's External Services changed. The critical year was not 1947—although this was the year of the Truman Doctrine, enunciated in March, and of the Marshall Plan, outlined in June—but 1948. The Communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia in the February of that year introduced a new phase which was to last beyond 1955. Even then, External Services were to stick to Ian Jacob's basic philosophy that the BBC was 'not waging an ideological war with anyone' or seeking to interfere with 'the course of events within other countries'.<sup>1</sup> 'Success will depend upon the quality of our output,' Jacob urged, 'upon the consistency of our standards, and upon the conviction with which we make clear British attachment to truth, freedom, and Christian principle.'<sup>2</sup>

## 6. Beyond the Silver Jubilee

IN NOVEMBER 1947 the BBC celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. 'At the end of twenty-five years,' Haley told Home Service listeners, 'broadcasting has become part of the fabric of everyday life.' It was a good time, he went on, 'to take stock'. With the war still in mind, Haley balanced on one side 'the outpouring of propaganda, the ceaseless sapping and erosion of other nations' beliefs and morale', and on the other side 'the power of broadcasting to pour out over the world a continuous, antiseptic flow of honest, objective, truthful news'. He added, however, that in the light of post-war experience there was a new problem—'the misrepresentation and abuse of theoretically friendly peoples'.

Haley also looked back to Reith—and forward to television.<sup>3</sup> 'No man', he said, 'has discharged a great responsibility with

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 511 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Directive No. 1, 29 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> The BBC sent a message to Reith as 'the founder and inspirer of our broadcasting system'. Reith replied with a message to all staff, particularly those who had been with him in the first sixteen years (*Radio Times*, 28 Nov. 1947).

more seriousness or higher purpose than Reith.' As for television, it was 'bringing into play new techniques and would eventually find its way into every home in the land. Years ahead it will finally marry with sound broadcasting. No one can yet say how. . . .'

Given events just round the corner, the most interesting sections of Haley's broadcast are not these but the passages in which he touched on 'commercialism' and in which he developed his own well-articulated philosophy of 'broadcasting and the individual'. 'A commercial service run for profit can do one kind of thing'; the BBC as 'a public service run by an independent corporation could and should do a different thing'. It should educate and inform as well as 'raise standards, but it should also serve as a source of companionship, of recreation, of good humour, of escape and of fun to millions of people—high, low or middle brow. . . . Broadcasting should not fear to assume leadership but an essential part of leadership is not to get out of touch.' This was an essential element in the philosophy.

Finally, unlike both commercial radio and government-controlled radio, the BBC as a public service did not want people to be listening all the time. It wanted listeners to be willing to switch off. 'It is possible that there is too much broadcasting: not in the range of the service but in its length.' Broadcasting, the presence of which Haley was later to describe as 'ubiquitous',<sup>1</sup> could and should awaken interests which it could not satisfy. 'Broadcasting will not be a social asset if it produces only a nation of listeners. . . . It is not an end in itself. . . . The wireless set or the television receiver are only signposts on the way to a full life.'<sup>2</sup>

Haley considered that the occasion of the Silver Jubilee gave the BBC an unparalleled opportunity to proclaim itself in this manner. Exactly a year before his Home Service broadcast, he had told his colleagues that 'we should do something in a really big way' to celebrate the first twenty-five years.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Haley, 'The Place of Broadcasting', a Home Service Talk reprinted in *The Listener*, 20 Nov. 1947. See also his article 'The BBC and its Silver Jubilee' in the *Radio Times*, 7 Nov. 1947. The Talk was also carried on the Overseas Service (\*W. M. Newton to Rendall, 5 Nov. 1947).

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley, Home Service Talk, 'The Place of Broadcasting'.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 719–21.

The BBC's twenty-first birthday had taken place in war-time and quite deliberately had been celebrated quietly with very few special programmes.<sup>1</sup> Now in the autumn of 1946 and the spring of 1947 many different people inside the BBC shared Haley's enthusiasm for a fitting celebration. As Senior Controller, Nicolls called for a prestige projection of the BBC 'on a world scale'. 'We will seek to establish by implication that the BBC is the leading broadcaster of the world, and regarded so by its fellow broadcasters.'<sup>2</sup> In addition to producing special programmes, a sort of cavalcade of broadcasting, the BBC, he suggested, should invite broadcasters from all parts of the world to London. At the same time Norman Collins, still in charge of the Light Programme, was asking for ideas 'on a fairly lavish scale, e.g., a super *Alhambra of the Air*'; they need not, he went on, be 'commemorative in any sense'.<sup>3</sup>

So many ideas were offered that restraint had to be applied. Let everything be confined within one week, Haley ordained, the week beginning 9 November, 'Week 46'.<sup>4</sup> To spread the celebrations out longer would involve the Corporation 'in the risk of being another Aristides'.<sup>5</sup> Scotland, however, had its own 'jubilee date' and produced a fascinating list of Scottish 'firsts' in broadcasting,<sup>6</sup> while Midland Region reminded London that its birthday came one day later than the birthday of the Corporation and that Birmingham wished to celebrate a week later than London.<sup>7</sup> After all views had been expressed,

<sup>1</sup> \*B. E. Nicolls, undated Note, 'The BBC's Twenty-fifth Birthday'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Chalmers, McMillan, and Sutherland, 18 March 1947. There is no reference to the Jubilee in the account of the Light Programme in *BBC Year Book, 1948*, pp. 69-71, but there is a reference to the "Alhambra of the Air", a series of the biggest all-star variety programmes ever attempted by the radio in this or any other country'.

<sup>4</sup> 9 November was Remembrance Sunday, and this in itself somewhat complicated the arrangements.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 16 July 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Andrew Stewart to Wellington, 11 Aug. 1947. The first play, the first opera, and the first full-length school transmission, it was claimed, came from Scotland. So too did some of the first war reports, like that on the return of the survivors of the *Athenia*. The launching of the *Queen Mary* was one of the biggest radio occasions, and Sir Harry Lauder and the Glasgow Orpheus Choir had a special place in history.

<sup>7</sup> \*David Gretton to G. Adams, 13 Aug. 1947. Baily wrote a *Midland Scrapbook* produced by Charles Brewer, but it was not broadcast nationally, 'to avoid over-lapping floods of reminiscence' (Wellington to D. Morris, 24 Oct. 1947).

a number of programmes were scheduled outside both Week 46 and Week 47.

Some of the most interesting programmes were, in fact, commemorative. In Jubilee week John Snagge revived memories of past BBC occasions and personalities; D. G. Bridson presented his *The Mirror of our Times* (with Robert Donat as narrator), 'a panorama across the years'; and Michael Barsley and Francis Worsley gathered around the microphone, in a programme called *Do you Remember?*, a group of well-known broadcasters, including Harold Nicolson, Ted Kavanagh, Mabel Constanduros, and Stuart Hibberd.

The *Radio Times* printed not only passages from Stuart Hibberd's diary—covering twenty-five years of announcing—but had a special article by Wilfrid Goatman on broadcasting as seen from within the family circle at 'the other end of the microphone'. It included also the report of an interview with George Bernard Shaw, who echoed Haley's ideas very much in Shavian guise. 'Do you think there is too much broadcasting?' 'Too much of vulgar trash.' 'What kind of broadcast does the BBC do best?' 'Whatever kind is best chosen, produced and spoken.' 'What do you consider is the proper function of television?' 'I don't consider it. It is a method of performance and as such its function is not new and raises no special question.'<sup>1</sup>

Barnes, then the Head of the Third Programme, had suggested that as part of the celebrations there might be 'half-a-dozen talks on the more serious aspects of radio'.<sup>2</sup> Whether Shaw's comments fell into this category or not is arguable. Barnes would have liked to have talks not only on 'radio as propaganda' and on the influence of radio on the audience for music but even, more daringly, on 'radio as a monopoly' and on 'the BBC, should it be managed or administered?' In the event, the only special talks actually broadcast were by Haley himself and by Gilbert Murray, an old friend of the BBC.<sup>3</sup> Nor was Barnes successful in his proposal that a special broadcast

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 7 Nov. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Rendall, 9 June 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Wellington to Nicolls, 23 July 1947, where he stated that he wanted a talk which would be in 'sober perspective—and which would provide a statement of the BBC's creed by which it works and intends to work'. 'The speaker whom you and I would both like to see do this talk is wondering whether he will consent or not.' Barnes had in mind Margaret Mead or Hugh Sykes Davies (Barnes to Rendall, 10 Sept. 1947).

of *The Ring* should be recorded in Vienna:<sup>1</sup> Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise* was an incomplete substitute. It was decided that the major music jubilee would be celebrated later, in May 1948, with a 'Festival of Drama and Music' ranging in its musical fare from a concert by the London Philharmonic Orchestra to the new American musical, *Oklahoma!*<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, in November 1947, *Music Hall* and *ITMA* were both directed to have 'a special Jubilee flavour',<sup>3</sup> even though, after discussion with Leslie Baily, it was agreed that there was to be no special Jubilee *Scrapbook*. Carroll Gibbons, leader of the Savoy Hotel Bands, was asked to pick out a medley of tunes that were being sung during the BBC's first year (appropriately for 'the age of Truman' they included 'I'm just wild about Harry'),<sup>4</sup> and programmes were to be commissioned called *This BBC*, dealing not with the past but with 'twenty-four hours in the work and life of the BBC, its staff, artists and attendant spirits', *BBC Calling Europe*, and *BBC Covers the World*.<sup>5</sup> For the last of these, links were projected with British Forces of Occupation in Japan, Radio SEAC staff in Ceylon, and a weather ship in the Atlantic.<sup>6</sup> There was also talk of contributions from a beach in Sydney, a butter factory in New Zealand, a medical school in Fiji, Lagos market, Jacaranda week in Pretoria, and a guarded perimeter in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of bringing a large number of representatives of foreign broadcasting organizations to London had its vicissitudes. First, some of its critics demanded, was this the right time to implement it in view of the difficulties of daily life in the England of 1947—lack of accommodation, food, transport, and

<sup>1</sup> \*Stuart Hibberd suggested a concert with Bruno Walter as conductor on the grounds that Walter had conducted the first outside symphony concert in 1924 (John Snagge to Godfrey Adams, 12 Aug. 1947).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note on Silver Jubilee Fortnight, 1948, 18 Aug. 1947. Jack Westrup gave a talk in Week 46, however, on 'Broadcasting and Music'.

<sup>3</sup> \*C. F. Meehan to Francis Worsley, 23 June 1947. Norman Collins arranged a Jubilee celebration of *Merry Go Round* (Collins to Nicolls, 8 July 1947).

<sup>4</sup> \*J. McMillan to Mrs. D. H. Neilson, 15 Sept. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Laurence Gilliam to Wellington, 25 June 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*C. Max-Muller, then General Overseas Service Director, to J. B. Clark, 12 Aug. 1947.

<sup>7</sup> \*Max-Muller to Clark, 15 Aug. 1947. 'Now that service personnel are confined to barracks almost continuously, broadcasting plays an even more important part than it did a year ago in maintaining morale and entertaining the young servicemen overseas.'

other discomforts?<sup>1</sup> Second, others persisted, which countries should be invited? Germany and Austria were both 'presumably' to be ruled out, along with Albania (but not most East European countries).<sup>2</sup> Third, everyone pressed, which kind of people should be invited—chief executives, *ex officio*, or people particularly friendly to the BBC, including close war-time broadcasting colleagues, like Gerbrandy from Holland, Øksnevad from Norway, and Ed Murrow from the United States?<sup>3</sup> Fourth, what form should the celebrations take? Should they be 'serialized'—from one part of Britain to another, with Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, and other cities being involved as well as London?

Only one point was plain. 'It is not regarded as practicable or profitable to have any "hard" agenda of business for a conference. The diversity of interests would exclude that.'<sup>4</sup> Haley added flatly that he did not think commercial interests should be invited. There was nothing that the BBC would be 'able to do . . . to show that the commercial system' felt 'any regard' for the BBC and its approach to programming. 'The Americans would certainly not run themselves down.'<sup>5</sup>

In the event, it was the vicissitudes not of the idea itself but of the British economy which prevented the most ambitious BBC plans from being realized. Economic crisis in the summer of 1947, brilliantly reported for the BBC by Graham Hutton, made large-scale spending on overseas visitors impossible. In June 1947 Nicolls had suggested that money might be used from savings brought about through enforced electricity cuts, and a few weeks later he was proposing to spend '£100 a head for 100 people'.<sup>6</sup> Yet even this soon seemed far too much. So also did the plans for drawing in the great, according to which the Prime Minister was to be invited to speak at a 'Government Hospitality Dinner', while Winston Churchill was to be asked to be the chief speaker at a dinner given by the BBC, 'a broad-

<sup>1</sup> \*R. D'A. Marriott to Clark, 24 April 1947. Haley thought it essential to 'bring in' government hospitality (Haley to Nicolls, 4 June 1947).

<sup>2</sup> \*Marriott to Jacob, 16 May 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.; Nicolls to Haley, 27 May 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Nicolls to Haley, 27 May 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 4 June 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Nicolls to Marriott, 11 July 1947. Thirty of the people were to be from Europe (Marriott to Jacob, 15 July 1947).



casters' occasion'.<sup>1</sup> By September, the visit of most of the foreign broadcasters had been put off until the Drama and Music Festival of May 1948, and by February 1948 it had been decided to cancel this Festival also.<sup>2</sup> The 'crisis' was deemed responsible. Eventually even a strictly limited BBC staff celebration had to be cancelled, 'the only possible decision', Haley said, 'in the public interest'.<sup>3</sup>

While there was no 'beano' for foreign visitors, a word used more than once by Nicolls, a small dinner party was held on 19 November 1947,<sup>4</sup> as messages and congratulations and gifts, including a modern Aubusson tapestry, were arriving from all parts of the world. There were further letters or telegrams from the Commonwealth<sup>5</sup> and seventy-three from non-Commonwealth countries, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden, and Iran.<sup>6</sup> In Holland, Sluysen broadcast recollections of his work with the BBC in London during the war, and from Prague Dr. Ripka, who had been involved in war-time Czech broadcasts from London, spoke in Czech on the significance of the event. 'It served its country,' he said of the BBC, 'but never the government of the day and educated the public and never lowered itself to a mere instrument of propaganda.'<sup>7</sup> Such words were soon to be frowned upon in Prague. From Budapest, Zoltan Kilian wished the BBC a triumphant march towards its golden jubilee. The Norwegian State Radio sent a practical gift: five members of the BBC staff were to be given tickets to Norway and two thousand kroner each (then £100) for expenses. There were also messages from Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk at Hamburg and Funk-Techniken in Berlin. The former saluted the BBC 'as a source of inspiration and example in its efforts to become an enlightened champion of truth'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*H. Grisewood to Barnes, 23 Feb. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Message from Haley to BBC Staff, 14 Nov. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Reith was present, sitting between Haley and Nicolls. Others present from the earliest days were L. Stanton Jefferies, Rex Palmer, and Percy Edgar.

<sup>5</sup> The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced a special programme *CBC to BBC*.

<sup>6</sup> \*'It is fortunate', Teheran said, 'that the Persian Section of the BBC prepares, with the particularly good taste of its Iranian employees, important broadcasts on political, scientific, cultural and social topics which appeal to Persian listeners who benefit from them.'

<sup>7</sup> \*Report on Congratulations, 1 Dec. 1947.

<sup>8</sup> \*Ibid.

British comment was as favourable as the views of foreign broadcasters and governments. The *Manchester Guardian*, for example, after referring to 'the enormous moral, political and artistic influence which the BBC has power to wield', supported the monopoly as strongly as *The Times*, which had consistently supported it strongly since 1922.<sup>1</sup> So, too, did *The Scotsman*, which commented that 'any alternative system would probably have been open to manifold abuses'. The current position of the BBC as 'a responsible public body, holding the balance carefully between political parties, while allowing an increasing measure of controversial discussion, trusted both at home and abroad for its scrupulous accuracy, moderation and devotion to truth' was one 'which it is hard to challenge'.<sup>2</sup>

The Silver Jubilee was more of a climax than a prelude, although in one of his first memoranda on the event Nicolls had related the celebrations to 'the coming Charter enquiry',<sup>3</sup> and in August 1947 Morrison had asked Lord Simon whether he had 'given any thought to the most suitable date for inviting the Inquiry into the BBC'. They both felt that it was 'premature for the Inquiry to get under way until a fair proportion of the present term of the Charter had passed'. There was little open sign, indeed, in the autumn of 1947 that the BBC would be passing into a period of protracted uncertainty about its future. For the moment, the Postmaster-General, Wilfred Paling, noted happily that the number of receivers was now near the eleven million mark, and was obviously at one with 'an unknown listener', an elderly woman who rang up on 17 November and said, 'I don't want to give my name. I am nobody of importance. I just want to tell you what a comfort the BBC has been through the years and to thank you for all you have done.'<sup>4</sup>

Television had only a small place in the arrangements for the Silver Jubilee and in the programmes as they eventually were transmitted. Like the Third Programme, it was a major casualty of the fuel crisis, and in the critical period it was as silent as it had been during the war.

Wellington had written that it was essential that Television should prepare a feature connected with the Jubilee and hoped

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 13 Nov. 1947; *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 Nov. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Nicolls to Haley, 27 May 1947.

<sup>4</sup> *Radio Times*, 28 Nov. 1947.

that Cecil McGivern, already established in Alexandra Palace as Television Programme Director, would do it.<sup>1</sup> This was planned for the beginning of December 1947. McGivern, who had written such remarkable war-time features, expressed great interest,<sup>2</sup> but felt that a joint Light Programme/Television Variety show during Week 46 would not be enough.<sup>3</sup> He was given no encouragement by Nicolls, however, when he pressed for a televised symphony concert as part of the celebrations. 'I find Television's keenness to go after such material rather disturbing,' Nicolls told him, 'and I personally cannot believe that using it makes for television progress.' An orchestra playing at 'a sea of faces in an audience' made 'third-rate visual material'.<sup>4</sup>

McGivern was not the kind of person to accept such a verdict without question. Seventeen letters of appreciation had been received after an early experiment in televised music. While the musicians did not like it, audiences did. 'Programme Correspondence Section say that the correspondence for the Proms is the biggest viewer response for any one television programme.' This type of event had a real future, and should be part of the Jubilee.<sup>5</sup> Nicolls won.<sup>6</sup> Nor was the Light Programme/Television Variety show broadcast. Some of the artists would not or could not be televised and McGivern withdrew. 'Here's to the next time' was McGivern's last word.<sup>7</sup>

Outside responses to television were to matter more in the making of history during the next few years than comments from inside Broadcasting House. Indeed, birthday or not—and favourable immediate comments or not—the respite enjoyed by the BBC after the birthday programmes were over did not last

<sup>1</sup> \*Wellington to Nicolls, 23 July 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*C. McGivern to Val Gielgud, 25 Aug. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*T. W. Chalmers to McGivern, 27 Aug. 1947. McGivern wanted the joint programmes (McGivern to Chalmers, 29 Sept. 1947).

<sup>4</sup> \*Nicolls to McGivern, 24 Sept. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*McGivern to Nicolls, 26 Sept. 1947. He reiterated this view in a note of 29 Sept. 1947.

<sup>6</sup> There was a reversal later, for Barnes regarded such concerts as an overriding obligation, as more and more people were turning to television. The BBC's moral role would be lost, he argued, if it did not televise them.

<sup>7</sup> \*McGivern to Chalmers, 23 Oct. 1947; Chalmers to McGivern, 25 Oct. 1947. Vic Oliver, Elsie and Doris Waters, and Charlie Chester were prohibited from appearing by contract, and Tommy Handley was 'averse to televising in any case'; see below, p. 206.

very long. Herbert Morrison had not yet consulted his colleagues about future broadcasting policy, but he had come to the tentative conclusion that the summer or autumn of 1948 would be right for the beginning of the Inquiry; and although after another year nothing further had happened, Simon told the Postmaster-General that since he understood 'the Committee of Inquiry' would be appointed 'about the end of the year', 'we are making every effort to be fully ready for it'.<sup>1</sup>

When Wing-Commander Geoffrey Cooper, Labour Member of Parliament for Middlesbrough West and a much publicized critic of the BBC,<sup>2</sup> asked Morrison in the House of Commons in May 1948 whether he would make a statement about the setting up of a Committee of Inquiry, he was told tersely, 'in due course', and when he raised the matter again in July, one month after Simon had written to Paling, asking for an undertaking that an inquiry be started within a month, he was told even more tersely, 'No'. Yet Cooper persisted. He urged Morrison to ensure that 'at least one of our nationalised undertakings is brought into line with the new conception of socialist administration'. One of his supplementary questions to the Minister was whether he was aware of 'alleged victimisation of members of the BBC staff and also of professional or other broadcasters'. Morrison replied briefly that any future inquiry would be competent to study anything.<sup>3</sup>

In 1948 the BBC was, in fact, collecting material of any kind which it was thought might be helpful when an inquiry was started.<sup>4</sup> This was months before Cooper, who once again asked a parliamentary question, was told in January 1949 that an inquiry would not start for some time.<sup>5</sup> This time Cooper got off to a particularly bad start by stating in his question that the BBC's Charter would run out at the end of 1950. Morrison had to tell him that the Charter did not actually expire until the end of 1951.

<sup>1</sup> Morrison to Lord Simon, 4 Aug. 1947; Paling to Simon, 3 June 1948 (P.O. Archive). See also below, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> \*He had raised the question of song plugging in 1946, claiming that 'fur coats and nylons' counted for 'far more than merit', and he had approached Haley on the subject (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 Nov. 1946). For further developments in the story see below, pp. 755-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 451, col. 24, 26 May 1948; vol. 453, cols. 569-70, 8 July 1948. Cooper gave notice of the second of these questions on 17 June 1948.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 311.

<sup>5</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 460, cols. 1376-7, 31 Jan. 1949.

There were several differences between an inquiry which started in 1949 and an inquiry which might have started four years earlier in 1945 or the inquiry which actually had taken place ten years before that in 1935. One of the biggest was the growing power of television. 'How can the subordination of television to sound broadcasting be justified?' was one tendentious way of putting the main question.<sup>1</sup> From the BBC's point of view, an equally difficult and less tendentious question was how to relate television development to the cinema and the film industry. As early as December 1947, Morrison had told Haley that the relationship between the BBC and film interests raised such complicated problems that decisions should be postponed until after 'the general inquiry into broadcasting to take place before the new Charter',<sup>2</sup> and in July 1948 the Board of Governors of the BBC came to a similar conclusion. Since 'even a temporary settlement' between the Corporation and the film industry might have 'a decisive effect' on the future not only of television but of broadcasting as a whole, they argued, the subject should be investigated 'by a Committee of the highest possible standing'. For this reason the Government should appoint the Committee of Inquiry at once.<sup>3</sup> It was only after BBC officials reported to the Governors that the position had improved that the urgency went out of this request.<sup>4</sup>

To recover the full range of contemporary reactions in this brief period of post-war history, reactions submerged by subsequent layers of history, it is necessary to turn back before 1949 to the story of the restoration of television in 1946 and to the hopes and fears surrounding its future after the first two years of post-war experience.

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 Nov. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 July 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 11 Dec. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 25 Nov. 1948.



### III

## THE RETURN OF TELEVISION

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Our general conclusions are that television has come to stay . . . that the time lost during the concentration of our resources on the war effort can be overtaken; and that British science, engineering and industry, working in cooperation with the BBC on the lines we suggest can be trusted in due course to produce an improved system of which the nation can be proud.

*The Hankey Report on Television, 1945, para. 378*

The television receiver in the home might well lead to a social revolution. Its attraction is insidious. Will there be a readjustment of our social habits? Shall we become incapable of creating our own diversions? . . . Shall we become lazy-minded, taking our entertainment and our ideas automatically from the screen? I remember my grandfather asking those questions apropos the gramophone, my father when I added a valve to amplify the sound from a crystal receiver.

JOHN SWIFT, *Adventure In Vision* (1950)

Television is a bomb about to burst. Already in radio and film we have loosed upon the world forces which affect men's minds as powerfully, and possibly as dangerously, as the new weapons of war affect their bodies. Now, at a moment when we can still scarcely guess at the long-term results of, say, American films upon the Asiatic mind, or propaganda broadcasting upon the inhabitants of Africa, we have upon our hands, and in our midst, this great new force, television.

GRACE WYNDHAM GOLDIE, *Made for Millions* (1947)





# 1. The Sleeping Beauty

ON SEVERAL occasions during the Second World War there had been flickers of public interest in television. In December 1939, for example, only three months after the closing down of Alexandra Palace, the BBC's pre-war television centre, confident predictions were being made that Britain would emulate Germany in 'reviving' television.<sup>1</sup> Two months later, there was Press comment and controversy on the possible provision of a 'wired' service, including an 'independent' service linking up hundreds of cinemas.<sup>2</sup> 'Britain', it was said, 'must not lose her lead in television to the USA.'

There was little support for such talk inside the BBC. During the summer of 1939, just before war broke out, the Corporation had been involved in extremely complex and disturbing debates about the finance of television; and during the autumn and winter of 1939, before the war had really started, it was as much opposed as the Post Office was to the revival of a limited and luxury service in war-time. There was, of course, no revival, and as many as fifty BBC engineers and other pre-war television staff switched their attention to radar and navigational aids.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the television issue could surface publicly again only after the fortunes of war had been completely reversed. This was in 1943, the year when the last German television transmitter at Witzleben was bombed out of existence.<sup>4</sup>

When in September 1943 the Hankey Committee was appointed to consider 'the re-instatement and development of the television service', it deliberately received no publicity,<sup>5</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 8 Dec. 1939.

<sup>2</sup> The first publicity in relation to an independent service backed by Scopphony and the Odeon Circuit of cinemas appeared in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 24 Dec. 1939. See also *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Feb. 1940.

<sup>3</sup> A Historical Memorandum prepared for the Hankey Committee as Paper No. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See J. Swift, *Adventure in Vision* (1950), p. 116. Television research was carried on by the Germans in Paris until a late stage of the war (see below, p. 486).

<sup>5</sup> The existence of the Committee was not revealed until January 1944 (*Hansard*, vol. 396, col. 32, 18 Jan. 1944), and only then because there had been a leak (Cabinet Papers, Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council, 22 Jan. 1944). There is a brief account in S. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, vol. II (1972), pp. 585-6. This biography is a definitive study of Lord Hankey.

its brief was a modest one—to prepare a plan for the provision of a television service ‘to at any rate the larger centres of population within a reasonable period after the war’. Hankey was also asked—and this consideration may have been uppermost in the minds of senior ministers—to study problems of research and development and to consider, doubtless with post-war needs in mind, ‘the guidance to be given to manufacturers, with a view especially to the development of the export trade’.<sup>1</sup>

His Committee was particularly powerful on the technical side, since questions of line definition were crucial to the timetable,<sup>2</sup> and if it had a rather strong Post Office flavour, it also included Professor J. D. Cockcroft, who was occupied with radar work before he switched to atomic energy.<sup>3</sup> Another member was Sir Edward Appleton, Secretary of the Department of Industrial and Scientific Research. The BBC was represented both through its Director-General—first Foot and then Haley—and through Sir Noel Ashbridge, whose presence, along with outside scientists, seemed likely to prevent a ‘slide into a Post Office Committee’.<sup>4</sup> In fact, BBC interests were well protected. Haley was anxious to see post-war television restored on the pre-war 405-line system: if there were protracted discussion of alternative line systems, he felt, then the BBC might not be invited to resume operations. He got his way, and the 405-line system was restored. Haley had been backed by BBC engineers, who pointed to the disadvantages of other line systems, including encroachment on VHF. Given a decision in favour of 405-lines, an immediate release of key personnel from the Forces, and adequate finance, the BBC offered to resume television within nine months of the end of the war.

The Hankey Committee met thirty times and interviewed many witnesses from inside and outside the BBC before reaching its conclusions. The witnesses included a number of outstanding pioneers. J. L. Baird, best-known of the inventors, was still

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 30. Sir John Anderson, then Lord President of the Council, who was responsible for Hankey’s appointment, first told the Chairman of the Governors about it in a letter of 30 July 1943.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 41. Hankey himself had been actively involved earlier during the war in manpower problems of radio personnel and in the planning of an ‘Intensive Training Scheme’ for engineers.

<sup>3</sup> M. Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy, 1939-1945* (1964), p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ashbridge to Haley, 19 Oct. 1943.

continuing his experiments, including experiments in colour television, although he had lost his commercial foothold in 1939.<sup>1</sup> Isaac Schoenberg of EMI had organized the brilliant technical team which had developed the first completely successful high-definition television technology.<sup>2</sup> Gerald Cock, pioneering pre-war Director of BBC Television, had managed the first regular television service in the world, which had started in 1936.<sup>3</sup> C. O. Stanley, Managing Director of Pye Ltd., an energetic and pertinacious Irishman who was to play an important role in the post-war story, was already one of the main protagonists of a competitive commercial television system outside the BBC's control;<sup>4</sup> and J. Arthur Rank had not only acquired a powerful stake in Britain's cinema industry—he disclaimed all interest in creating a monopoly—but had secured a substantial number of television patents. He was in his late fifties and his interests through the Rank Organisation, which he chaired, were already widespread.

The first issue raised in the Hankey Committee echoed the themes of the keen pre-war debate. It also demonstrated that television had both a radio and a cinema pedigree, for Rank talked to the Committee at its first meeting mainly about the screening of television not in the home but in cinemas. Within four or five years of the end of the war, he envisaged the BBC broadcasting direct to the public and the cinema industry having its own television studios, where television programmes would be prepared for public showing. He did not foresee that a general diffusion of home television might spell doom for the cinema business as it had developed lavishly during the 1930s and as it had flourished during the war. The queues outside the picture palaces were larger than ever, and the glamour even of 'starlets' was real enough to stir the crowds. Rank's personal

<sup>1</sup> See S. Moseley, *John Baird* (n.d.), chs. 18 and 19. Baird gave evidence on 13 June 1944, the only witness to refer to Russia. He died soon after the end of the war.

<sup>2</sup> For Schoenberg's work, see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), especially pp. 568–9 and 576–9 and *Proceedings of the Institution of Electrical Engineers*, vol. xcix (1952). Ashbridge told the Television Committee (*Minutes*, 26 Oct. 1943) that 'to all intents and purposes one firm—EMI—had created television as a practical activity in this country'.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 80–6.

<sup>4</sup> He had served as pre-war chairman of the Radio Manufacturers' Association Television Development Sub-Committee.

view, he explained to Hankey, was that the existence side by side of 'two forms of entertainment' would be helpful rather than otherwise to the cinema industry, and that home viewing would be likely to have a stimulating not a deterrent effect on cinema attendances.<sup>1</sup> It would in the long run be 'suicidal', he exclaimed, for the film industry 'to fight an organisation like the BBC which had State backing', and there could and should be co-operation during the 'four or five years' after the war when preparations were being made for large-scale cinema viewing.

Similar questions were discussed when the Committee interviewed Sir Maurice Bonham Carter, representing Scophony, the business concern which had installed large-scale television apparatus before the war in the Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square,<sup>2</sup> and later, in August 1944, when it received a sizeable deputation from a divided film industry.<sup>3</sup> The members of the deputation agreed on only one major point—that television was something which was 'bound to come'. They did not know when, and they refused to say whether or not they would welcome television in cinemas until they could assess the technical merits of an 'improved system'. They would certainly not be interested, most of them stated, in setting up a 'line network' for the distribution in cinemas of television programmes of the pre-war quality. Given an 'improved system', they were divided about programming. It was 'fairly certain', they remarked, that they would take 'some television news items', but they remained doubtful about the appeal of other BBC-type television programmes. Their reactions were almost entirely defensive. So, too, was their attitude to technical improvement. They were not interested in new research, but at most in pooling of patents.

On this, as on many other occasions, J. Arthur Rank proved

<sup>1</sup> \*Evidence at a Meeting of 18 April 1944. Rank was accompanied by Glenvil Hall, Vice-President of the British Film Producers' Association. Both emphasized that they were speaking for themselves and not for the industry as a whole, some members of which, they said, were afraid of television.

<sup>2</sup> \*Evidence at a Meeting held on 9 May 1944. The price of Scophony shares had fluctuated considerably during the war, and since the Scophony system was not electronic but mechanical they had little future.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 15 Aug. 1944. At the Meeting on 27 June it had been reported that a Central Cinema Council had been set up with Rank as acting chairman. A similar deputation from the radio industry had been received by the Television Committee in January (*Minutes*, 18 Jan. 1944).

himself more constructive than most of the other representatives of the industry.<sup>1</sup> While they had to be reminded by Haley of the false fears of the newspaper proprietors concerning the challenge of sound broadcasting during the 1920s, Rank looked forward without prompting not only to television competing for 'stars' with the film industry, but, very realistically, to a substantial television market for old films for home viewing: 'there was a certain residual value in films which was never fully exploited' and 'there were always people who liked to see a film twice or who had missed it on the first release'.<sup>2</sup> Rank did not foresee the many problems which lay ahead in relation to such a use of films.<sup>3</sup> Nor did he discuss whether or not entertainment interests would be willing to co-operate with television in allowing their 'stars' to appear on the home screen, a matter which had already been raised with Hankey after Rank's first appearance before the Committee.

The Committee had decided by then not to invite George Black and Jack Hylton, two of the leading impresarios in the world of entertainment, to give evidence as to their attitudes to television.<sup>4</sup> Black, in particular, had a chequered past in relation to radio. He had banned many first-rate artists from sound broadcasting during the 1920s and 1930s, and although he had seemed more sympathetic to the BBC during the Second World War than he had ever been before, his sympathies did not extend to cover the BBC's future involvements in television. At a meeting early in the war he had plainly told two BBC officials that in his view 'the whole basis of television finance, production and presentation was likely to undergo a fundamental change in the course of time'.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, Rank foresaw in 1944 that television might make films more popular than ever 'if our publicity people are clever enough'. Television, he also thought, might result 'in an entirely new kind of film making'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*This was the impression of Gerald Cock, former Head of Television, who met him on 8 February 1944. 'He was prepared to co-operate in every reasonable way . . . [he himself being the first to suggest the televising of visual features]. In return he expected reasonable co-operation from the BBC in favour of British films' (Appendix III to G. Cock, 'Report on Conditions for a Post-war Television Service', 1944). For the importance of this document, see below, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> \*Evidence at a Meeting held on 15 Aug. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> \* *Minutes* of the Meeting of 18 April 1944.

<sup>5</sup> At a meeting with the Business Manager and Programme Contracts Executive.

<sup>6</sup> \*Broadcast Interview of 12 Jan. 1944.

While the cinema and entertainment industries were disagreeing about what could or should be done with television—and when—the Post Office made a statement that the Postmaster-General had the legal right to lease lines to any organization, including cinemas, and to distribute television programmes by wire if and when the necessary plant was available.<sup>1</sup> The BBC, more clear about its own objectives than the cinema or entertainment industries were about theirs, stated at once that it regarded this position as being ‘most unfortunate’. ‘The Corporation’, it added, ‘ought to have a monopoly of Television . . . (whether originated by the BBC or otherwise) by wire.’<sup>2</sup> Haley pressed this case at a meeting of the Hankey Committee in June 1944, arguing powerfully that there was no ‘room for two public systems of television in the United Kingdom’.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Hankey Committee decided unanimously that the future public television service should be entrusted to the BBC as the sound broadcasting authority,<sup>4</sup> it never went as far as Haley and the BBC had wished, and it never questioned the Post Office authority. Indeed, at a relatively early stage in the proceedings, before Haley became Director-General, when his predecessor had suggested that since the BBC had a monopoly of sound broadcasting it should ‘logically’ have a monopoly of television broadcasting, the Post Office had refused to accept the logic. Sir Raymond Birchall, speaking on its behalf, had replied that Parliament had always refused to suppress wireless exchanges and ‘would no doubt fight any attempt by the BBC to monopolise television’.<sup>5</sup> ‘A Private Bill conferring monopoly powers on the BBC,’ R. J. P. Harvey, the Treasury representative on the Committee, had written in an important memorandum, ‘would . . . have to be regarded as impracticable.’<sup>6</sup> In his copy of Harvey’s memorandum Haley added the words ‘at present’ in ink, but they certainly offered no long-term safe-

<sup>1</sup> \*Minutes of the Meeting of 28 March 1944.

<sup>2</sup> \*‘Statement of the position reached in the discussion of the question of television monopoly in relation to the BBC up to and including the meeting on 25 July 1944.’

<sup>3</sup> \*Minutes of the Meeting of 27 June 1944.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> \*Television Committee, *Minutes*, 28 March 1944.

<sup>6</sup> \*BBC Monopoly: A Note by R. J. P. Harvey, 1 Aug. 1944.

guard to the BBC, which was never in any doubt that its monopoly position was *de facto* and not *de jure*.<sup>1</sup>

Even on the matter of 'sponsoring' of television, the BBC did not get all that it wished in 1944, although it got more than it would have done five years earlier. Sponsoring had been one of several difficult issues which were being hotly debated during the last peace-time summer of 1939, when the limited television service was costing the BBC £450,000 a year—there were then 23,000 licence holders—and the Treasury stated that it would not pay any more.<sup>2</sup> At that time, sponsoring had been backed by the Postmaster-General's Television Advisory Committee, headed since March 1939 by Lord Cadman, the industrialist—and a recent colleague on another official committee of F. J. Marquis, later Lord Woolton<sup>3</sup>—who believed that sponsored programmes were necessary if a 'really stirring and immediate impetus' was to be given to television. When the BBC had resisted this thesis, the then Postmaster-General, Major Tryon, had passed on the Treasury view that it was 'difficult to understand' the Corporation's reluctance 'to adopt the measure which is of all measures most calculated to generate such an impetus'. The Television Advisory Committee had soon gone even further. 'In view of the great difficulty of financing the television service,' it had concluded, 'and providing for its extension to the provinces, we consider that the inclusion of sponsored programmes and even direct advertising in that service would be fully justified.'<sup>4</sup>

Had there been no war in 1939, it is conceivable that commercial television would have come to Britain fifteen years before it did. As war approached, there was deadlock while the BBC continued to assert that 'the delivery of the television service in any shape or form to cinema interests' would be the

<sup>1</sup> \*R. Jardine Brown, the Head of the BBC's Legal Department, 'Comments on D.G.'s Notes on Post-war Position', 5 April 1943. 'The Corporation's factual monopoly', he went on, 'has been confirmed to some extent by the wording of the Preamble to the Charter. The position is, however, weak and could only be altered by an Act of Parliament derogating from the powers of the Postmaster-General.'

<sup>2</sup> For a brief outline of the story, see Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 618–19.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee of Enquiry on Civil Aviation, which reported (Cmd. 5685) in March 1938. Ironically it was following the publication of this Report that Reith moved from the BBC to Imperial Airways.

<sup>4</sup> *Television Advisory Committee Report*, 23 June 1939.

ultimate disaster and the film industry, backed by radio manufacturing interests, was counter-asserting that 'any attempt to obtain the full cost of television programmes by means of licensing is doomed to failure'.<sup>1</sup> In the event, Haley was able to win a case in 1944 which Ogilvie was finding it increasingly hard even to put to ministers and civil servants in 1939.

Yet the shift in attitudes had not been sudden. Hankey himself stated at a meeting of his Committee in May 1944 that while he knew the BBC would be strongly opposed to 'the introduction of sponsoring into British broadcasting', if only because the United States and Australia both made use of this method of finance, 'the Committee ought not to close their minds to the possibility of a trial of sponsoring to see whether there was any considerable amount of money to be derived from it'.<sup>2</sup> During the same month, moreover, the American periodical *Variety* was describing 'a bombshell hitting Broadcasting House'—advertising programmes—and although Lindsay Wellington, then the BBC's representative in New York, cabled England to collect 'amused comment' on this report,<sup>3</sup> there was more gossip at this time than ever before—on both sides of the Atlantic—of the possible 'partnership' between television and 'the cinema' which had been first mentioned before the war.<sup>4</sup>

Naturally, the members of the deputation from the film industry which appeared before the Hankey Committee were interested in American parallels. They rightly suspected that the BBC would not provide the same kind of programmes as a sponsored television agency. 'In the U.S.A. . . . the arrangements were left in the hands of people who knew what entertainment the public wanted and gave it to them. If the BBC wanted the wholehearted cooperation of the cinema industry and were ready to arrange a purely entertainment programme they should invite the industry to assist in producing the pro-

<sup>1</sup> For a current statement of the case for limited co-operation between BBC and cinema, see *Wireless World*, Aug. 1939, 'A Partnership with the Cinema'. The main speaker at a meeting of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1943, B. J. Edwards of Pye Ltd., argued that if only licence revenue were available to meet programme costs, 'it is almost certain that the quality of the programmes would deteriorate . . . which in turn would cause a falling off in licences, so further deteriorating the programmes'.

<sup>2</sup> \**Minutes of the Meeting of 9 May 1944.*

<sup>3</sup> \*Telegram from Wellington to Gorham, 19 May 1944.

<sup>4</sup> \*Aide-mémoire for the Board of Governors, 25 June 1944.



grammes and allow them access to the studios.'<sup>1</sup> Yet the cinema industry had no agreed plan of its own, and eventually it was the Post Office representative, not the BBC's representatives, who suggested that it would be better to leave open for the present the question of sponsoring of television.

There seems to have been no definite Treasury view at this time, and all that Sir Alan Barlow, the Treasury representative, felt that he could say 'at this stage' was that 'we recognise that, for a period which cannot be defined, the idea of a self-supporting BBC (including the television service) will not be attainable, and that some form of subvention from the Exchequer may be needed, although the Government would be anxious that all possible alternative sources of revenue other than a direct government grant should be explored.'<sup>2</sup>

The final statement on this subject in the Hankey Report deliberately dodged the old issue by raising a new point which had not been made in 1939. 'It is quite clear', it read, 'that until the television service is well developed, commercial interests would not be willing to incur large expenditure for this purpose, owing, for example, to the limited audience served. . . . In these circumstances, and without prejudicing the matter for the future, we feel it would be premature to come to a conclusion on this question.'<sup>3</sup> In reaching such a judgement, the Committee may have considered the historical point that before the war Britain's BBC had been more effective in establishing a regular television service than commercial interests across the Atlantic. Indeed, even during the late stages of the war CBS in New York was expecting a slow pace of development in television and was advising its affiliates to secure FM radio licences rather than television transmitting franchises.<sup>4</sup>

Cross-references of this kind to the United States always figured prominently—and not only within this context—in the deliberations of the Hankey Committee, and H. L. Kirke, the experienced radio engineer, who visited the United States in 1944 on behalf of the Committee, reported that there was not

<sup>1</sup> \* *Minutes of the Meeting of 15 Aug. 1944.*

<sup>2</sup> \* Sir Alan Barlow to Powell, 7 Dec. 1943.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, p. 17, para. 70.

<sup>4</sup> E. Barnouw, *The Golden Web* (1968), p. 243.

very much current activity in the television field. 'Certain companies were giving out one or two evening's entertainment a week', but the talent was not very good and they were tightly restricted by the technical staff available.<sup>1</sup> In May 1942 the War Construction Board had forbidden the further manufacture of television sets for civilian use, and it was estimated that there were no more than ten thousand of them in the whole of the United States. It was not until after the war that the Radio Corporation of America began to re-tool its plants and promised television sets by mid-1946.<sup>2</sup>

Once on the move, the United States was obviously likely to be a business competitor in the post-war world as well as a holder of what might prove to be indispensable television patents. It was certainly not thought of in 1944 and 1945 as presenting a possible model for future British development. It had not resolved the basic question of where to find finance for investment in television; and, as we have seen,<sup>3</sup> even in technical terms, its line-definition, 525, the standard definition laid down by the Federal Communications Commission in May 1941, was not adopted by the Hankey Committee, which—after discussion—settled for 405, the basis of the pre-war British system. 'The introduction of a new standard of transmission and reception', the Radio Industry Council argued, 'could only be justified by a major improvement, e.g. an increase of the order of 2:1 in the number of screening lines.'<sup>4</sup> And the BBC was strongly of the same opinion. The general feeling was 'overwhelming', the War Cabinet was told, that there should be restoration not revision and that there should be no delay while 'fundamental improvements', possibly including colour and stereoscopic effects, were being 'incorporated'.<sup>5</sup>

Leaving the United States on one side, Sir William Palmer of the Board of Trade encouraged the Hankey Committee to believe that 'it would be unlikely that any European country

<sup>1</sup> Kirke pointed out that while there was little immediate likelihood of co-operation between rival television interests in the States, 'cut-throat competition would prove impossible in the long run for financial reasons' (\*Minutes of the Meeting of the Hankey Committee, 11 July 1944).

<sup>2</sup> Barnouw, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> \*Memorandum of 11 May 1944.

<sup>5</sup> War Cabinet Broadcasting Committee, *Minutes*, 11 April 1945; *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, paras. 15-16, 25.

would catch up with British development for several years'.<sup>1</sup> Yet as the members considered the possible role of Britain's television industry in a post-war exports drive, they were forced to take account not only of American initiative,<sup>2</sup> but of the progress made by the French during the war. At their meeting on 9 November 1944 Ashbridge reported a visit to France by F. C. McLean, one of his most trusted BBC engineers, where he had learnt of 'television with definition approaching that of the cinema'.<sup>3</sup> René Barthélemy, one of the French pioneers, had been experimenting with 1050-line definition—the kind of alternative figure which the War Cabinet Committee in London had briefly considered—and the Compagnie de Compteurs was said to have spent over ten million francs on research.<sup>4</sup> 'It is very difficult to say what practical effect these experiments in France will have,' a BBC note stated. Yet it was thought 'peculiar that almost the only significant television research which has been done during the war on this side of the Atlantic has been carried out in an occupied country'.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the possible practical effect, in its final text the Hankey Committee revised what it had said on the subject of international competition in its draft report. The first draft read, 'It is not improbable that more effort has been directed to television development in other countries, but we are not aware of any progress which has been of such a nature as to modify our conclusion.' Later, however, all the words after 'but' were reconsidered, and the final version read simply, 'More

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Clark, Chairman of EMI, had told a company meeting on 16 Dec. 1943 that new advances had been made and that the company 'aims at maintaining its leadership'.

<sup>2</sup> On a transatlantic visit in January 1945, Professor J. D. Cockcroft reported a meeting with Zworykin and the demonstration of 'a camera tube of such sensitivity that studio technique would be completely changed'. Zworykin considered that it would take four to five years to make real progress, and that this would include progress in colour. At an earlier date Cockcroft had sent the Committee a clipping on the subject from the *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 May 1944.

<sup>3</sup> \* *Minutes of the Meeting of 9 Nov. 1944*. Report by F. C. McLean, Oct. 1944: 'A large building (at Montrouge) is devoted wholly to this work.' The RDF studio at the Eiffel Tower had been in use until 16 August and had transmitted pictures for German soldiers in hospitals. For later French developments, see below, pp. 486 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Swift, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> \*BBC Note, 7 Nov. 1944. The word 'peculiar' was ill-chosen. Most of the BBC's own technical staff had been diverted from television development to radar in order to win the war.

effort has been directed to broadcast development in other countries of which we have taken due account.' The Committee also acknowledged the desirability of adopting common international standards and the need for international agreement on the frequency bands to be used for television.

The BBC had been anxious to have fuller references to finance incorporated in the Hankey Report, for Lochhead, the BBC's Controller (Finance), remembered all too well both the pre-war problems of television finance and the financial confusion which had bedevilled the BBC's sound broadcasting activities during the early years of the war.<sup>1</sup> He estimated the annual running cost of a post-war London service at £800,000 (as against £560,000 in 1939) and of any additional service, starting with Birmingham, at £100,000.

The Postmaster-General passed on Lochhead's estimates to the War Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting, adding himself that 'as the service expands either in the direction of more stations or longer programme hours, or both, the cost will increase, maybe to something of the order of £2,000,000 per annum'.<sup>2</sup> It was a modest estimate, at least in the light of history, yet the difficulties in dealing systematically with the demand for such annual income were obvious enough in 1945. The Hankey Committee put on one side leading questions relating to the BBC finances, deeming them 'outside our province',<sup>3</sup> although it agreed in principle with a proposal which was already in the air—to introduce a new combined sound and television licence for listeners and viewers.<sup>4</sup> (It also favoured a cinema licence.) It urged in addition that the new television service should become 'self-supporting' as soon as possible.<sup>5</sup>

Another matter to which the BBC attached great importance

<sup>1</sup> \*T. Lochhead and R. Jardine Brown to Haley, 28 Oct. 1944.

<sup>2</sup> \*T. Lochhead, A Memorandum on Finance, 19 April 1944.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, para. 64.

<sup>4</sup> The public knew little of the proposal to charge a higher fee for a combined sound and television licence and it was still being treated as a news item in the autumn of 1945 (*Daily Mail*, 6 Nov. 1945). *Band Wagon*, March 1946, stated just before the licences were actually increased that by what seemed 'a sleight of hand' a ten-shilling note was turned into a pound note and British radio revenue doubled overnight.

<sup>5</sup> Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 723-6; War Cabinet, Broadcasting Committee, A Note by the Postmaster-General on 'The probable Future Costs of a Television Service in the United Kingdom', 25 July 1944.

in 1944 was the setting up of a new Television Advisory Committee. Even though there had been problems with the Committee before the war,<sup>1</sup> both Haley and Ashbridge pressed for its reintroduction as quickly as possible. The Hankey Committee concurred,<sup>2</sup> and soon after the publication of its Report, Hankey told Attlee how important it was that the Committee should be established at an early date.<sup>3</sup> The Cabinet Committee on Broadcasting had not been anxious 'to endorse any proposal which would in any way bind' a responsible Minister 'as to the source from which he could seek advice', and had decided, with no Labour members present, that 'the composition and terms of reference of any such Committee should be left to the discretion of the Minister'.<sup>4</sup>

The Hankey Report, which was published in March 1945,<sup>5</sup> was more concerned, as a whole, to identify opportunities than to point to problems. Its main conclusion was direct and succinct: 'Television has come to stay.'<sup>6</sup> The decision to restore the 405-line system meant that there would be no initial delay. Progress thereafter, however, would inevitably be gradual and cumulative. The BBC should be in charge, and London should lead the way from Alexandra Palace, as it had done in 1936. Planning should start at once for six centres of 'populous' districts outside London. Such extension of the service to large centres of population, it was maintained—and they were not specified in the Report—would greatly increase the demand for receivers so that their price, 'which at first will be higher than before the war, should fall, particularly when the stage of mass production is reached'.<sup>7</sup> Studio programmes would be relayed by the provincial stations from the programme centre in London, and the programmes should be varied in character.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 181.    <sup>2</sup> *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, paras. 13, 62.

<sup>3</sup> \*Hankey to Attlee, 25 Jan. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> War Cabinet Committee, *Minutes*, 11 April 1945. Lord Woolton was in the chair, and others present were Bracken, Butler, Robert Grimston, the Assistant Postmaster-General, and representatives of the Post Office and the Foreign Office.

<sup>5</sup> Haley informed his Chairman of the contents of the Report on 15 December 1944 (\*Note of 19 Dec. 1944), and in January 1945 Attlee thanked Hankey for the manuscript of the report which he had read with 'very great interest'. He added that publication was being considered (\*Attlee to Hankey, 3 Jan. 1945). See also above, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, para. 78. This key paragraph was added last (\**Minutes of the Meeting of 18 Dec. 1944*).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 74.

Entertainment was an obvious preoccupation. Yet in the educational field, also, the Committee believed that television opened up 'considerable possibilities'.<sup>1</sup> It was the 'televising of actual events', however, which seemed to offer the really distinctive opportunity—'the ability to give the viewer a front-row seat at almost every kind of exciting or memorable spectacle'. This would be 'its greatest service'.<sup>2</sup>

Eventually television would unite countries, even continents. 'The day is probably distant when trans-oceanic exchanges of programmes will be possible, but across land frontiers they already present no technical, as distinct from political, difficulties.'<sup>3</sup> As far as immediate technology was concerned, there was a call not for a pooling of patents or the creation of a research association, but for co-operation between all the interests concerned—Electrical and Musical Industries was dominant—and limited co-ordination by a new Television Advisory Committee. It was recognized that the aim should eventually be an approach to the standards of the cinema and a definition of the order of 1000 lines. Work should continue also with colour and stereoscopic effects.<sup>4</sup>

Labour was in power by the time that the Government accepted in principle the recommendations of the Hankey Committee on 20 September 1945 and announced its decision on 9 October. A month later, the setting up of the new Television Advisory Committee was also announced. Its Chairman was George Morgan Garro-Jones (later Lord Trefgarne), former Labour MP for North Aberdeen and Parliamentary Secretary of the war-time Coalition Government's Ministry of Production. The Committee met for the first time on 4 December.

As the Radio Industry Council through the London Press urged speedy implementation of all the Hankey proposals,<sup>5</sup> the BBC itself in a public statement spoke of 'the least possible

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Hankey told Haley in June 1944 that he had hoped to include in the Committee's report a paragraph on education (\*Haley to Nicolls, 13 June 1944). The Board of Education was, nonetheless, slow to provide evidence, and there was cautious talk when its representatives approved of the need to balance 'the educational gain against the cost' (\*Minutes of the Meetings of 25 July, 15 Aug. 1944). See also below, pp. 831-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Television Committee, 1943*, para. 74.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., paras. 70-5.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the *Evening Standard*, 8 Nov. 1945.

delay'.<sup>1</sup> Six days earlier, W. J. Woodburn of the Ministry of Information had written to W. St. J. Pym, Arkell's predecessor as the BBC's Head of Staff Administration, to facilitate arrangements for the release from war duties of key engineering staff (though not at that stage of administrative staff),<sup>2</sup> and within a few days of the Government's announcement the first contingent of pre-war television engineers returned to Alexandra Palace. A new post of Superintendent Engineer (Television) was created and D. C. Birkinshaw, who was appointed to it, quickly assembled a team, with H. W. Baker as Engineer-in-Charge, Alexandra Palace, 'mad keen to get back to television again'.<sup>3</sup> Their impatience was exceeded by that of the Radio Industry Council, which was asking urgently for test pictures as soon as possible: 'if the tests are delayed until March,' it claimed, '“live” broadcasts cannot start before June.'<sup>4</sup>

Haley, who had many other preoccupations in late 1945, was inclined to dismiss much of this impatience as 'nonsense'.<sup>5</sup> The first step for him was the appointment of a Head of the Television Service, not yet called a Controller; and on 2 November 1945 he invited Maurice Gorham, ex-editor of the *Radio Times* and only recently appointed Head of the new Light Programme (in June),<sup>6</sup> to become new Head of the Television Service. Gorham was a 'television enthusiast' who immediately appreciated the possibilities of his new occupation; he had hankered after a television post earlier in the year and he now felt 'on top of the world' with his 'dream come true'.<sup>7</sup> At his first Press interview, the *Manchester Guardian* reporter found him 'lively and informal', and the Press as a whole welcomed Haley's choice.<sup>8</sup> Yet Gorham was in no doubt about the magnitude of his task if he was to translate his dream into reality. On his first visit as Head of Television to Alexandra Palace in November 1945, he felt that it looked 'more tumbledown' than it had done ten years before when he first visited it. It reminded

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 10 Oct. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> W. J. Woodburn to W. St. J. Pym, 3 Oct. 1945. He had written earlier on 14 September telling him about the projected Cabinet discussion on 20 September.

<sup>3</sup> Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972*, p. 354.

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Standard*, 8 Nov. 1945.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note to Ashbridge, 8 Nov. 1945: 'Aren't there any sensible people in the Radio Industry Council whom we could approach to stop this sort of nonsense?'

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> See M. Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (1948), p. 160.

<sup>8</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Nov. 1945.

him, indeed, he said, of the *Marie Celeste*—‘offices left all standing with half-finished letters on the table and forsaken cups of tea’.<sup>1</sup> The engineers also felt that they were re-emerging ‘from a dream-filled state of suspension’, but that all the studio equipment was ‘in a sorry state’.<sup>2</sup> Gorham continued to be involved with the Light Programme for some weeks and did not take up residence at Alexandra Palace until February 1946, when he moved into an office with a view which even Haley envied. By then he had studied all the possibilities of the new service and most of the restraints which would influence his plans.

A key document at his—and Haley’s—disposal in 1945 and early 1946 was Gerald Cock’s ‘Report on the Conditions for a Post-War Television Service’, prepared in January 1944, which Cock himself called ‘an aide-mémoire and guide’.<sup>3</sup> As the pre-war Head of BBC Television, Cock had great experience: he was also immensely knowledgeable about conditions in the United States, and had served as BBC Representative both in New York and California. He was struck there, like Kirke,<sup>4</sup> by the fact that there was not only a deficiency of trained personnel to develop television but a marked reluctance on the part of the networks ‘to disperse vast sums in creating competition with their present extremely prosperous sound broadcasting interests’. Yet he believed also that ‘American energy and drive, when stimulated by a profit motive, can be tremendous’ and that it would be unwise to underrate progress when the broadcasting networks came under pressure from advertising agencies.<sup>5</sup> As far as Britain was concerned, he feared that there would be a ‘great danger that clamour for an early resumption of the British service’ would ‘result in too early a start’. Given likely changes in television technology, when the service did re-start, ‘the public should be able to regard their television receivers as reasonably permanent assets’.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> Pawley, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

<sup>3</sup> \*Cock to Foot, 27 Jan. 1944.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> There were already signs that he was right about this early in 1944. See *Broadcasting*, 17 April 1944, which reported that half the advertising agencies in the United States already had television departments.

<sup>6</sup> \*Cock believed that a demand for ‘at least one experimental transmission in colour must be expected’ from the start. ‘Colour television, although experimental, is already impressive’ (Report, p. 4).



With some 'tightening up', Cock believed, pre-war programme schedules could serve as rough indicators for a new service,<sup>1</sup> although more attention should be paid to regular children's programmes, education, and above all, News. 'Television News . . . should be a main feature of the service.' He foresaw difficulties in dealing with 'vested theatre interests and sports promoters', partly because of self-interest but partly, too, because of principle ('for example the Jockey Club might oppose the televising of races'), and he was aware of the potential strength of the Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport. 'If the obstructionists cannot otherwise be brought into line,' he urged, 'they . . . should be given to understand that the BBC will support those organisations willing to cooperate with mutually advantageous broadcasts, but will exclude others from the air altogether pending a change of attitude.'

The most important problem for the BBC, Cock argued, was to get its logistics right—to agree on allocations, on studio planning (including the planning of their location), on the provision of equipment, and on the bases of a national transmitter plan. 'A definite, geographical order in which a country-wide coverage is to be established, as well as the nature of the relay system to be used, should be decided as soon as possible, and publicised.'

The new Television Advisory Committee, of course, would be concerned with many of these decisions, but if the plan were to be achieved, Cock concluded, 'television should logically have the status of a Division instead of a Department inside the BBC itself'. 'Organisation on departmental lines turned out to be completely illogical before 1939, in that the status and pay of staff, functioning in conditions requiring greater skill, knowledge and experience than in the case of their opposite numbers in sound broadcasting, were adversely affected; and there were

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Marsland Gander, the first Press television critic, in the *Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1946, soon before resumption: 'By 1939 almost every conceivable type of programme suggested by experience in other forms of entertainment or by the ingenuity of the apprentice producer had been tried—studio plays, cabarets, music hall turns, demonstrations of all kinds, ballet, operetta, puppet shows and so on. Above all, outside broadcasts of sport and topical events had proved their popularity. The future task is to improve on these rather than to discover new forms.'

other more unfortunate results. . . . It would be folly', Cock added, 'to perpetuate the former unsatisfactory conditions by not knowing what is required. This Report presupposes that those in authority wish to avoid previous mistakes at any reasonable cost in organising the new Service, so that the energy of the staff may be used to a better purpose than in perpetual improvisation.'

Haley paid attention to all Cock's suggestions about programming and timetabling, but he did not make Gorham a Controller. He thus failed—and with far-reaching consequences—to implement the most urgent of all Cock's recommendations about future organization. He probably thought that neither television—still, in his view, a 'luxury service' at best—nor Gorham was ready for it. Gorham was told that he was 'on his own',<sup>1</sup> but the detailed initial logistics of television then and later were left to others. Indeed, one of the first letters dealing with television logistics actually precedes Gorham's appointment: it was written by Sir Guy Williams, the BBC's Resettlement Officer, in October 1945. The sequence of procedure, Williams suggested, should be (1) the appointment of a Director, (2) an Establishment showing the sequence of posts required and into which returning staff could be placed, and (3) a scrutiny of a list of returning staff prepared by Nicolls as Senior Controller to ensure that they received 'appropriate appointments'.<sup>2</sup> The purse strings were in Broadcasting House, not Alexandra Palace. A further note by Allowances Officer stated quietly that 'when staff who at the outbreak of war were employed in the Television Division at Alexandra Palace return to their base there, they will for allowance purposes be returning to their normal base, in exactly the same way as the School Broadcasting Department has recently returned to its normal base in London.'<sup>3</sup>

There may have been something reassuring in this stress on continuities, although it frustrated those people inside and outside the BBC who wanted change; and as Gorham set about creating the first post-war television team he certainly found himself dealing with many congenial people who had served in

<sup>1</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> \*Williams to Pym, 'Television Programme Staff', 10 Oct. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*J. M. Rose-Troup to Pym, 19 Nov. 1945.

Alexandra Palace before the war. Thus, Cecil Madden, after directing the Overseas Entertainment Unit and more recently, during the war, entertainment programmes for the Allied Expeditionary Forces, became Programme Organizer, George More O'Ferrall and Mary Adams Senior Producers in charge of drama and talks, Philip Dorté (who appeared in Group-Captain's uniform at the first television Press Conference) Outside Broadcasts and Film Supervisor, with Ian Orr-Ewing responsible to him as Outside Broadcasts Manager and G. del Strother as Film Manager, Imlay Watts Studio Productions Manager, and Peter Bax Design Manager. Among the people responsible to Watts were A. J. M. Ozmond, dealing with studio management (including costumes, props, and continuity), and Miss J. Bradnock as Make-up and Wardrobe Manager.<sup>1</sup> Among producers, I. R. Atkins had been an Assistant Television Studio Manager and D. H. Munro Television Production Manager. J. A. C. Knott, a former cameraman, dealt with the first executive problems of administration.

For Programme Director and Deputy Head of Television, Gorham chose a fellow Irishman, the playwright Denis Johnston, author of *The Moon in the Yellow River*. Johnston was a pre-war television producer, who had worked during the war both as a feature producer and a war reporter. Yet since he could not take up his post at once, Cecil Madden was responsible for both the first programming and the first programme planning. Even after Johnston arrived, 'free from all the conventions and circumspections of office life',<sup>2</sup> he left Variety to Madden and concentrated on Drama. Nor was he involved in Madden's second assignment, the further refinement of planning procedures, and it was Madden who arranged many of the programmes for Opening Night, as he had done in 1936, and who devised 'the pattern of a TV week which survived for many years to come'.<sup>3</sup>

Birkinshaw, Superintendent Engineer (Television)—ultimately responsible through the engineering hierarchy to the BBC's Chief Engineer, Harold Bishop—was as much of a

<sup>1</sup> \*The first television organization was promulgated in a Note by Gorham on 26 April 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> C. Madden, Unpublished Manuscript, 'Starlight'.

'television enthusiast' as Gorham himself or Madden. He had been working at Daventry during the war, and he was keen to restore the Alexandra Palace studios as quickly as possible, energetically assisted by H. W. Baker and by D. R. Campbell, another pre-war pioneer. They were 'a BBC' in themselves. Relations between producers and engineers could sometimes be strained during the difficult early years of post-war television, but Gorham happily included Birkinshaw in what he thought of as his own 'direction team'.<sup>1</sup>

The very first 'organization chart'—that of April 1946—is of historic interest and is set out in the table opposite,<sup>2</sup> though the term 'organization' does not do justice to the mood of the first months at Alexandra Palace, when the atmosphere was comparable with that of Savoy Hill during the early days of sound broadcasting. In fact, it was even more informal, with a flavour of the film world as well as of broadcasting which had been missing from the BBC of the early 1930s.<sup>3</sup> An early visitor, John Pudney, described how in 'the democratic canteen' Gorham might be encountered 'sitting next to an electrician in overalls' and how both might share their table with two actors 'in the lace ruffles and wigs of the eighteenth century'.<sup>4</sup> There was the same sense of the extempore in the corrugated iron hut known as 'the Dive' located outside the Palace on the summit of Muswell Hill.

The returning members of the pre-war television staff talked incessantly of the 'old days', sometimes rather disturbingly as far as Gorham was concerned, because he knew that the pre-war television service had been 'kept going' only by immense enthusiasm in face of overwhelming physical difficulties. He wanted to improve on the pre-war record not just to emulate it. Yet if the 'Sleeping Beauty' of Television, as he (and *The Observer*)<sup>5</sup> called her, was to awake at the right moment,

<sup>1</sup> There was no shortage of engineers in 1945 and early in 1946, but there was a shortage of carpenters. The Corporation was 'inundated' with applications from ex-servicemen and radar operators and mechanics (*Muswell Hill Record*, 8 Feb. 1946). Gorham went to Rank for his assistance—somewhat against Haley's advice—before BBC television returned to the air.

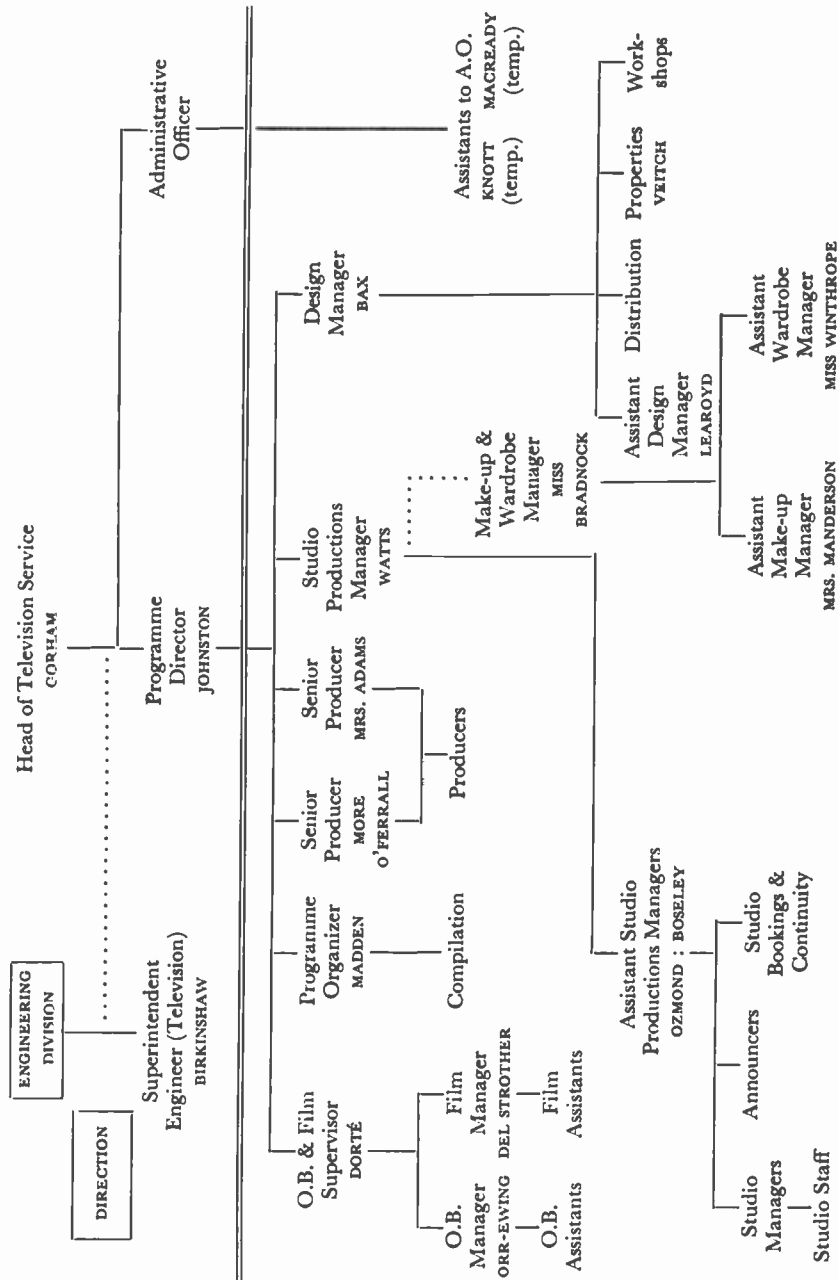
<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Gorham, 26 April 1946, appending the Chart.

<sup>3</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

<sup>4</sup> John Pudney, 'British Television in Years Ahead' in *John Bull*, 1 June 1946.

<sup>5</sup> *The Observer*, 21 April 1946. See also the headline in the *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Feb. 1946, 'Television stirs from Sleep'.

# THE FIRST TELEVISION ORGANIZATION



'immense enthusiasm' was still just as necessary for success as informed decision-making by committees, technical skill, or creative artistry.

In the next section of this chapter a different metaphor current in 1946 is used—that of 'resurrection'. Either will do, for the two metaphors pointed to the same situation and the same dénouement. So, indeed, did the evidence presented by Scophony to the Hankey Committee in which all kinds of metaphors were beautifully mixed up:

The war, by impelling a period of forced quiescence in programming, while simultaneously stirring up a vast undercurrent of inventive energy in the technical laboratories, has supplied television with its golden opportunity. After twelve years of incubation, television is now living through a period of hibernation, but behind this shell of inertia the dominant characteristics of television for the next twenty-five years are being shaped. The mask of tranquillity covers a deep internal disturbance. In electronic terms, we are living through a revolution which may well open the door to an actual land of promise, in place of that shadow of a promise we had known before.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Resurrection

PROGRAMME Planning Committee was the formal gathering where the members of Gorham's team met, and after test transmissions had begun in February 1946 it was agreed in April that rough schedules should be worked out (on squared paper) nine-and-a-half weeks in advance and detailed schedules seven-and-a-half weeks in advance.<sup>2</sup> The first television diet was to be 'balanced'. Authors were to be encouraged to write for television, and new producers were to be trained.<sup>3</sup> Soon Birkinshaw was preparing details of shift systems,<sup>4</sup> announcers

<sup>1</sup> A memorandum from Scophony to the Hankey Committee which had already been printed in *Electronics* under the heading 'Objectives for Post-war Television'. The author was Worthington Miner, Manager of the Television Department of CBS, New York.

<sup>2</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 18 April 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 23 May 1946.

were being tested,<sup>1</sup> and the scenery was being checked, repaired, and repainted. 'The nucleus of a library collection' was set up in Alexandra Palace.<sup>2</sup> Much time was spent also on trying out 'dry runs' of programmes on closed circuit television and in shooting demonstration film.

It was agreed during this hectic preparatory period that each public transmission would open with a shot of the television mast at Alexandra Palace—'it doesn't matter whether it is wet or fine'<sup>3</sup>—and that Mantovani's Orchestra should play on opening day. Other proposals proved more contentious, or it may be that the minutes are more cryptic. Thus, 'the suggestion of a talk by Keynes or Clark' (the latter to be appointed nine years afterwards the first head of the Independent Television Authority) was not to be pursued.<sup>4</sup> Continuities were to be stressed for the public as they were being realized for the staff behind the scenes. It was decided, therefore, that the same Mickey Mouse programme which had been broadcast on the distant day in September 1939 when Alexandra Palace went silent would be repeated on Opening Day, Friday 7 June 1946, even though it was thought to be slightly more 'dated' than most Mickey Mouse cartoons in that it caricatured 'a number of Hollywood stars who are now just memories'.<sup>5</sup>

There was a very deliberate 'note of reminiscence' (some would have said nostalgia) in many of the items in the programme for the day, justified by Gorham both on policy grounds—'we are resuming a service when other countries are starting theirs'—and for practical reasons. Most of the sets in use were pre-war sets, and the Radio Industry Council had told the Television Advisory Committee that it did not favour even minor changes in frequencies if they would mean that tuning changes had to be made to existing sets.<sup>6</sup> Gorham thought also

<sup>1</sup> See M. Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (1948), pp. 202–3. Leslie Mitchell and Elizabeth Cowell, pre-war announcers, had both left the BBC, the former to join Movietone News, but Jasmine Bligh had returned.

<sup>2</sup> \*M. Farquharson to Gorham, 5 Dec. 1945; Gorham to Farquharson, 6 Dec. 1945; Farquharson to Miss B. M. West, 7 Dec. 1945; Note of a Meeting, 8 March 1946; Farquharson to Gorham, 18 April 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Draft of Opening Programme, 1 April 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 18 April 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*G. del Strother to Gorham, 17 April 1946.

<sup>6</sup> \**First Report* of the Television Advisory Committee, Feb. 1946; Report on a Meeting with representatives of the Radio Industry Council, 14 Jan. 1946.

that pre-war viewers would be in the majority.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, Jasmine Bligh's opening sentences as Announcer were to include the question 'Remember me?' and to refer to a 'lapse of seven years'. Even the choice of Mantovani's Orchestra was justified on the grounds that it had been due to play on the last day of pre-war television broadcasting.<sup>2</sup>

The term 'resurrection' was well chosen, therefore, although there was a warning not to expect any more miracles.<sup>3</sup> One new item to be included was a Television March, specially composed for the occasion by Eric Coates, and one new star was to appear—Margot Fonteyn, prima ballerina of Sadler's Wells. She had appeared before the war in televised ballet—an early favourite for programme planners since it was both 'visual' and 'buyable'.

The choice of Opening Day—7 June—was easily settled,<sup>4</sup> since it was the day immediately before the great Victory Parade of 1946, which everyone would wish to see on their screens, and one day after the Derby which would have been too costly to televise even had permission been granted. The Parade was an international spectacular which might itself have been specially designed for television, and more than ten countries asked for details of the programmes and their reception. By a coincidence, 7 June was also two years to the day after Gorham had begun working as Director of the war-time Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme transmitted after the Normandy landings. 'I took this as a good omen,' he remarked; 'the A.E.F.P. had been an acknowledged success.'<sup>5</sup>

The opening television ceremony, which began at three o'clock in the afternoon, was attended by a large number of official visitors, including representatives of the four great American networks. The formal speech was made by the Post-

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 1 April 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*E. Fawcett to Gorham, 11 April 1946.

<sup>3</sup> W. E. Williams in *The Observer*, 21 April 1946. 'The Sleeping Beauty of Alexandra Palace is scheduled for revival on June 6. The BBC, however, has wisely warned us against great expectations from this event.'

<sup>4</sup> It was announced at a Press Conference and a luncheon on 8 April 1946, which was attended by 400 dealers and addressed by C. O. Stanley in his capacity as Chairman of the Television Promotion Committee of the British Radio Equipment Manufacturers' Association. See *The Times*, 9 April 1946.

<sup>5</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 206.



master-General, the Earl of Listowel, who looked back not to 1939 but to the Second World War. 'The resumption of this service', he declared, 'can be taken as another sign that the traditional vigour of British science and industry is not exhausted by the war.' It had originally been proposed that Attlee should be present, and in his absence Listowel did his best to catch the philosophy of the hour. Television was to be a 'new public service'. It should cease to be a luxury or 'plaything for the few' and should become 'a refreshment and recreation for the many'. The 'many' would be offered 'a more vivid awareness of the greatness of their country' and would have brought before their eyes 'the colourful pageantry that marks our constitutional and civic life'.<sup>1</sup>

The BBC response was made by Sir Allan Powell, the Chairman of the Governors, and not by Haley, who had told Gorham simply 'I have no desire to appear'.<sup>2</sup> Powell, an experienced public speaker, decided not to read from a script but to face the camera direct. The consequence was disturbing. For a few seconds he 'dried up', a few seconds that seemed like an age. Gorham was more interested in this unusual phenomenon than in Listowel's familiar philosophy, much of which would have been shared both by Attlee and Lord Woolton. 'The tension of facing advancing cameras under blazing lights makes people forget what they have just said and what they are going to say next,' he commented, noting that television would have to overcome the problem. And with his interest in the specific characteristics of the new medium, Gorham distinguished it in this connection not only from radio but from film-making when 'you simply cut and re-take'.<sup>3</sup>

Every broadcaster had his own preoccupations at the moment of television's resurrection. For Norman Collins, then in charge of the Light Programme, it was a popular feature in sound on the subject of television.<sup>4</sup> For George More O'Ferrall, the Senior Play Producer, it was the production of George Bernard Shaw's *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. For the two new announcers—Winifred Shotter, well known to lovers of Aldwych farces,

<sup>1</sup> \*Postmaster-General's script for 7 June 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Gorham, 4 April 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 4 April 1946.

and McDonald Hopley, freshly back from military service in Asia—it was ‘a first night feeling in the afternoon’. For Richard Dimbleby, as enthralled by television as he had been in 1936, it was whether or not he would be in charge of the commentary on the Victory Parade. ‘We have already fixed up Freddie Grisewood as our Number One Commentator,’ Gorham replied to a letter from him, asking for a place as a commentator, ‘but we should very much like to have you with him.’<sup>1</sup>

For the engineers, it was not only a test, to be followed by the greater test of televising the Victory Parade—which meant using a television cable linking the West End with Alexandra Palace which had not been used since 1939—but a kind of consecration. Two of the great engineering pioneers of television, A. D. Blumlein and C. O. Browne, had been killed in an aeroplane crash during the war.<sup>2</sup> They were deeply respected by their colleagues.<sup>3</sup> As members of the great EMI team of the 1930s, they had been adventurous and successful pioneers, and their death in 1942 had been a tragedy. Within a week of the starting of the new service in 1946, their old indefatigable rival, still the most controversial figure in the history of television but a man whom they themselves had admired, J. L. Baird, was dead also—after an illness of four months. He had been television’s greatest publicist in Britain and much more, but after narrowly missing making millions, he left only a little over £7,000.<sup>4</sup>

The BBC radio programme in sound which dealt with television was broadcast on the eve of the first post-war television programme—not on the Light Programme but on the Home Service—and it was mainly concerned with engineering. Written by Robert Barr, it concentrated on the contribution television engineers had made to war-time radar, described as ‘a simple off-shoot of television’; on the Emitron, ‘the electric eye of the television camera’; and on television as ‘horizon’ broadcasting (with no thought of satellites or landing on the

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Dimbleby, 13 April 1946. See also J. Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby, A Biography* (1975), p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> For their work in the 1930s, see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 567, 569, 583.

<sup>3</sup> \*R. T. B. Wynn (through H. Bishop) to Gorham, 22 Feb. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> J. Swift, *Adventure in Vision* (1950), p. 121. Baird died on 14 June.

moon).<sup>1</sup> With the remarkable ingenuity shown by producers of post-war sound features, the orchestra was used to give 'a sound picture of a good wide carrier wave'. Piccolos and drums were used to demonstrate why sound broadcasts could travel thousands of miles while television from Alexandra Palace (except for 'freak' effects) could reach viewers only within a radius of thirty or forty miles, as far north as Luton and Thaxted and as far south as Maidstone and Guildford.<sup>2</sup>

It is doubtful how many listeners understood much of what was said to them on such matters, and they must have paid more attention when their memories were stirred with a glance back at Len Hutton's televised record Test innings, or with the orchestra's playing of 'The Eyes of the World are on You', the signature tune of pre-war Television Outside Broadcasts. There was also ample promise for the future—'the comfort of watching a show in your own home, the magic of seeing great events at your own fireside'—although there was never a hint that the 'new, fast, exciting medium' would ever threaten to supplant sound broadcasting. The most exciting sequence involved Freddie Grisewood reminiscing about the great Coronation television broadcast of May 1937,<sup>3</sup> when he had described Aussies with emu feathers in the turned-up brims of their hats as 'the wicked kukris of the Gurkhas'. He explained that his 'pavement camera' in 1937 was the very same camera which 'will have the honour of televising Their Majesties for the first time' at the Victory Parade.

The most memorable hat of the Victory Parade was Princess Elizabeth's, 'an ostrich-feathered toque in turquoise blue': 'you will forgive a man for saying that it is only a hat with feathers on it', commented Richard Dimpleby. The Parade itself was an unqualified success, 'a smash hit', despite a grey day, as grey as most of the paint inside Alexandra Palace;<sup>4</sup> and there were no hitches or breakdowns in what to a few people remains the

<sup>1</sup> \*'Television is Here Again', BBC script, 6 June 1946. The 'engineer' in the programme pointed out, however, that 'a radar impulse had been directed at the moon—and had reached it'.

<sup>2</sup> \*'In practice,' a BBC Press Release of June 1947 read, 'many "viewers" [note the inverted commas] enjoy programmes, at distances of 60 miles and beyond.'

<sup>3</sup> See *The Golden Age of Wireless*, p. 611.

<sup>4</sup> \*'"Television grey", a special tone of paint which responds well for vision broadcasts, is used extensively' (*Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*, 8 Feb. 1946).

most memorable of all television programmes. Viewers could watch the great procession, the RAF fly-past, and the movements of the personalities at the saluting base far more easily than the crowds gathered along the Mall where the cameras were mounted. And the 'pictures' broadcast were technically better than those before the war because of improvements in cathode ray tubes and the redesigning of the transmission aerial. By one of those 'freaks' of reception to which Robert Barr had referred, it was even picked up on a television screen in Minehead, 169 miles from London.<sup>1</sup>

When the great day was over, the Board of Governors sent congratulations to Gorham and his colleagues,<sup>2</sup> but far more important in the history of British television, the British Press was ready to hail what had happened as a victory for the whole country. The *News Chronicle* headline read, 'Television experts jubilant', and the headline stretched over four columns. 'Vision on BBC was a winner', added Moore Raymond of the *Sunday Dispatch*, and readers of *The Times* were told how 'the small silvery screen' had become 'in effect a window on the Mall'.<sup>3</sup> In the *Sunday Chronicle* Jonah Barrington, often a sharp critic of the BBC, remarked simply, after apologizing for being a 'trifle incoherent', 'This was the BBC's finest two hours.' He went on to speak of the 'thrill' of home viewing. 'The pictures were so clear that we could see the cuff-links on Mr. Churchill's sleeves and the bristles of Mr. Attlee's moustache. We could look our fill at Queen Mary as she smoothed her gloves. . . . In time, no doubt, they'll impose a limit on how long a television camera may rubber-neck a famous personage, but in these early days it is free for all.' Barrington contrasted his experience with that of watching newsreels in a cinema where 'we are always cut off just when we want to see more'.<sup>4</sup>

The only failures of the first week of post-war television were an inability to televise an aquatic display on the Thames

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Times*, 9 June 1946; *Somerset County Gazette*, 15 June 1946. Reception was on an apparatus constructed by W. F. Steel, a radio engineer formerly employed by the RAF. The 1946 record was Babbacombe, about 200 miles from Alexandra Palace (*The Times*, 21 June 1946).

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 27 June 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 10 June 1946; *Sunday Dispatch*, 9 June 1946; *The Times*, 10 June 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Chronicle*, 9 June 1946.

# PROGRAMMES

Vision 45 Mc/s JUNE 9-15 Sound 41.5 Mc/s



IN THE JULIANSON GARDEN

The late Mr. C. H. Middleton in the small garden he built on the steep slope of the Garden Palace. In a scene set during the war and P. Norman is shown in his garden with a 'blow of London'. Mr. Middleton will work in the garden on Sunday at 3.10 p.m.

## SUNDAY

JUNE 9

### 10 PM FILM

**14 "IN OUR GARDEN"**  
A series reveals the television garden on the grounds of Abchurch Lane Palace and gives viewers some practical hints.

### 10.10 CARTOON FILM

**10.10 FOR THE CHILDREN**  
The Hogarth Puppet Show presented by Jan Plankin and Ann Hogarth  
Paul Woodward as Hank the Mole  
Eric Cuth, conductor  
Presentation by A. Miller Jones

### ★ ★ ★

### 10.10 FILM

**10.10 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**  
A French Comedy by Oscar Wilde  
The Wardrobe: Robert Robinson  
The Music: Mackenzie Ward  
The Characters: Duval Horth  
The Butler: J. H. Birtles Davis  
The Narrator: Allan Finkelstein  
The Characters: Margaret Hetherington  
The Characters: Margaret Vinn  
The Characters: Dorothy Hayman  
The Characters: Betty Potter  
The Characters: Agnes Monckton  
The Characters: Hilda Monckton  
The Characters: The Duke of the Manor House  
The Characters: The Duke of the Manor House  
The Characters: The Duke of the Manor House

Settings by Harry Secord  
Produced by G. Moore O'Farrell  
Robert Robinson as narrator of the R. J. Jones Theatre and Dorothy Brown at the Haymarket Theatre

10.10-10.20 News (sound only)

## MONDAY

JUNE 10

3.0 FILM

**3.10 HARRY ROY AND HIS BAND**  
with Eric Whitley and Eric Lombard  
Harry Kaye

3.40 WRESTLING

A demonstration of heavyweight wrestling  
Harry Ashcroft vs Bert Asprell  
Arranged by R. C. Fevoldy  
Commentary: K. R. Vort

4.0-4.15 BANK HOLIDAY

AT ALL SANDRA FALLEN  
The television camera takes you into the grounds

### ★ ★ ★

8.30 SYLVE SAINT-JEAN

The French singer with JACK and EDDY EDREN in songs at the piano

8.45 FILM

8.55 "CAT JOYS"  
Viewers are invited to a musical entertainment of the late 1800's. Sing the choruses with

artists from the Players Theatre, who include

- Don Gemmill
  - Joan Strevdale Bennett
  - Bill Shine
  - Bill Rowbotham
  - Hattie Jacques
  - Harty Lawrence (at the piano)
- Under the general chairmanship of Leonard Sachs  
Presented for television by Philip Dale

### 9.25 "TRANSATLANTIC QUIZ"

In this first televised edition viewers will see the London end of the famous contest between Professor D. W. Brown and Jan Struther, with Quiz-Master Lionel Hale, and six New York teams—Christopher Morley and John Mason Brown, with Quiz-Master Aladdin Quinn  
Produced by Mary Adlam

10.0-10.10 News (sound only)

## TUESDAY

JUNE 11

3.0 HELE PRADOR

(At the piano, Evel Thurra)



HELE PRADOR  
takes the title and the part of a presentation of the Playwright's Theatre production 'The Silence of the Sea' on Monday night at 8.51

### 3.5 "THE SILENCE OF THE SEA"

A television play of the story by 'Le Silence de la Mer'. Translated by Cyril Connolly  
The night... J. H. Roberts  
The piece... Antonette C. De...  
The German officer... Knuth Mue...  
(Western version)



"THE HOGARTH PUPPETS"

Jan Plankin and Ann Hogarth introduce their amusing puppet show presented in seven shows for children on Sunday afternoon at 1.3

8. A page of Radio Times showing some of the first post-war television programmes in June 1946

because heavy rain ruined the camera cables,<sup>1</sup> and 'interference' with the projection of the first day's programmes on a large-scale cinema screen, one of Baird's great hopes. It was the ballet which 'overwhelmed' the large image. Margot Fonteyn appeared to be dancing behind thick strands of barbed wire.<sup>2</sup>

Within the home the first programmes were very much appreciated, particularly the outside broadcasts which were still the greatest selling point for television dealers. The programmes included the Wightman Cup transmissions during the first weekend and the England versus India Test Match a few days later. Viewers were impressed too by the revival of *Picture Page*, one of Madden's 'evergreens' which deliberately numbered its editions continuously from the 1930s. This magazine programme (with a new presenter, Joan Gilbert) recaptured at once its pre-war following with what was described at the time as 'its swift sequences of interviews with people in the news'.<sup>3</sup> Other 'firsts' quickly multiplied. Thus, the first outside theatre programme came from the Garrick—Beatrice Lillie's revue *Better Late*—and the first televised Church Service was transmitted from St. George's Chapel at Biggin Hill on Battle of Britain Sunday, 15 September.<sup>4</sup> Neither established a regular pattern, but as many as twenty-four studio plays were produced in the first forty-eight days.<sup>5</sup> Afternoon transmission 'sessions' then lasted from 3 o'clock to 4 o'clock or 4.30 and evening sessions from 8.30 to 10 o'clock or later,<sup>6</sup> and regular series soon included *Cabaret Cartoons*, a revival, like *Composer at the Piano*, and *Guest Night*.

The emerging pattern can be traced either in Press comments or, at a more interesting level, in the minutes of Programme Committee. 'Mr. Gorham confirmed that he had no objection

<sup>1</sup> See L. Miall (ed.), *Richard Dimbleby Broadcaster* (1966), p. 60. Orr-Ewing wrote to the Lord Chamberlain on 14 June 1946 apologizing and adding that he hoped that there would be a later chance of 'doing a programme from the Houses of Parliament as I think they will provide most interesting material'.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 11 June 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1947, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 782.

<sup>5</sup> \*Television Operations Meeting, 25 July 1946.

<sup>6</sup> There was also a demonstration film transmitted every weekday morning between 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock, primarily for the benefit of the radio industry.

to the inclusion of dance bands on Sunday afternoons.’<sup>1</sup> ‘Agreed to get a copy of *Dracula* before deciding on its inclusion.’<sup>2</sup> ‘Our policy is to have more public affairs and informative material in our programmes.’<sup>3</sup> ‘Agreed that Mr. Orr-Ewing should follow up Victor Silvester’s BBC dancing trophy suggestion.’<sup>4</sup> ‘Agreed that Mr. Gorham should ask News Division to give us their one-line version of weather forecast for inclusion in News Bulletins.’<sup>5</sup> ‘The meeting felt that there should be something for every day’s programme trailed in Teleflash.’<sup>6</sup> ‘Agreed to ask Mrs. Adams [soon to become the first Head of Television Talks] to consider the possibility of a guest night for television newspaper critics.’<sup>7</sup>

For all the experiments and the successes, however, there were several recurring and disturbing difficulties. First, it was never easy to establish the right relationship between Television and Sound as far as either administrators or artists were concerned. The key BBC administrators, headed by Nicolls, the Senior Controller, were all in Broadcasting House, far removed from Gorham’s ‘colourful and chaotic kingdom’,<sup>8</sup> and some of the best-known artists were not only heavily committed to sound but were being encouraged, even by BBC administrators, not to switch to television. There were protracted arguments, often involving Equity, about particular programmes, and television highlights were quite specifically excluded from the daily sound announcements in *Programme Parade*.<sup>9</sup>

The story of what happened to *ITMA* illustrates many of these themes. There was a long debate about whether it should be televised at all, a debate involving Francis Worsley, the producer, and Ted Kavanagh, the author of the script, as well as Tommy Handley himself.<sup>10</sup> One ingenious suggestion put forward was that animal puppets or ‘waxworks’ should be used in a television version instead of the actual characters, but the idea—to be taken up enthusiastically at a later date for other

<sup>1</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 23 May 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 30 May 1946.      <sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 6 June 1946.      <sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 11 July 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid., 4 July 1946.      <sup>6</sup> \*Ibid., 15 Aug. 1946.      <sup>7</sup> \*Ibid., 20 June 1946.

<sup>8</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>9</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 10 April 1947.

<sup>10</sup> \*Ibid., 16, 23, 30 May 1946. At the meeting on 4 July it was reported that Worsley did not want televising of *ITMA* to begin until at least six weeks after his new series had started on sound. Ted Kavanagh was considering a new television comedy script (*ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1946).

programmes, particularly in the United States—did not ‘appeal to the meeting’.<sup>1</sup> Even after it had been decided in August 1946 to ‘allow’ television cameras to be brought into the sound broadcasting studio to televise *ITMA*,<sup>2</sup> Worsley wrote that Handley remained very reluctant on the grounds that *ITMA* was ‘produced *for* and broadcast *in* sound, and should remain so’. Worsley had persuaded him to take part only by using the argument that ‘we should be helping a sister service in the early stages of its development’.<sup>3</sup> At this point, Equity was brought into the discussions, since artists contracted for sound demanded extra fees if they were also televised, and eventually the project was dropped.<sup>4</sup> Nicolls was not unhappy about the outcome. ‘Whatever we do,’ he wrote frankly to Gorham, ‘we don’t want to get into difficulties with our Old Faithful artists of Sound broadcasting . . . through snooping on Sound by Television.’<sup>5</sup> Television, he went on, should ‘develop its own stars’: Haley had been ‘emphatic’ about this.<sup>6</sup>

Only a few completely new television personalities emerged, however, during the first months—among them Richard Hearne, ‘a very good television comic’, Philip Harben, ‘a master of televised cookery’, Annette Mills, complete with ‘Muffin the Mule’, a new announcer, Gillian Webb, a RADA student who took the place of Jasmine Bligh when the latter resigned, and the gardener Fred Streeter, television’s ‘Mr. Middleton’.<sup>7</sup> They all made life easier in Alexandra Palace, and after one year’s activity Gorham at last was able to write to Nicolls that ‘the prospects of more sharing of programmes between sound and television are improving. On the last two occasions when we have televised sound programmes—*Those Were the Days* and *Twenty Questions*—we have had excellent co-operation . . . and . . . good results.’<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 12 Sept. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*W. L. Streton to Variety Booking Manager, A. H. Brown, 30 Aug. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Worsley to Streton, 2 Sept. 1946.      <sup>4</sup> \*Gorham to Nicolls, 19 Oct. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Nicolls to Gorham, 23 Oct. 1946.      <sup>6</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> \*Nicolls complained to Gorham that he had not seen Miss Webb before she was appointed and the publicity was put out about her. ‘I do for the time being wish to see all Television announcers before appointment’ (Nicolls to Gorham, 17 July 1946).

<sup>8</sup> \*Gorham to Nicolls, 16 June 1947. Efforts were made to ‘catch *Have a Go* when it came south’ (Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 16 Jan. 1947).



Some of the other recurring difficulties were far greater and more protracted. It proved almost impossible to secure the co-operation of outside theatre, film, and sporting interests, and in this connection difficulties grew rather than diminished. To some extent, Gorham was merely re-enacting Reith's struggles of the 1920s during the early history of sound:<sup>1</sup> in addition, however, he was dealing with even more entrenched organizations more conscious of their rival interests. All Chappell-Harms music had to be removed from 'speciality acts', and the film industry made it clear after 8 June (*pace* Rank) that it would not allow films, old or new, long or short, to be shown on television, even on strictly commercial terms.<sup>2</sup> Even the Disney cartoons had to disappear by the end of 1946.<sup>3</sup> (British Movietone would not go so far as to allow the BBC to have a copy of its film of the reopening of the BBC's Television Service.)<sup>4</sup> Theatre managers were equally difficult, and negotiations for Act 3 of the popular *Worm's Eye View* quickly broke down.<sup>5</sup> There were transmissions from the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and ballet and opera from Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells, but for every performance actually presented five were refused.

Similar difficulties arose in relation to many branches of sport. Wimbledon was always willing, but there were 'bans', for example on League Football,<sup>6</sup> and owing to difficulties with Mrs. Topham, the proprietor, the popular pre-war television event of the Grand National could not be screened.<sup>7</sup> Speedway, amateur boxing and athletics, and wrestling were not perfect substitutes.

Third, there were serious financial and management difficulties, many but not all of them by-products of the 'age of austerity' during which television was restored. Few controls were relaxed and the winter of 1946/47 was exceptionally hard and grim even by war-time standards. Because of the fuel crisis,

<sup>1</sup> See Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 250 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Gorham, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-7. The ban applied even to a very old 'classic' film like *Mayerling* (\*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 11 July 1946). For a later change of policy, see below, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 28 Nov. 1946. Efforts were made to get films out of the Russians (*ibid.*, 27 Feb. 1947).

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 29 Aug. 1946. <sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 22 Nov. 1946. <sup>6</sup> See below, pp. 839-856.

<sup>7</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 20 Feb. 1947.

which hit homes and headlines in February 1947, television transmissions had to be suspended completely for a month, and for a further seven weeks they were resumed only on a limited schedule (with no afternoon transmissions). American post-war television developed by contrast in an 'age of affluence'—with manufacturers of receivers and programme controllers looking for quick profits once they had got over their first inhibitions.<sup>1</sup>

Key figures in the BBC itself were more interested in 1946 in the starting of the Third Programme than in the resumption of television, and it was not only 'at the top levels' of the Corporation that seasoned BBC administrators and producers looked with suspicion at Gorham's quest for 'independence'.<sup>2</sup> His critics found him 'dictatorial', but exaggerated his 'access to the inner councils' of the BBC, for no representative of the new Television Service was present at the BBC Governors' meetings unless (quite exceptionally) by invitation, and Governors' papers dealing with television accounted for only about one in twelve. The service was still thought of as a luxury service for a minority, involving expenditure both on capital items and programmes which was and should be only a fraction of that on sound. Thus, at their first meeting in 1946, just before the service was resumed, the BBC's Board of Governors voted the placing of stock orders for television valves—they were making do with old stock—to the value of £2,500 and sound broadcasting valves to the value of £30,000.<sup>3</sup> All in all, only £14,487 was spent on investment capital in television and equipment during the financial year ending March 1946 as against £214,587 (itself not a large sum) in sound,<sup>4</sup> and television operational costs were fixed for 1946/47 at £249,140—below the 1939 estimate, when prices had been far lower.<sup>5</sup>

Not surprisingly, by the end of the first year of post-war television there was an alarming pressure on space, equipment, and people. Nor did it make for peace of mind that the

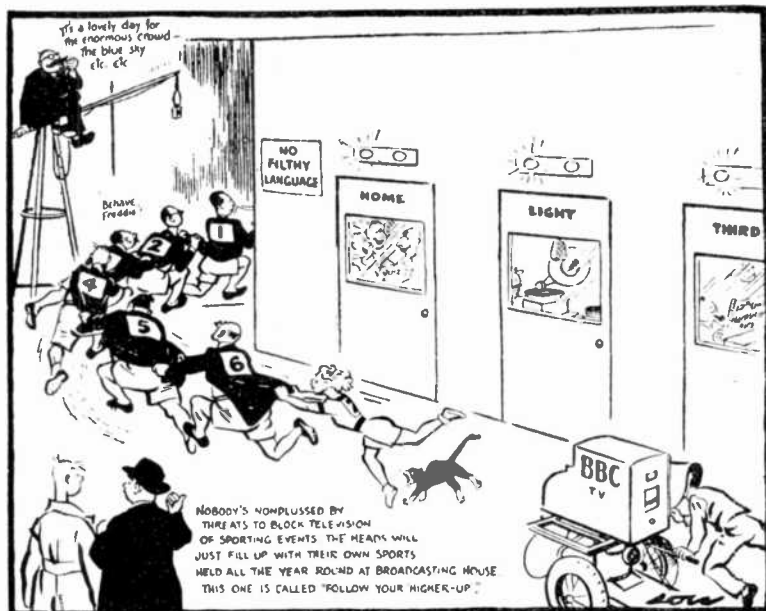
<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 183–5, and L. Bogart, *The Age of Television* (1956).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, V. Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror* (1965), pp. 127, where there is sharp criticism of Gorham for 'widening the gulf' between Alexandra Palace and Broadcasting House.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 10 Jan. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report on Finance for the Year Ending 31 March 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 27 Sept. 1946; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 March 1946.



9. How Our Great Institutions are Conducted—The BBC. *Daily Herald*, 14 April 1950

Alexandra Park Trustees were said to be willing to consider selling the whole of the Palace.<sup>1</sup> The first annual report of Television Outside Broadcasts referred to 'many limitations' causing 'bottlenecks to increased output', among them 'the lack of an equipped O.B. base for efficient maintenance purposes', 'the manning of the existing O.B. units with a single watch of engineering staff', and 'the considerable time necessary to rig and de-rig'. The author of the report, Ian Orr-Ewing, was to repeat the same message month after month until he left the Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

Harassed by difficulties which were mainly outside his control, Gorham produced two extremely interesting papers on television for Haley in February and July 1947. 'Now that the second year of the post-war Television Service is getting near', he wrote in his first paper, the BBC should note carefully the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 May 1947. At the next meeting Haley reported that the Trustees were willing to negotiate the letting of the Exhibition Hall to the BBC (*ibid.*, 29 May 1947).

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report of Television O.B.s*, 1 Jan. 1948. See also pp. 267, 281.

operational difficulties caused by out-of-date equipment, inadequate studio accommodation,<sup>1</sup> and too small a staff. A 'partial revolution' was necessary in requirements for studio and staff. Gorham told Haley bluntly that 'a service started on similar lines with the benefit of modern resources, say in France or in America, could soon leave us behind', and added correctly that as far as resources were concerned, 'the second year of post-war television will find us much as we are now'. His second memorandum was circulated on 18 July and dealt with 'filming television', 'a development that we may expect in the near future'. Recording programmes might relieve the strain on staff resources entailed by the current programme schedule, but it would entail a 'revolution' in thinking about programming as a whole. Nor could such development take place without the support of trade unions as well as of management. 'It will be useless in the long run to try to sustain the BBC Staff Association, which to the average Trade Unionist is a company union . . . against the powerful unions already operating in fields very close to ours.'<sup>2</sup>

Gorham did not get very far with either of his memoranda. A meeting in March 1947 resolved few of the difficulties,<sup>3</sup> and when it was rumoured that Rank was interested in starting his own studios, Gorham cannot have been encouraged by Haley's comment that if Rank were to spend half a million pounds on such a project this would be to give television an 'absurdly high priority'.<sup>4</sup> Sound called all the tunes, and both as Deputy Director-General and a member of the Television Advisory Committee, Ashbridge had told Gorham somewhat hopelessly a few days before that 'we are struggling with the whole question of what we are going to be allowed to do and what has got to be dropped'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 'Next Stage in Television Service', 21 Feb. 1947. At the Television Operations Meeting on 11 Feb. 1947 a small committee had been set up 'to consider and present a united report on projected plans for any future television building'. It was very clear, however, that the Corporation was not ready for such a step. For later developments, see below, pp. 237-8, 268 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 'Television, General Questions', 18 July 1947. For the beginnings of staff organization see *ABS Bulletin*, May 1965: 'Those Twenty-five Years—how we got there'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Haley, 6 March 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report of Telephone Conversation between Gorham and Haley, 27 Oct. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ashbridge to Gorham, 15 Oct. 1947.

In October 1947 Haley reiterated that the Government would be unwilling to change its policy of allowing only a very limited allocation of capital equipment for television.<sup>1</sup> Gorham had written to Ashbridge a fortnight before in no uncertain terms. 'The development of BBC television depends largely upon facilities that are often in short supply. I do not however feel certain that we are getting all we could, and as fast as we could, by means of the present internal machinery.'<sup>2</sup>

High policy was not considered an appropriate subject for discussion by the BBC's television staff. Yet the consequences of penury were all too plain at meetings of the Programme Planning Committee. 'Mr. Orr-Ewing stated that five O.B.s would have to be cancelled in December if we could not get two engineering labourers in the near future.'<sup>3</sup> 'The proposed television version of *How to Furnish a Flat* has now fallen through owing to unavailability of the furniture.'<sup>4</sup> 'Bax was authorised to be tough with producers over excessive demands for props and models.'<sup>5</sup> 'This repeated succession of plays has meant that our scenery is becoming somewhat dilapidated and, with the present staff, it is impossible to keep it in good condition.'<sup>6</sup> '*Uncle Harry* was turned down in view of dollar expenditure and *Lady Windermere's Fan* was agreed instead.'<sup>7</sup> 'Knott said that he had received a warning from Finance Secretary that payment in sterling in this country to the agents and representatives of foreign artists and writers not resident in this country was out of order and that the Treasury had implied that this was an infringement of currency regulations.'<sup>8</sup> In an age of ration books, television administrators and producers had their own BBC ration books, and the control system was at least as effective inside the Corporation as it was outside. Certainly there was no black market and there were no 'spivs'.

Current attitudes towards manners and morals affected the Corporation as much as chronic austerity: indeed, the Corporation itself tried to give a lead. Betting odds could never be shown

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of Telephone Conversation between Gorham and Haley, 27 Oct. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*Gorham to Ashbridge, 13 Oct. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 7 Nov. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 23 Jan. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 6 Feb. 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Television Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 25 July 1946.

<sup>7</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 24 April 1947.

<sup>8</sup> \**Ibid.*, 5 June 1947.

when races were televised. Comedians had to take great care with their studio jokes, announcers with their pronunciation, scriptwriters with their texts. There was a ban on the impersonation of politicians<sup>1</sup> and a policy directive on astrology.<sup>2</sup> (There was also a policy directive that the word 'policy' should not be used in communicating with artists or outside bodies.)<sup>3</sup> The keynote had been set in a note by Denis Johnston in February 1946. 'The control of vision from the policy and decency angle' involved problems 'beyond the scope of the very sensible directives which already apply to sound only': 'what is perfectly legitimate in a long shot may be objectionable in a close-up.'<sup>4</sup> Johnston wished to treat producers as 'responsible people', and extracts from Programme Planning Committee minutes show just how responsible they were. 'Bax and Dorté said that the words "Cartoon Films" in the *Radio Times* caused embarrassment to parents as children wished to stay up for them. Agreed that all films in the evening programme should be billed as "Film", but that cartoons can be billed as such in the afternoons.' 'Gorham to write to J. B. Priestley about dropping the word "immoral" from the billing . . . of *Laburnum Grove*. Caption to be amended if Priestley agrees.' 'Once a month is too frequent for jam sessions.'<sup>5</sup>

The BBC had not been known as 'Auntie BBC' before the Second World War. Now the term was coming into general use at a time just before George Orwell was to forecast the two-way screen and the arrival into the home of a very different relative, Big Brother. Although Gorham did not want to be 'rule-minded',<sup>6</sup> a 'code' was drafted for producers with the additional warning that 'we in television must, if anything, be more careful than "sound" producers'. Vision was one reason: the 'family audience' another.<sup>7</sup> 'Censorship' was tightened up

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 9 Jan. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 29 May 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 6 Feb. 1947. Nevertheless, Gorham had to insist that special steps should be taken to see that guests or occasional producers should have policy regulations brought to their attention (ibid., 9 Jan. 1947).

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Johnston, 19 Feb. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 12 Sept. 1946, 23 Jan., 27 Feb. 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Gorham, 10 Feb. 1947. He thought that Johnston's note of 19 Feb. 1946 didn't 'read badly after nearly a year'.

<sup>7</sup> \*Note by C. McGivern to all Producers, 4 Feb. 1949.

in 1949,<sup>1</sup> and efforts were to be made to tighten it up far more in the future.<sup>2</sup> Yet the policy went back to the beginnings even before public complaints came in.

In general, there was little public criticism of the content or consequences of television during the very early period. Individual items were treated on their own merits, like some memorable outside broadcasts—of the Lord Mayor's Show, for example, or of the maiden voyage of the *Queen Elizabeth* or of the opening by the King of the new Bodleian Library in Oxford. The exclusive 'scoop' of George Bernard Shaw's ninetieth birthday was singled out for praise, as were a number of lively and imaginative BBC productions of studio theatre, including Shaw's *St. Joan*, O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, a new Priestley play written for television, *The Rose and the Crown*, Patrick Hamilton's *Rope* a pre-war radio favourite which was prefaced with a suitable horror announcement, and O'Ferrall's production of *Hamlet* which won the Television Society's first Oscar Award for 1947.

The programmes were far more varied than those on American television, where the debate on content and consequences was just starting.<sup>3</sup> Thus, there was a lecture by Professor Allibone on atomic energy (including the Bomb), complete with films, models, and diagrams, which lasted for an hour<sup>4</sup> and was aptly complemented by a Bertrand Russell lecture on 'The Future of Mankind'. Algernon Blackwood, the second Oscar winner, told his horror stories, and children were regaled with *Muffin the Mule*, twelve inches long and six inches high. There were 'information programmes' on industrial design, 'Germany under control', and the techniques of confidence tricksters, and materials for 'obituary programmes' were beginning to be collected on the King, Queen Mary, Churchill, and Shaw.<sup>5</sup> One

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern to Jeanne Bradnock, when she was in charge of costumes, 9 June 1949; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, June 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Ronald Waldman to Producers, 15 March 1954; Sir Ian Jacob, then Director-General, to Barnes, then Director of Television Broadcasting, 24 March 1954.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, 'Television, Boon or Bane' in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Aug. 1956) and 'Hypnosis in the Living Room' (*Readers' Digest*, April 1949).

<sup>4</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 20 June, 8 Aug. 1946, dealing with the origins of the idea of a talk on this subject.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid., 12 Dec. 1946. Second 'obituary priority' was given to Stalin, Smuts, Attlee, Montgomery, Einstein, Eisenhower, Bevin, Gandhi, and Cecil.

of the most controversial programmes planned was *not* broadcast. Peter Casson, the hypnotist, carried out an experiment on a closed circuit in December 1946; four people in the test went to sleep and two needed waking up. To Casson's annoyance, the BBC decided that 'a hypnotic television broadcast would not be advisable'; there was a danger of 'hypnotising viewers who might not have anyone at hand to wake them'.<sup>1</sup>

When the new Service had been in operation for one year, Nicolls, as Senior Controller, wrote to a number of people inside the Corporation 'other than actual Television staff' to collect 'their ideas generally on the year's programmes'. How did they compare, he asked, with pre-war programmes? How had they 'developed or otherwise during the year? What were their strengths and weaknesses?'<sup>2</sup>

The replies were very interesting. A few were critical. 'The general standard of entertainment is rather too much on the Light Programme level to satisfy the audience,' wrote Freddie Grisewood, 'which I imagine can't be quite the same as [that for the] Light Programme.' Too little, in his opinion, was being made of 'the visual': 'there is too much which is just sound with vision added, e.g. music and people talking.'<sup>3</sup> 'The present Service does not yet approach the standard which had been reached by the summer of 1939,' wrote Lindsay Wellington. 'We have not yet contrived to do the hard basic thinking on the nature of television as distinct from all other media of communication, without which we are looking a little blindly for an unknown target.'<sup>4</sup> Val Gielgud had received his television set only at the time when afternoon transmissions stopped during the fuel crisis, and he had watched very little: 'I fail to see any sign', he wrote, however, 'of the establishment of a theory as to television, its object and method. As far as I can judge, the camera is still supreme over the microphone, and the television producer tends to photograph a stage play rather than to illustrate a broadcast.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 Nov. 1946, when views were expressed that 'such a frightening show' should not be publicly transmitted. See also *The Times*, 21 Dec. 1946; *News Chronicle*, 21 Dec. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Nicolls, 27 May 1947.    <sup>3</sup> \*F. Grisewood to Nicolls, 31 May 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Wellington to Nicolls, 9 June 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Gielgud to Nicolls, 30 May 1947. See also his article in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. II, no. 1 (1947).



A few replies were very friendly. 'To say that there has been an improvement in television programmes since the reopening after the war is almost an understatement,' remarked H. L. Kirke.<sup>1</sup> 'There has been a welcome development in direct contact with the viewer,' wrote E. L. E. Pawley.<sup>2</sup> 'The camera work has improved since 1939,' Pat Hillyard, then Assistant Director of Variety, stated.<sup>3</sup> 'I think that television now has more entertainment value than it had before the war,' replied L. Hotine, the Senior Superintendent Engineer. Dance bands would be better 'unseen and unheard', but studio plays were the regular highlights.<sup>4</sup> Many other respondents praised the plays and the outside broadcasts, while criticizing *inter alia* (and not unanimously) the announcing, Variety, wrestling and darts matches ('particularly those that are supposed to be funny').<sup>5</sup> *Picture Page*, one or two felt, had lost some of its freshness, and R. J. F. Howgill, then Acting Controller (Entertainment), went further in stating quite personally that 'the feeling of novelty [in television] seemed to remain with it until it closed down [in 1939] and failed to revive with its reopening.'<sup>6</sup>

The verdicts of this closed BBC audience questioned by Nicolls on behalf of Haley seemed to be not dissimilar from those of the public at large. It, too, preferred outside broadcasts and plays, and it too objected, like R. T. B. Wynn, the BBC's lively Assistant Chief Engineer, to the 'King Canute' attitude of certain entertainment and sporting interests.<sup>7</sup> It, too, wanted more 'actuality', though it might not have made the point as clearly as H. B. Rantzen, Head of Designs Department, who complained that "'actuality" seems to have dropped right out and "home entertainment" would be a better description than "television"'.<sup>8</sup>

The editors of the *Radio Times* and *The Listener* were in close touch both with the BBC audience and with the larger public. The former, T. F. Henn, who had been brought over to the

<sup>1</sup> \*H. L. Kirke to Nicolls, 2 June 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*E. L. E. Pawley to Nicolls, 3 June 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*P. Hillyard to Nicolls, 10 June 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*L. Hotine to Nicolls, 29 May 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*R. T. B. Wynn to Nicolls, 2 June 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*R. J. F. Howgill to Nicolls, 2 June 1947.

<sup>7</sup> \*Wynn to Nicolls, 2 June 1947.

<sup>8</sup> \*H. B. Rantzen to Nicolls, 10 June 1947.

*Radio Times*, Gorham's old responsibility, from *London Calling*, stated simply in his reply that 'the staff at Alexandra Palace can be proud and satisfied with its first year of post-war television, but experimenting must go on, the programmes must not develop into schedules of series'.<sup>1</sup> The latter, Alan Thomas, an extremely able editor, remarked (almost representatively) that 'the best things to my mind in the present programmes are the actualities—the Boat Race, the cricket at Lord's, the University sports. Here television performs its true function; it is doing what no other medium can do. Next in interest come topical features.'<sup>2</sup>

The comments of Norman Collins, Head of the Light Programme, are particularly interesting, since he was soon to leave sound broadcasting to become Controller of Television.<sup>3</sup> He had found television drama very successful—both the acting and the production—and there had been 'no suggestion at all of cramped space or technical difficulties'. Outside broadcasts had been exceptionally good also, although in his view the commentators were not as effective as those used for sound alone.<sup>4</sup> The magazine programmes had been good and improving, but *Variety* had been disappointing, even vulgar. There had been very little in the way of serious music or straight talks. Collins's 'over-all comment' was that 'the selective viewer can get a remarkably fine return for his licence money, whereas the indiscriminate viewer is more than likely, because of the amount of *Variety* of one kind or another that is broadcast, to feel that he will encounter something rather second-rate.'<sup>5</sup>

R. J. E. Silvey, Head of Listener Research, replied both in a professional and a personal capacity. Gorham had hoped that he would have been able to obtain from Silvey a television equivalent of the 'Daily Listening Barometer' for sound, but Haley refused to provide resources for this, even after Gorham had appealed to him a second time.<sup>6</sup> 'Alexandra Palace can

<sup>1</sup> \*T. F. Henn to Nicolls, 17 June 1947.

<sup>2</sup> \*A. Thomas to Nicolls, 3 June 1947.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> Other respondents criticized the commentating. Why, one of them asked, for example, should Wimbledon commentators describe the ball-boys picking up the tennis balls while the viewers could see them? There were complaints, also, of clichés. (\*Wellington to Nicolls, 9 June 1947.)

<sup>5</sup> \*Collins to Nicolls, 4 June 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Memorandum by Gorham, 29 June 1946; Silvey to Howgill, 25 May 1946; Howgill to Gorham, 5 June 1946; Silvey to Gorham, 6 June 1946; Gorham to Haley, 28 June 1946; Haley to Gorham, 1 July 1946.

very easily become mentally isolated,' he had told Haley, and it was 'a bad thing for the staff to have no constant reminder of the reactions of the audience, such as has become a normal background to programme work in sound broadcasting.'<sup>1</sup> Silvey shared this opinion, but he did not hesitate to present his own personal preferences to Nicolls:

If mine were not a staff set, I do not think television would be switched on by the adults in my home more often than once in two or three weeks in the winter and even less in the summer. . . . I have been trying to analyse why people like my wife and I would not buy a television set even if we had the cash to spare. We ought to be in the market. We go out very little in the evening. . . . We are rarely able to go to the theatre and our visits to the cinema average about once in three months, if that. We are certainly not allergic to broadcasting; our set is used almost every evening. Why, then, does television make very little appeal to people like us? . . . (1) The picture itself still seems very primitive. Once the miraculous aspect of television has faded, as it inevitably does, the picture tends to be compared with that of the cinema. The comparison is least odious in respect of television studio productions, but in respect of O.B.s . . . the very field where television has so great an advantage, the resulting picture seems to fall glaringly short of a newsreel. . . . (2) For 'people like us', the programmes themselves contain much which is of very little appeal. We just aren't Variety-minded. . . . Magazine programmes such as *Kaleidoscope* and *Picture Page* seem to us amusing enough if one wishes to demonstrate television to a friend but never of sufficient appeal to warrant switching the set on specially. . . . (3) A further factor operating against television is the extremely high standard of sound broadcasting. . . . We have no sense of being kept on short commons. Furthermore, we are experienced listeners. (4) Finally, by no means the least potent factor militating against television is the sheer palaver involved in having to watch it. It means putting the light out, moving the furniture round and settling down to give the programme undivided attention.<sup>2</sup>

This socially and culturally interesting reply is particular enough in its detail to lead the reader to admire Silvey as the

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 28 June 1946, asking for even 'occasional enquiries'. 'It is rather disconcerting after having worked in sound broadcasting, to discuss planning, number of repeat performances, use of close-ups, suitability of announcers, and such matters involving listeners' tastes and habits, without having any outside reaction except programme correspondence.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Silvey to Nicolls, 18 June 1947.

historian of a transient mood as well as the research sociologist of listener and viewer behaviour.

Perhaps the most percipient of all the replies, however, came from Laurence Gilliam, Director of Features, one of the most sensitive and imaginative people inside the BBC. He was struck by 'the impression of extraordinary achievement—good top-line sports actualities (including cup finals and test matches) way ahead in audience appeal and selling power', and admitted that television drama had 'killed' his interest in 'conventional radio drama' even though he had seen no 'imaginative' television drama comparable with 'imaginative' radio drama. Yet what was missing from television was news, a point made daily to Philip Dorté by dissatisfied viewers. 'The absence of a Television News Service is a tragedy. Surely this *must* come soon. . . . A bulletin, with a gradually increasing proportion of picture reports from our own units, located in key news centres, would surely build up a regular television audience faster than any other single development.' This pointer to the shape of things to come was ignored in 1947. Although someone (Nicolls?) put a mark against points in Gilliam's letter which seemed to be of special interest, there was no mark against this striking reference to News. There was a mark, however, against Gilliam's plea for more experiment. 'From the stream of experiments will come the key advances in technique and programme development. . . . There is everything to gain, and practically nothing to lose, by such a policy.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not clear whether or not the comments Nicolls collected were passed on to Gorham or whether Nicolls made any comments of his own. Whether or not, few 'experiments' of the kind Gilliam was demanding were carried out between the first anniversary of post-war television and the BBC's twenty-fifth anniversary on 14 November 1947. Yet television did not stand still. There were more signs of change in programming than there were in the fundamental problems which persisted behind the scenes—problems of how to overcome bans and boycotts and of how to obtain greater resources for development from the Corporation. *Women's Magazine* was being launched in the summer. So, too, was a weekly *Television Newsreel* which was eventually to be converted into a daily service. Meanwhile,

<sup>1</sup> \*Gilliam to Nicolls, 25 June 1947.

*Kaleidoscope* was establishing itself as 'the viewers' own magazine programme'.<sup>1</sup>

Several single programmes were great successes. On 14 July there was an all-French cabaret entertainment compèred by Jacques Pauliac of Radiodiffusion Française: the French Ambassador was among the studio guests. In September Gracie Fields, anxious to test her popularity with a post-war British audience, made a television appearance along with most of her family, and in the same month when part of a Promenade Concert was broadcast 'a terrific atmosphere came over'.<sup>2</sup> Finally, on 20 November the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip was a very special kind of royal occasion, the kind which has always enhanced the popularity of television.

Radiolympia 1947—just before the wedding—broke all attendance records, and television was one of the main themes. Gorham spent a lot of time there. A few weeks earlier, he had visited the United States at his own expense to see what was happening both in television studios and control rooms—he was particularly interested in RCA's Orthicon camera—and in American homes. What impressed him most was not actual achievement in television but the universal *élan*. 'Their studios', he found, 'were no better than ours, but they were building where we were not', and their 'standard television sets were no bigger but they were making far more of them'. 'If we had had their equipment,' he concluded, 'our staff could have produced a really terrific service.'<sup>3</sup>

Another visitor to the United States, the well-informed and imaginative engineer, Leslie Hayes, attended the International Telecommunications Conference in Atlantic City. Like Gorham, he was particularly interested in colour television<sup>4</sup> and, above all, in possibilities of telerecording. Work on the latter was being carried out in Alexandra Palace itself, and in November 1947 Dorté and his BBC film unit made the first public use

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1948*, pp. 97-9.

<sup>2</sup> \*McGivern to Nicolls, 26 Sept. 1947. 'I have spoken to dozens of people inside and outside the BBC. They were unanimous in their praise of this transmission.'

<sup>3</sup> Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (1948), pp. 229-30.

<sup>4</sup> In April 1947 the Federal Communications Commission had ruled that colour television, being pressed for by CBS, had no immediate commercial possibilities and that the development of television should not wait upon the perfection of a new colour system.

of recorded television anywhere in the world.<sup>1</sup> Techniques were to change, but there was no doubt about what needed to be done.

Such triumphs, alas, were more ephemeral in 1947 than the persisting problems, including those of shortages and controls, problems which overshadowed the programmes themselves and the course of technical development.<sup>2</sup> It was necessary, for instance, to plan the outside broadcast schedule for the autumn of 1947, the Royal Wedding autumn, on the assumption that only half the 'normal number' of outside broadcasts, however popular, could be scheduled, and to warn producers that if their 'ration books' showed increases on original estimates, 'extra funds would not be available to meet the additional requirements'.<sup>3</sup> Filming *Transatlantic Quiz* had to be abandoned, and because of currency restrictions no further American play could be produced after *The Bad Man*.

Meanwhile the bans continued. No live television camera could be taken into Westminster Abbey for the Royal Wedding.<sup>4</sup> The Football League was as unwilling to allow television of matches as the theatre managers were to allow even excerpts from West End theatres. While advanced plans for televising a match between Charlton Athletic and Chelsea were having to be cancelled in October,<sup>5</sup> the Theatre Council was adamant in refusing to allow a broadcast from the Hippodrome.<sup>6</sup> The General Film Distributors finally cancelled permission to supply four French films,<sup>7</sup> while Howard Thomas, then working with Associated British Pathé, said that no old newsreels could be televised—even for the year 1922 when the BBC began—except for very short illustrative extracts.<sup>8</sup> Paul Beard, leader of

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1948*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 17 July, 7 Aug. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> It was possible, however, to introduce a film camera, and a film of what happened inside the Abbey was shown to viewers in the evening—immediacy at one remove.

<sup>5</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 9 Oct. 1947. In September Charlton had agreed to the televising of the match (*ibid.*, 11 Sept. 1947).

<sup>6</sup> \**Ibid.*, 11 Sept. 1947. The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, outside the West End, offered the Restoration comedy *The Relapse* (9 Oct. 1947) which was not thought to make good television (*ibid.*, 23 Oct. 1947).

<sup>7</sup> \**Ibid.*, 4 Sept. 1947.

<sup>8</sup> \**Ibid.*, 23 Nov. 1947. Gorham had made a useful deal with NBC in the USA to exchange news films. NBC, like the BBC, was banned from using newsreel (*Sound and Fury* (1948), p. 217).

the BBC Symphony Orchestra, was uneasy about the effect on the orchestra of the extra lighting in the Albert Hall in a Jubilee Symphony Concert,<sup>1</sup> and even the first response of Gracie Fields to the suggestion of television from the People's Palace was that it would not be right on artistic grounds to be televised while doing a sound broadcast.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in November, when there was talk of a New Year's Eve service, Gorham had to tell the Programme Planning Committee that it had been ruled that there could be no television of church services 'until a decision had been made by the Church Council'.<sup>3</sup>

Everything seemed to be difficult, and members of the Television Service were warned not to talk with 'outsiders' about the Television Advisory Committee. High hopes had been placed in it,<sup>4</sup> but in 1946 and 1947 it was proving 'hopeless' in trying to sort matters out. It collected statistics and noted trends in other countries,<sup>5</sup> but 'questions referred to it' about British development were vanishing into 'a limbo of adjourned meetings and inconclusive interviews'.<sup>6</sup>

There was frustration even in relation to a possible television performance by Lord Reith—in the series *Speaking Personally*. Though pressed to take part by Haley, with whom he was on good terms, Reith at first did not reply. Eventually he said no.<sup>7</sup> Gorham, whose appreciation of Reith was limited, was doubtless not very much surprised by or concerned about this outcome. He was beginning to feel that the 'old guard' in the BBC was holding back television, that the top management was less committed than he was, and that there were other priorities; and his suspicions seemed justified by an 'array of old hands' at

<sup>1</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 23 Oct. 1947. There were many complaints from members of the orchestra, and Kenneth Wright, the BBC's Assistant Director of Music, wrote to Gorham on 27 September that they could not go ahead with another concert 'because of the discomfort to musicians caused by glare and heat'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 14 Aug. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> It circulated, for example, an interesting report from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 July 1946. 'Major Network split on use of television soon or delaying until colour sets are perfected.' NBC wanted to go ahead with 'monochrome now'; CBS was prepared to await colour 'even if expensive delay pending perfection is the penalty'. For the statistics, see below, p. 243.

<sup>6</sup> M. Gorham, *Broadcasting and Television since 1900* (1952), p. 241.

<sup>7</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 19 Sept., 2, 16 Oct. 1947.

a Jubilee dinner for Reith. People who had come to the BBC when it was still young and spent twenty years in fairly senior jobs<sup>1</sup> could scarcely be expected, he felt, to take television in their stride. Gorham knew from experience in the early days of sound that the driving force of the organization had been provided by young men who still had their careers to make.

### 3. New Faces: New Vistas

TELEVISION was not to remain for much longer the preserve of the first post-war team—too small as it was to meet the demands of growth and too limited in range and, above all, in influence inside the Corporation. The number of people employed in the Television Service increased from 456 in June 1946 to 606 at the end of 1947 and 677 in June 1948, two years after the resumption of regular programmes.<sup>2</sup>

A system of 'quota gradings' meant that the establishment had to be considered at first in set categories—A1, B, and B1—and each increase in staffing was carefully considered within that framework of gradings. Thus, in January 1947, when it was decided to increase the numbers of producers from nineteen to twenty-one (including five Senior Producers instead of two in category A1), the Central Establishment Office recommended a continuation of the figure of nineteen with only three Senior Producers in category A1, five in category B, and only eleven instead of thirteen in category B1.<sup>3</sup> The exact details are, of course, less interesting and less important than the necessary attempt to control the composition of the staff in terms of status and pay as well as of function. The effort was related to BBC staffing policy as a whole, and Gorham had to refer relatively minor matters like permission for additional cameramen and appointments of announcers back to Nicolls and his deputies in Broadcasting House.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gorham, *Sound and Fury*, pp. 240-1.

<sup>2</sup> The authorized 'establishment' figures were 441 in June 1946, 690 in December 1947, and still 690 in June 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*J. A. Crockett, 'Television Quota Gradings', 11 Jan. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Gorham to Nicolls, 27 Jan. 1947. The appointment of the Chief Camera Operator had had to be referred to the Deputy Director-General.



There were changes at the top as well as within the ranks. Six days after hearing Reith speak at the Jubilee dinner in what seemed to Gorham the accents of the past, Gorham himself left the BBC on 24 November 1947. Soon there were to be many new faces. There were also to be significant shifts of power, some of them involving struggle. In time, there were people in Britain who were to say that Collins, Gorham's able and energetic successor, was 'the man who did more than any other single individual to bring commercial television to Britain'.<sup>1</sup> In 1947, however, when he took over Gorham's job, he seemed to Haley to be just the right man to make BBC television work.

Even before Collins replaced Gorham in November 1947, there had already been one big change of face. Denis Johnston resigned from the BBC in March 1947 on personal grounds—in order to have more time to write<sup>2</sup>—and was replaced as Television Programme Director by Cecil McGivern. This was a key appointment. McGivern has often been singled out as 'the true architect of BBC television';<sup>3</sup> and he made his presence felt immediately in 1947. Like Johnston, he had personal experience both of the theatre (as actor and as stage manager) and of the film industry (as a screen writer). He was a Tynesider by birth and a graduate of Durham University, and he had already left his mark on the history of sound broadcasting before 1945 as a colleague of Laurence Gilliam in the pioneering development of the radio 'feature', one of the BBC's greatest contributions to the art of radio.<sup>4</sup> His best-known programmes included the war-time *Junction X*, *The Battle of Britain*, *Fighter Pilot*, and *The Harbour called Mulberry*, and he had also been the man behind the scenes (with Gilliam) in the Christmas line-up programmes heard by millions.

When he left the Rank Organisation in 1947 to rejoin the BBC, McGivern was forty years old to the month. Intense, dedicated, demanding, and prickly, he was uninterested in

<sup>1</sup> *The Observer*, 18 Sept. 1955. Cf. Kenneth Baily in 1950 (*Here's Television*, p. 70): 'It is far too early in his career to say whether he will go down in history as the chief architect of Britain's national television service—or as that of something else.'

<sup>2</sup> Note by Gorham, 13 March 1947. Two of Johnston's new plays were televised in 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Black, *The Mirror in the Corner* (1972), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 167–9; *The War of Words*, pp. 393, 710.

getting on with people if he could get on with programmes, and he was glued to the screen every night watching everything that was happening through thick-lensed glasses. The terms of reference of his appointment included the phrase, 'to supervise the over-all quality of the television output',<sup>1</sup> and he made every effort to treat the output comprehensively. He wanted individual programmes to be both technically and artistically the very best, whatever their content—drama, politics, or sport—and he was desperately afraid of monotony. He also believed in long-term programme planning, and in January 1948 introduced a new programme planning system allowing for planning further ahead than had been possible before.<sup>2</sup>

McGivern's influence was ubiquitous. He never suffered fools gladly, but in the early years of post-war television he could win the loyalty of most of the people who worked with him because they trusted completely in his integrity. His personal contribution to the history of television will be apparent at many points in this volume. Yet he was always complemented by others with contrasting personalities. Collins, for example, was very different—literary in tastes and a novelist himself, interested in people, most of them outside the BBC, keenly ambitious. So, too, was Cecil Madden, who kept the Television Service in touch with show business—often despite the BBC. Madden continued to discover 'new talent', as he had discovered Petula Clark, the Beverley Sisters, and Jimmy Edwards, and he showed equal interest in the televising of O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *No, No, Nanette* (1948—with Hattie Jacques as Flora). Like Imlay Watts, who had to deal with the reception and accommodation of 'stars' in overcrowded post-war London, Madden loved meeting them, and every year he produced a fascinating montage of the 'personalities of the year'.<sup>3</sup>

There was one other new face at Alexandra Palace in 1947 before Gorham left. Pat Hillyard, who had had experience in television as an assistant production manager before the war,

<sup>1</sup> \*'Note on the Organisation of the Television Service', 26 April 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 11 Dec. 1947, 1 Jan. 1948. The first revised scheme broke down (*ibid.*, 22, 29 April, 10 June 1948) and a new system was introduced in June.

<sup>3</sup> The montages have been presented to the BBC Archives at Caversham.

and during the war had been Assistant Director of radio Variety, became Presentation Director (a new post)<sup>1</sup> during the summer of 1947, and it was he who had to deal with the planning of new studio facilities as well as efficient use of existing ones. His responsibilities were far more extensive than this, however, and he soon found himself concerned with many external matters, including relations with the formidable group of theatrical agents who could do so much to inhibit BBC initiatives.<sup>2</sup> On 10 December—after Gorham's departure—he was given over-all responsibilities for Light Entertainment, and the post of Presentation Director became vacant. It was in his new capacity, therefore, that Hillyard told a Programme Planning Committee meeting later in December that Emile Littler had just refused permission for any of 'his artists' to appear on television if no spoken credits were given.<sup>3</sup>

The replacement of Gorham by Collins in November 1947 was a quite different matter from the replacement of Johnston by McGivern. Gorham had had the immensely difficult task of trying to make the BBC's Television Service work efficiently in face not only of external barriers but of internal 'handicaps', as he called them, and misunderstandings. He had seen his *Sleeping Beauty* become—in his own estimate, which he believed was shared by others—a 'Cinderella of the BBC'.<sup>4</sup> For months he had become increasingly uneasy about much that was happening, and the final blow was Haley's 'reorganization' of the Corporation, announced appropriately on 5 November 1947. This upset him profoundly.<sup>5</sup> 'I know that reorganisations always disappoint somebody,' he began a letter to Haley four days later, adding that he was writing to express not personal disappointment but deep concern for the future of television.

Hitherto, Gorham had dealt directly with Haley or with his Deputy, Ashbridge. Now in all that he did he would have to work through Nicolls. He was galled that there would be no separate Director of Television, that television would be treated as only one of six 'divisions' within 'Home Broadcasting', and

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Pym, 9 April 1947. He had originally thought of appointing Hillyard as Productions Supervisor.

<sup>2</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 11 Sept. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 18 Dec. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 9 Nov. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> For the reorganization, see above, pp. 117 ff.

that control of news, features, and editorial functions would pass to an unnamed Director of the Spoken Word.<sup>1</sup>

In his autobiography, published not very long after the event and which he actually started to write on the night that Haley made his announcement, Gorham added that while he had tried to keep this important letter 'reasonable and moderate'—as, indeed, it was—he was 'full of despair'. 'It seemed to be a plunge right back into the bad old days of the BBC. We had had it all so often: the same air of mystery, the same lack of any discussion with the staff, and the same result of making the real work harder for those who were doing it.'<sup>2</sup>

Gorham did not resign immediately, but clearly he was bound to do so when Haley did not respond either to his arguments or to his way of putting them. Haley had apparently been planning changes in television management quite independently earlier in the year, and at a second interview with Gorham he told him plainly that it was before the reorganization and not after it that he had contemplated transferring him back to the Light Programme and switching Collins to television. The outcome was inevitable. Gorham resigned on 24 November, Haley accepted his resignation 'with very real regret', and Gorham parted from him and the BBC, he wrote later, with a feeling of 'enormous relief'.<sup>3</sup>

Collins took over his new post with infectious enthusiasm. He had worked in the BBC since 1940, first as a Talks Producer (Overseas) on the unestablished staff, and he had risen within the hierarchy by reason of his sheer ability. As Head of the Light Programme after Gorham moved to Alexandra Palace, he had demonstrated that he not only had more ideas than most people inside the BBC but that he was a keen and gifted administrator. He had shown also that while he was able to initiate and develop new kinds of 'popular' programme, his talents were by no means limited to the cultivation of such a field. It was not only that he wrote novels (including the best-selling *London Belongs to Me*) and film scripts or that he had more outside contacts than most of his colleagues. He was also one of the few people inside the Corporation who could make general statements about the philosophy and objectives of broadcasting.

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 9 Nov. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> M. Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (1948), p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246-7.

In 1947, therefore, Haley obviously believed that Collins had the right bundle of qualities—not least, energy—to guide television through a difficult but challenging period when there would be rapid development but when resources would still be strictly limited and government controls would still be tough.

For his part, Collins admired Haley, and in December 1946 had written to him that there was ‘a new and prevailing feeling of buoyancy’ in the BBC as a result of his personal influence.<sup>1</sup> A year later, after taking over his new post, he received a ‘battle order’ from Haley which he acknowledged with enthusiasm. ‘You are beginning a great pioneering job,’ Haley told him, before specifying his allotted tasks: ‘Give television a sense of social purpose. Give television a sense of adventure. Give television a sense of style.’ His first care, Haley added, was to see to the staff who were bound to be unsettled: ‘Get it into their heads that it is Quality that counts.’ The programmes should never fall below BBC standards: television had the same responsibilities as sound broadcasting. It had both ‘to educate and entertain’.<sup>2</sup> Haley’s final words would have interested Maurice Gorham, who had also been told on 1 January 1946 that he was one of the ‘pioneers’ embarking ‘on an adventure to which there will be no end’.<sup>3</sup> ‘Resolve’, Haley told Collins, ‘to see the opportunities rather than the difficulties. It is part of our national duty at present to use a maximum of resourcefulness to overcome a minimum of resources.’<sup>4</sup>

Collins replied that he looked forward to his new post, that he had found the staff at Alexandra Palace impressively enthusiastic, and that he and McGivern shared the same views on ‘the whole field of social purpose and the broadcasting of serious and intelligent programmes’.<sup>5</sup> There were no obvious divergencies at this stage between his views and those of Haley.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, there were inevitable organizational changes. ‘The programme staff structure of Television is still in process of formation,’ a memorandum of December 1947 began. Thereafter, four ‘programme groups’ were to be created—Drama,

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 20 Dec. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Collins, 2 Dec. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Gorham, 1 Jan. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Collins, 2 Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 6 Dec. 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 13 Nov. 1947.

Light Entertainment (which Hillyard took over),<sup>1</sup> Talks and Talks Features (which Mary Adams took over)—these were terms borrowed inappropriately from sound broadcasting—and Outside Broadcasts and Films. *Picture Page* went to Talks, *Kaleidoscope* to Light Entertainment. Puppet programmes were treated as an offshoot of Drama, and Geraldo's Orchestra as 'the lighter side of television music, rather than the musical side of light entertainment'.<sup>2</sup> Yet 'departmentalism' was still thought undesirable, and producers were to remain on a Central Television establishment ultimately responsible to McGivern as Television Programme Director, who would allot their services ('on as "permanent" a basis as possible') according to the needs of the four groups. No new titles were to be introduced in relation to posts within the changing structure.

Haley does not seem to have liked television titles and objected two weeks later to there being a Television Presentation Director, an Assistant Presentation Director, and a Senior Presentation Assistant. 'This seems to me to be getting somewhat top-heavy,' he wrote from a distance, not to Collins, but Nicolls.<sup>3</sup> Collins, when told, replied sensibly enough to Nicolls that 'Presentation in Television means something quite different from Presentation in Sound. The senior member of that department in Television is responsible for all the *organisational* work in connection with the studios and, in a sense, is better described as *Productions* Director.'<sup>4</sup>

With some possible misunderstandings removed, the way was prepared for change of a different kind, and in February 1948 Collins was able to announce that Haley had agreed to an extra £500 a week for the Programme Allowance, now set at £5,550, including an earmarked grant for the projected *Newsreel* programme. An increase of £5,750 per annum for overtime had also been granted.<sup>5</sup> Collins stressed, of course, that 'television *must* plan within this allocation'. He also reminded his colleagues that it had to pay off its debts of £3,000 incurred through previous overspending on programmes.<sup>6</sup> By the end

<sup>1</sup> \*'Television Reorganisation', 10 Dec. 1947; McGivern to Hillyard, 15 Dec. 1947. P. A. T. Bate was to work directly to McGivern for ballet. What happened was less 'cut and dried', as Hillyard foresaw (Hillyard to McGivern, 22 Dec. 1947).

<sup>2</sup> \*'Television Reorganisation', 10 Dec. 1947. <sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 24 Dec. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to Nicolls, 31 Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Collins, 10 March 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 26 Feb. 1948.

of the year the new financial policy had worked. Collins was still asking for additional funds, but financial administration had been tightened up and there had been no 'wastage' in the sense that money allotted to television was returned unspent.<sup>1</sup>

'Financial administration' was always related very closely to new aspects of programming. Thus, *Newsreel*, a fifteen-minute programme, was the kind of venture which had been urged by a few of the respondents to Nicolls's inquiries in 1947;<sup>2</sup> and although the first broadcast did not take place until 5 January 1948,<sup>3</sup> preparations were long and costly.<sup>4</sup> Dorté chose Harold Cox, formerly of Gaumont British and Assistant Television Outside Broadcasts Manager before the war, to serve as first *Newsreel* manager, but the programme involved substantially increased costs and not only a new manager but a new production team.<sup>5</sup> It also entailed further changes in television organization. In March 1948, therefore, Haley agreed to the splitting of the Television Outside Broadcasts and Film Department into two separate parts, the former to be headed by Ian Orr-Ewing and the latter by Philip Dorté. Nicolls took care to add, however, that this was agreed only on 'the definite assumption that this split will not involve any extra staff—that is to say that you [Collins] will not in the next year or so ask for any extra staff which you would not have asked for if the Department had not been split'.<sup>6</sup>

This kind of injunction must have been very cramping, not least because Collins, like Gorham before him, very quickly discovered how badly overworked many of the Television staff were, not only programme producing, but in such departments as design and supply.<sup>7</sup> Very soon after being appointed, Collins had had a lunch-time talk with Lord Simon, the Chairman of the Governors, who had told Herbert Morrison, the Lord

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 23 Dec. 1948. In November 1948, however, McGivern was still complaining that savings from one quarter could not be carried forward to the next (ibid., 4 Nov. 1948).

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 590.

<sup>4</sup> There had been a long discussion on the subject in October 1947 (\*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 16 Oct. 1947), when the name 'BBC Teleciné Review' was mooted.

<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 593.

<sup>6</sup> \*Nicolls to Collins, 17 March 1948.

<sup>7</sup> \*N. Collins, Report on Television, 9 April 1948, Appendix C. 'The Supply Manager has been and is consistently overworked. His average weekly hours are 52. He was able to take only one week's annual leave instead of four in 1947.'

President of the Council, in November 1947 how 'eager' the BBC was to 'go ahead with television'.<sup>1</sup> Simon asked Collins very frankly—as was his wont—whether enough money was being spent on television research, whether there could be any improvement in the provision of studio space and supply of cameras, and whether the Corporation was 'fully abreast' of general developments in American television. 'If the American cameras were really outstandingly good,' he went on, then 'dollars should be spent to bring them here.' He also expressed the hope that Collins could visit American television studios and learn more about American experience.

Collins properly reported the conversation to Haley.<sup>2</sup> He was granted more studio space than Gorham had ever had at his disposal,<sup>3</sup> but he maintained his pressure on Haley, knowing that he was fully backed by Television's Direction Committee, which from January 1949 onwards included R. T. B. Wynn, the Assistant Chief Engineer, as well as television engineers, programme heads, and administrators.<sup>4</sup> Like his closest colleagues, he also believed strongly that far more staff were needed along with the extra equipment, that Alexandra Palace, even if available, was not suitable for long-term television development, and that any split-site arrangement would, even in the medium term, be untenable.<sup>5</sup>

Haley was soon to acknowledge the force of the last point. Nonetheless, while he recognized that 'obviously we should do everything we can to give the people on our staff and the people whom we ask to broadcast the best conditions we reasonably can', he was alarmed at Collins's projected staff figures. These he could study carefully in an important—and realistic—paper prepared by Collins in the early spring of 1948. 'A great deal of what Collins says is based on taking the first hurdle of the staff without further questions,' he commented in response. 'I do not think we can do this with equanimity. The figures he gives

<sup>1</sup> \*'Television Policy', Note by the BBC, of Nov. 1947, sent to the Lord President of the Council and the Postmaster-General.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 22 Jan. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*In a Memorandum of 19 Feb. 1948, J. A. C. Knott had pointed out that the average space per person working at Alexandra Palace was 45 square feet. 'The BBC has no standard rate per head but the normal pre-war standard with other public organisations was a maximum of 100 square feet per head.'

<sup>4</sup> \*Direction Meeting, *Minutes*, 14 Jan. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 27 May 1949.



are alarming, and it seems to me that a most thorough and meticulous examination must be made of the validity of the arguments in their favour. I do not feel that it is sufficient to say that programme technique has changed and therefore the number of staff has more than doubled. There has to be a controlling point on staff. . . . It is important we should tackle this aspect of the problem while television is still young enough to be moulded, and if necessary, re-oriented.<sup>1</sup>

This significant comment was the prelude not to a contraction but to yet a further expansion of television, for Collins had not been exaggerating when he had stated bluntly in what he called his *magnum opus*<sup>2</sup> that, given the responsibilities of the posts and the additional complications arising from the medium of television, 'certain key posts' were 'undergraded in relation to . . . Sound' and that there were serious staff shortages in essential places. The inordinate amount of overtime being worked registered this.<sup>3</sup> To reinforce his case, J. A. C. Knott produced the following table of staff change since 1936:<sup>4</sup>

STAFF INCREASES—1936-1948

	1936	1939	1946	1948 (first 3 months)	
<i>Programmes and Administration</i>	40	182	202	280	Between 1936 and 1939 Staff Administration was dealt with centrally at Broadcasting House
<i>Engineering</i>	71	211	218	241	
<i>Ancillary Services (including Publicity)</i>	86 (7)	112 (7)	112 (4)	131 (5)	Between 1936 and 1939 there was no separate Television Accounts Section, the work being handled by the Central Accounts Department
<i>Totals</i>	197	505	536	652	
<i>Average Weekly Hours of Transmission</i>	12·8	24·2	28·4	28·9	

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 21 April 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to Pym, 28 April 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins, 'Report on Television', 9 April 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*J. A. C. Knott, 'Television Staff Developments, 1936-1948', 3 May 1948.

Within the staffing pattern, there were difficulties at different points—in relation, for example, to studio managers and to announcers. Nor was it easy to reach agreement about solutions. Thus, when P. E. Cruttwell, the Staff Administration Officer, argued against Collins's view that Television Announcers should be on short-term contract basis—'I should have thought that if viewers could stand a Television Announcer up to five years they could do so indefinitely'<sup>1</sup>—Collins reiterated that 'looks' mattered immensely and that the last thing viewers wished to see were 'ageing juveniles'.<sup>2</sup> A five-year stint was the proper Television Announcer's life.<sup>3</sup>

The correspondence had its funny side, particularly when Nicolls descended to detail,<sup>4</sup> yet television announcers were obviously placed in a difficult personal position in 1948 and 1949.<sup>5</sup> They had the best-known faces in the country—or at least in those areas where there was television—but their position was often uncertain. All would-be new announcers—and there were many of them—were given extended trials, for in this field Collins and his colleagues would take no risks. Meanwhile, McDonald Hobley and Sylvia Peters stayed, along with Mary Malcolm, the only granddaughter of Lillie Langtry, who had first appeared in a James Laver televised fashion show and was appointed an announcer in January 1948.

There were a number of staff changes, some of them very important, the need for which was argued about in rather different terms. Thus the role in television of music—serious or light—was a matter of debate even after Eric Robinson, brother of Stanford, became Conductor of the Television Orchestra. Eric Robinson, lively and versatile, became a 'personality' just because he had no favourite kind of music: 'it would be impossible to do my job properly if I had,' he said. He was as happy with Donald Peers, the surprising singing

<sup>1</sup> \*P. E. Cruttwell to Nicolls, 5 Aug. 1948. McGivern had written on the same subject to Nicolls as early as 30 August 1946, saying that the Service should be free to engage announcers either on Programme Contract or a Staff Contract according to circumstances in particular cases.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to Cruttwell, 25 Aug. 1948.      <sup>3</sup> \*Knott to Cruttwell, 9 Oct. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Nicolls to Gorham, 28 Aug. 1946. There was one 'grave doubt', Nicolls thought, about a particular announcer, 'mainly arising from his face'.

<sup>5</sup> \*Pym to Knott, 17 Nov. 1948, agreeing that television announcers should not be offered 'establishment' but should work on short-term contracts. The contracts were prepared in December 1948.

success of 1949, as with Puccini, and it was with particular reference to his programme *Music for You* that he won the Television Society's Silver Medal in 1952.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, Val Gielgud, who moved from Sound to Television as Head of Drama after Collins took over, had a very unhappy time. He had hardly thought of Muswell Hill, the site of Alexandra Palace, as 'one of the Delectable Mountains', and he found it compared unfavourably with 'the Hill Difficulty'. He was soon at loggerheads both with Collins and McGivern. The latter he had greatly respected, but he found him lacking in a sense both of order and of direction, and it was after much misunderstanding that Gielgud returned to Broadcasting House. He had strong likes and dislikes of his own, and wanted a defined drama policy for television. He also disliked the fact that television had no established script unit and 'no departmental control worth the name'. Finally, he objected to 'the off-the-cuff and last minute changes' which were not only a product of McGivern's personality but part of the culture of television itself.<sup>2</sup>

Television comedy was to discover its own balance between the contrived and the impromptu, but it took time, as Denis Norden admitted, for scriptwriters—or producers—to move easily from the verbal to the visual.<sup>3</sup> Tony Hancock as a television face postdates this volume, for *Hancock's Half Hour* did not move to television until 1956. Meanwhile, however, Michael Mills, a later BBC Head of Comedy, had become a Light Entertainment producer; Jack Mewett, a stores clerk before the war and later General Manager, Film Operations and Services, had become Administrative Assistant, Films; and Richard Cawston, an imaginative and innovatory producer

<sup>1</sup> For a good brief account of Eric Robinson, who had joined the BBC Orchestra (Sound) in 1931, see G. Ross, *Television Jubilee* (1961), pp. 151–4. See also below, pp. 741–2. The development of music on television was severely restricted by the Musicians' Union.

<sup>2</sup> See V. Gielgud, *op. cit.*, pp. 126 ff. See also below, p. 688. Gielgud had taken an active part in pre-war television. He had starred, indeed, along with John Gielgud, in what was perhaps television's first play, *The Man with a Flower in his Mouth*, produced in April 1930 during Baird experimental broadcasts. For a time in 1948 and 1949 Robert MacDermot, who had been an announcer and programme planner, had been in charge of television drama. Neither he nor McGivern had been happy about the arrangement.

<sup>3</sup> Norden is quoted in D. Nathan, *The Laughtermakers* (1971), p. 35. See also below, p. 716.

and later Head of Documentaries, had become an Assistant Film Editor. In 1949 John Elliott, creator in 1966 of *The Troubleshooters*, appeared in the Film Section for the first time.

In retrospect, perhaps the most important new face in 1948 was that of Grace Wyndham Goldie. Her first title was that of Television Talks Producer, but this title gives no idea of the seminal role she was to play both in introducing other new faces, mainly young ones, to television and in devising new televisual arts and techniques, not least in political broadcasting. She had been a radio critic during the 1930s, a Civil Servant in the Board of Trade between 1942 and 1944, and a Talks Producer (Sound) from 1944 until she moved to the Television Service, and she made her impact at once in a branch of television which had hitherto been neglected. Her first reactions were uncertain. She saw faces 'grey with fatigue', offices that were dirty and overcrowded, sets that were already dingy, and a dangerous iron ladder leading to the crowded control gallery above Studio A. Even after she had settled, 'pinpricking administrative obstinacy' continued to irritate her. Yet she took naturally to television and realized its unique possibilities.<sup>1</sup>

Factual evidence on the duties and job responsibilities of 'all posts in the Television Establishment, promising or established, big or small', was patiently and painstakingly collected on behalf of the Central Establishment Office by I. Beynon-Lewis during the late summer and early autumn of 1948. Written in 'O and M' terms, it did not identify the rich store of talent which Collins had already acquired. Nor were the general comments, however well intended, calculated to appeal to people who were not used to the ways of Broadcasting House.

Some of the 'problems' in different parts of the television set-up seemed to have sprung—so Beynon-Lewis argued—from 'the tendency to recruit, for even senior posts in Television, the "slick dealer" from both the film and theatre world'. The situation should be rectified. 'Over the years the Corporation has built up for itself a tradition of leadership in culture, manners and good behaviour, and it is clearly desirable that this should also become the tradition of the Television Service.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See G. Wyndham Goldie, *Facing the Nation* (1977), ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> \*Notes by I. Beynon-Lewis; D. Hay, Head of Central Establishment Office, to Bottomley, 25 Oct. 1948.

Such a statement reveals some of the suspicions in Broadcasting House, yet there was also a feeling there that there should be a regular flow of staff from sound to television, partly doubtless to maintain the tradition, partly because television opportunities would increase as coverage was extended. There was scope for misunderstanding here. Thus, when in November 1948 Nicolls suggested that new producers' posts should be created to permit people to move over from sound into television,<sup>1</sup> Collins was convinced that there were few people with 'sufficient stage or film experience' to make the transition.<sup>2</sup> And when Beynon-Lewis's report was finally completed in February 1949, there were generalizations in it which Collins found disturbing. 'Your . . . paragraph beginning ". . . it is appreciated that at the moment and for some time to come this medium is experiencing teething troubles . . ." is completely unindicative of the number and the magnitude of the problems facing Television. . . . The medium of Sound Radio has been fully and exhaustively explored within the past twenty-five years, so that it is virtually true to say that everything that can be done has been done and remains only to be done better. On the other hand, Television (even though it has acquired an impressive air of expertise in certain directions) is virtually unexplored.' Moving on to the attack, Collins added that he was 'most anxious' not to 'allow Television establishment to become a rigidly boxed up affair as Sound establishment has become'.<sup>3</sup>

The documents highlight such arguments. Meanwhile, however, Collins was winning the battle to secure more resources for television than had ever been thought necessary before. In May 1948 he had asked Haley for 'some indication of the kind of development which he is expecting from Television within say the next five years'.<sup>4</sup> The kind of development he himself wanted was 'orderly' and 'planned' in contrast to the 'uncoordinated developments which have been occurring in the past'.<sup>5</sup> It was difficult fully to assess technical needs, he pointed out, before the possibilities of telerecording were more clear, and even on the programme side little more could be done until

<sup>1</sup> \*Nicolls to B. W. Gray, Assistant Head of Staff Training, 4 Nov. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 7 Oct. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Hay, 7 Feb. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 5 May 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Collins to Nicolls, 14 May 1948.

new studios were available. Yet the preparation of educational programmes figured high, Collins went on, in his own list of priorities. 'Even though there is . . . no prospect of this within the next year or so, I feel that by the end of the five year period they are likely to be a practical possibility.'<sup>1</sup> Studio space remained a main limiting factor. 'There should be one studio set aside entirely for that purpose [education] and this is not even provided for in the development plans. Also, we should bear in mind that . . . when staff are recruited it will take three to six months before they are familiar with the new medium.'<sup>2</sup>

In June 1948 the Governors agreed with Haley in one of their relatively rare discussions on television that the most urgent building priority was additional television studios,<sup>3</sup> and a week later Haley called an important meeting at Broadcasting House at which all the senior BBC officials, including Collins and Nicolls, were present. This was perhaps the first meeting at which large-scale action in relation to television development was decided upon. Priority would be given, Haley said, to building two new studios and ancillary offices at Shepherd's Bush, and new programme schedules would be related to this increase in accommodation which would be available in approximately three-and-a-half years' time. In parallel, if the Government approved, new regional transmitters would be opened at the rate of three in two years, thus giving nation-wide coverage by 1955/56.<sup>4</sup>

The Government did approve, and an important official Government statement by the Postmaster-General on the future of television was published on 24 August 1948.<sup>5</sup> It stated that the 405-line picture would continue to be used for a number of years—Lord Trefgarne called this 'a triumph for the British radio industry'—that work on the Sutton Coldfield station for

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 5 May 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to Nicolls, 14 May 1948. He enclosed a note from *The Times Educational Supplement*. He wrote again on the same subject on 24 May 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 10 June 1948. At their meeting on 9 September they agreed to stand by their decision to acquire the Shepherd's Bush site despite a number of difficulties.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 17 June 1948.

<sup>5</sup> GPO statement, 24 August 1948. See also *The Times*, 24 Aug. 1948. Collins stated that it 'disposes for the time being of any controversy regarding the 405 line system' (\*Note by Collins, 25 Aug. 1948). See also E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), p. 355.

Midlands viewers was pressing ahead, and that the BBC had been authorized to plan further television stations, beginning with the North of England, 'so as to bring television within the range of the greater part of the population'.<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, which noted in a leader that this nation-wide extension would require 'most businesslike handling', stressed how difficult post-war progress had hitherto been. 'The road between then [1946] and now may be described as passing through a pattern of vicious circles, and only pioneers with stout hearts, boundless enthusiasm, and unrivalled professional knowledge would have travelled it.'<sup>2</sup>

One point that Collins knew only too well about future journeying was that while Alexandra Palace seemed likely to remain as a home base for 'a number of years', its facilities were completely inadequate; and one day after the Postmaster-General's public statement Collins chaired a Television Direction Meeting, at which the senior engineers and two of the Governors, Air Marshal Peck and John Adamson, were present, when it was agreed that a five-acre site provided 'an inadequate area for television development'.<sup>3</sup> It was during the following year, 1949, that a number of critical decisions were taken about long-term siting. In March the Corporation acquired a 13½-acre site at the White City which had housed the buildings for the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908, and secured the permission of the London County Council to start developing it.

Much was to happen to television before the opening of Television Centre in 1960, but it was possible by July to prepare a first sketch plan, with rough schedules of floor areas, and by September to list departmental requirements. In November, after consultations with the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Graham Dawbarn was appointed architect for the new Centre to work in association with Marmaduke Tudsbury Tudsbury, the BBC's Civil Engineer. His first designs resembled a large snail, and certainly early progress was at snail's pace. There were to be many delays—and many second thoughts—before the scheme went ahead.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Draft Government Statement, 6 July 1948; \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 8 July 1948, reporting that they had been told of the imminent statement.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 24 Aug. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Direction Meeting, 25 Aug. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> See M. T. Tudsbury, 'The White City Site' in *BBC Handbook*, 1951. There were some early doubts about the site. Thus a Television Direction meeting on 27 May

But meanwhile the Rank Film Studios at Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, were acquired in November 1949, after a frantic weekend when Haley rang up the Governors one by one to ask for their approval.<sup>1</sup> The five studios there were ideal for television, but the largest had to be reserved for scenery storage and as a kind of marshalling yard. A Television Studio Development Committee was set up in January 1950 under the chairmanship of M. J. L. Pulling, the recently appointed Senior Superintendent Engineer, Television Broadcasting, and the first new studio, Studio D (used for Children's Television), was opened in May. A further studio, Studio G, intended mainly for Light Entertainment programmes, was opened on 23 December, just in time for a Christmas Gala programme, but it was not until February 1952 that Studio H (for Talks) was opened, enabling Studio B at Alexandra Palace to be closed down.<sup>2</sup>

The pressures within the Service continued until these and further new facilities became available,<sup>3</sup> and Collins told Nicolls bluntly in September 1948 that they were '*exceedingly heavy*' and would inevitably '*increase rather than diminish*'.<sup>4</sup> He proposed a new post at that time—Assistant Head of Television Programmes—not merely to relieve McGivern of 'the load of work that descends upon him'—on average, 72 hours a week—but 'to strengthen the organisation and thereby improve the quality of output'.<sup>5</sup> Imlay Watts was his candidate for the post, and his transfer would mean promoting A. J. M. Ozmond, the Senior Presentation Assistant, to a new post of 'Television Productions Manager'. Later in that year Outside Broadcasts and Films, which were beginning to play a greater part in general programming, were split, with S. J. de Lotbinière taking over the former in addition to his responsibilities for

<sup>1</sup> The Board of Governors had decided against trying to acquire them earlier in the year (\*Television Direction Committee, *Minutes*, 22 July 1949). Earlier sites considered and rejected were the King George V Suite at Alexandra Palace; the Athenaeum, Muswell Hill (previously a ballroom); the Westminster Ice Rink; and the Highbury Film Studios.

<sup>2</sup> For the later story, including the taking over of Studio E on 23 August 1953 and the closing down of Studio A at Alexandra Palace in 1954, see below, pp. 982-4.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Nicolls, 23 Sept. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid.

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1949 thought that it was unsuitable for the permanent centre. A later meeting on 7 October noted that the development would go ahead on the basis of development of half the site by 1954.



Sound and Dorté the latter. On this occasion the move was not favoured by Collins or McGivern, both of whom feared that Television was to be controlled by Sound in one of its most distinctive activities. De Lotbinière, however, was an invaluable organizer and initiator, during a 'bridge' period, and after he had succeeded in his task, Sound and Television Outside Broadcasts were themselves split again in 1952.

Meanwhile, Peter Dimmock, who became Assistant Head of Outside Broadcasts (Television), was in no doubt as to which medium would count for most in the future. Nor was Grace Wyndham Goldie. When she moved to television, Bertrand Russell told her sadly that 'it will be of no importance in your lifetime or mine'. It was one of Russell's many prophecies which very soon was to be proved untrue.<sup>1</sup>

The growth of the audience was taken for granted by Collins. 'The television public', he wrote in the *BBC Quarterly* in the spring of 1949, 'is at the moment a small one: it is no more than a hundredth part of the radio audience. Nor can the remaining 99 per cent be recruited overnight. But once TV is truly national it will become the most important medium that exists. Everything that it does or does not do will be important. The very fact that it is in the home is vital. Its only rival will be the wireless, and the rivalry will not be strong.'<sup>2</sup>

## 4. The Growth of the Audience

THE growth of the television audience to the point in time when it covered 'the greater part of the population' has been studied from many different angles, with one important monograph (and a number of articles) concentrating on the mathematics of the demand curve for television sets.<sup>3</sup> The statistics of total numbers of licences issued—a three-hundredfold increase in eight years—are revealing even without further probing into

<sup>1</sup> See Black, *op. cit.*, p. 131.   <sup>2</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IV, no. 1, April 1949, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> A. D. Bain, *The Growth of Television Ownership in the United Kingdom, A Lognormal Model* (1964) and 'The Growth of Television Ownership in the United Kingdom' in *International Economic Review*, vol. 3 (1962). Cf. for the United States, T. F. Derrburg, 'Consumer Response to Innovation: Television' in *Yale Studies in Economics*, no. 9, *Studies in Household Economic Behaviour* (1958).

their detail, and it is interesting to compare this very rapid growth—in 1950/1 the numbers doubled—with the statistics of the 1920s, relating to wireless sets. The two-million figure was reached more quickly for wireless sets during the 1920s, but thereafter growth was slower. There was something of a plateau, indeed, for five years.<sup>1</sup> In studying the post-war story of television, it is necessary to take account of a rather longer span than the period covered in this chapter, for there was always a double dimension—operating here and now and planning for a more distant future.

NUMBERS OF SOUND AND TELEVISION LICENCES, 1947-1955, AND OF SOUND LICENCES, 1922-1930\*

Year	Sound Totals†	Combined Sound and Vision Totals	Sound Totals‡	Year
1947	10,713,298	14,560	35,755‡	1922
1948	11,081,977	45,564	595,496	1923
1949	11,567,227	126,567	1,129,578	1924
1950	11,819,190	343,882	1,645,207	1925
1951	11,546,925	763,941	2,178,259	1926
1952	11,244,141	1,449,260	2,263,894	1927
1953	10,688,684	2,142,452	2,470,639	1928
1954	10,125,512	3,248,892	2,717,367	1929
1955	9,414,224	4,503,766	3,075,828	1930
1975	—	17,700,815	10,347,831	1946

\* 31 March figures taken from the *Annual Report and Accounts* of the BBC.

† These do not include wireless licences issued free to the blind (46,861 in 1945 and 62,506 in 1955).

‡ Not strictly comparable with the later figures.

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), p. 18. George Barnes, in a talk to the Home Sound Programme Liaison Committee, 7 July 1953, examined briefly the comparative statistics. The rate of growth—2,000 a day—was not faster, he said, than that of sound licences, but was, in practice, not comparable because television was 'five times as expensive'.

Inside the post-war BBC it was recognized, perhaps belatedly, that the Corporation's income might rise beyond all precedent as a result of a sharp increase in combined sound and television fees. Yet the estimates made inside the Corporation always involved a great deal of guesswork. Thus, projections of June 1949 are compared in the following table with realized facts:<sup>1</sup>

SOUND AND TELEVISION LICENCES:  
AS ESTIMATED AND ACTUAL

<i>March</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Actual</i>
1949	120,000	126,567
1950	250,000	343,882
1951	500,000	763,941
1952	800,000	1,449,260
1953	1,200,000	2,142,452
1954	1,600,000	3,248,852
1955	2,000,000	4,503,766

It is clear that the rate of growth was being thought of very much in terms of broadcasting experience before 1930. As far as the Television Advisory Committee was concerned, however, estimates had to be related mainly to estimates of the numbers of television sets the British radio industry seemed likely to produce. In January 1946 the Committee was forecasting a production of 500,000 sets within three years in 'the knowledge of industry capacity and an assessment of public demand'.<sup>2</sup> Yet it had to revise these figures as production lagged behind from the start. Materials were in short supply, including

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to H. Townshend (Post Office), 9 Sept. 1949. 'You will appreciate', he added, 'that some factors such as the rate of set production . . . will depend on the national economic position.' The figures were reproduced in Cmd. 8117 (1951, p. 85).

<sup>2</sup> \*Television Advisory Committee, *Second Report*, July 1946. In the short run it anticipated a production of 35,000 sets by September 1947 (Television Advisory Committee, *Third Report*, Dec. 1946). It was still thinking, however, at least partially, in terms of 'cinema and other forms of communal viewing' ('Past and Future Production of Television Receiving Sets', 18 June 1947).

glass for cathode-ray tubes and timber, and only 2,000 sets were being produced each month during the first six months of 1947. At the end of the year only 34,000 sets were in use and only 0.2 per cent of families had sets in their homes. Even at the end of 1948 the figure was only 134,000.

There was a doubling in production in 1949/50, when the *Annual Register* included sections on Broadcasting and Television for the first time, but it was not until 1953 that the numbers of television sets being produced was greater than the number of sound receivers.<sup>1</sup> This was a critical year in the shift from home listening to home viewing. Exports were to remain negligible—despite the war-time hopes of the Hankey Committee—until 1962:

PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS OF  
TELEVISION SETS AND WIRELESS SETS

	<i>Television Sets</i>	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Wireless Sets</i>	<i>Exports</i>
1946	6,500			
1947	25,000		1,981,000	385,000
1948	91,000		1,630,000	323,000
1949	205,000		1,348,000	309,000
1950	540,000	100	1,806,000	369,000
1951	711,000	600	1,738,000	549,000
1952	812,000	6,300	1,013,000	488,000
1953	1,147,000	5,300	956,000	370,000
1954	1,237,000	8,000	1,554,000	293,000
1955	1,771,000	7,000	1,623,000	316,000

The BBC paid less attention to such figures than to the capital and recurrent costs of providing an extended television service, and it was not represented, for example, at a Press Conference held by the Radio Industry Council in August 1948 just after

<sup>1</sup> The figures have been obtained from the British Radio Equipment Manufacturers' Association (BREMA).

the Government had issued its statement on the extension of broadcasting:<sup>1</sup> the grounds given were that it did not wish to send its officials to a meeting held 'under the auspices of a private industrial body'.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, it could not ignore demand factors in planning television development. Collins, like Ashbridge, who sat on the Television Advisory Committee, knew what was happening, and was hopeful at that time that mass production of television sets in the United States would have the effect of bringing down the price of sets and speeding the transition from sound broadcasting to television. He was forced to recognize, however, that there were limitations. It was only if 'the trade could get raw materials', he pointed out, that it could engage 'in mass production, or at least near mass production'.<sup>3</sup>

A year later the newspapers were pointing to American sales of a thousand sets a day and suggesting that three million sets would be in use by the end of the year, 'only a foretaste of what is coming in every civilised country'.<sup>4</sup> Alistair Cooke had explained that television was 'already as humble as a hot dog' on the other side of the Atlantic;<sup>5</sup> and it was, in fact, from Britain's economically deprived north-east, where television had not yet penetrated, that a news headline read 'Revolution in the Home'. 'Although television tends to keep you at home,' the report remarked, 'it is also a talisman for friendship. Put an H-aerial up over your house and you will be astonished to find how many friends you have in the street.' The writer added that he had a friend who was a 'television fiend' and had installed eight cinema tip-up seats in his drawing-room.<sup>6</sup> Not all reporters thought that the aerials necessarily signified viewing, certainly not collective viewing. A BBC *Scrapbook* programme quoted an *Evening News* comment from London that 'the television aerial has become the symbol of social superiority down our street'.<sup>7</sup>

The *Investors Chronicle*, too, was sceptical. After *The Times*

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 236.      <sup>2</sup> R. J. S. Baker to R. T. B. Wynn, 21 Aug. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> N. Collins, 'Television: long-term view', 15 Sept. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 29 March 1949.

<sup>5</sup> A. Cooke, 'Letter from America', Broadcast of 18 July 1948. Charles Curran, later Director-General of the BBC, was the producer.

<sup>6</sup> *Evening Chronicle* (Manchester), 23 June 1949.

<sup>7</sup> *Scrapbook for 1948*, broadcast on 9 April 1969.

had described the issue of the hundred-thousandth television licence in February 1949 as 'a significant advance', it commented that 'our progress in television' was 'singularly insignificant'. 'If ever there was a country which is ideally suited for television, it is Britain. Yet the United States has raced ahead of us.' 'There is no greater bore than the new owner of a television set,' it went on, 'but it is a moot point whether this is a tribute to the Alexandra Palace programmes or to the child in all of us and the delight even a stockbroker of fifty-five takes in a new toy.' 'Most of us really covet television sets today on at most two dozen occasions during the year,' the article concluded. 'For the rest, we are not strongly attracted. To attract us, a great deal of money would have to be spent.'<sup>1</sup>

The writer of the *Investors Chronicle* article conceded the difficulties confronting an individual seeking to 'judge mass opinion'. Evidence from the body perhaps most qualified to do so—Mass Observation—suggested a somewhat different conclusion a few months later. Television sets were still to be found in only three households out of a hundred, but the numbers had trebled within eighteen months, and many more people than owners had watched television. There was no shortage of critical people who complained, for example, that the screens were too small or that too much concentrated attention was needed, while others said that before buying sets they were waiting for large screens *and* colour. Yet there were some people who were highly appreciative, particularly about the outside broadcasts. 'We used to go to the pictures once a week or so, but since we have had a television set we've hardly been at all. What's the point? We sit up all the time with the set and go everywhere—Wimbledon, Lords, the Royal Tournament. And the plays are so good too.'<sup>2</sup>

This tribute to the contribution of the outside broadcasters to popular television was echoed by all radio dealers, and all dealers must have been encouraged that Mass Observation, with no commercial axes to grind, reported that 48 per cent of people without sets said that they would like a set if they could buy one and 11 per cent that they would like one 'later on' when further technical advances had been made. Costs were

<sup>1</sup> *Investors Chronicle*, 26 Feb. 1949. The article was called 'Good Looking?'

<sup>2</sup> *Mass Observation Bulletin*, 1 Aug. 1949.

the main inhibition, and a pharmacist who remarked that 'at the moment' he did not 'feel justified' in paying out £70 to £150 for a set but 'he wished he could', was felt to be expressing 'a very widespread attitude'.<sup>1</sup>

Demand for a new commodity which has not been available before is not governed solely by economic factors—the prices of sets and the incomes of purchasers—for there has to be an initial breakthrough before large numbers of people are 'converted' to acceptance. Yet prices and incomes were always relevant. A table radio (AM only) cost on average only £18. 3s. 8d. in 1948 and a table 'radio-gram' £29. 4s. 5d.—the exact sums sound beautifully precise—but there were far cheaper 'wireless sets' on sale, designed, it was said, with no reference to listeners' incomes, for those who 'wanted no more than good quality reproduction from home stations'. A very few television sets could by then be bought for less than £50, but prices were far higher for 'aesthetes' who objected to the appearance of a bleak television screen. Bearing in mind that wage rates were rising less than prices after 1946 and that average earnings for men over 21 working in industry in 1949 were only £7. 2s. 8d. a week, there were obvious economic limits to the expansion of the market—at least until widespread renting of sets (with, of course, an initial down payment) became common after 1950.<sup>2</sup> There were occasional setbacks, as in 1952, when hire purchase was temporarily suspended.

In the beginning there was much communal viewing—even, it was said, in 'pre-fab' houses. Indeed, viewing for a time was 'a habit shared with the people next door'.<sup>3</sup> Most of the first sets had tubes of 12 inches or less, which must have strained viewing capacity, but the size of screens increased between 1952 and 1955, when there were over four hundred models on display at the Radio Exhibition. There were often difficult production problems, as during the Korean War, which began in 1950 and which perpetuated a 'television freeze' which had

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. The average wage of the group identified by Mass Observation was then £11. 10s. od. per week.

<sup>2</sup> Each year from 1949 onwards the *Radio Times* gave a good account of new sets at the time of the Radio Exhibition at Olympia. The details which follow are taken from this source and from surviving advertisements and catalogues.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register*, 1950, p. 413.

been imposed in the United States nearly two years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Yet there were few doubts by 1950 that producers would find it hard in future to keep pace with demand.<sup>2</sup> The electronics industry would have to grow.

A precondition of a substantial 'viewing growth' in the television audience was widening coverage—always rated higher than colour—and as each new transmitter began to operate, the rate of growth increased. There were no significant differences in local response, and the growth rate in each area opened up by a new transmitter was roughly the same. Thus by the end of 1954 the proportion of television families in the West Midlands area, served by the first provincial station, Sutton Coldfield, opened in December 1949, was about the same as in the pioneering London area. So, too, was the proportion in those parts of Scotland opened up in mid-1952 with the introduction of the Kirk o' Shotts transmitter.

It was clearly recognized inside the BBC—and the Television Advisory Committee—that until all areas outside London began to receive television programmes there would be complaints about BBC spending on television rather than on sound, for which coverage was almost complete. The *Liverpool Daily Post* had not been exceptional in April 1946 when it condemned London-based television. 'How long must Liverpool licence-holders continue to pay for a scene so distant that they cannot even see it? As things are, television is simply a luxury service for London and listeners elsewhere, who will soon have to double their wireless payments, have the irritating feeling that their money is partly being used for diversions in which they cannot share.'<sup>3</sup>

Similar complaints continued to come in from 'neglected' areas until the new high-power transmitters opened. 'The radio trade in Scotland is very disappointed that Scotland has to play second fiddle to the Midlands and North of England in television development', a Glasgow newspaper complained in August 1948, at the very time when Manchester itself was grumbling that an official statement had just been made that

<sup>1</sup> E. Barnouw, *The Golden Web* (1968), pp. 285–90. In 1952 there was a production cut of one-third in Britain (*Radio Times*, 22 Aug. 1952).

<sup>2</sup> M. Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (1948), p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 April 1946. Cf. the *Sussex Daily News*, much nearer to London, 10 April 1946, 'Delayed Action Television'.



it could not be 'foreseen when work would be started' on the new Northern transmitter.<sup>1</sup> 'Scotland's interest in television may seem to be mainly academic,' was the comment of another Glasgow newspaper. 'The Government are more concerned with television as an export item than as a service of entertainment in this country.'<sup>2</sup>

Such comments could not be ignored, and the BBC did its best (within the framework of tight Government control) to make announcements about its future expansion plans as far in advance as possible, long before transmitters were actually opened. Already in February 1946 there was publicity in the newspapers concerning 'six provincial stations'<sup>3</sup> and 'the sporting chance' that places as far north as Derby, Nottingham, and Shrewsbury would be able to pick up programmes from Birmingham by the autumn of 1947.<sup>4</sup> The sporting chance did not come off, but 'universal television' was already said to be on the way. In the case of the Sutton Coldfield transmitter, the first announcement about equipment and manning was made as early as June 1947,<sup>5</sup> and considerable publicity was given to the fact that it would be the most powerful television station in the world with a mast 750 feet high.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that despite regular publicity about the growing size of the potential television public, and announcements about Holme Moss in the North of England and Kirk o' Shotts in Scotland, there was very little indeed about the television audience in the *BBC Year Book* either for 1949 or 1950. Lord Simon, the then Chairman of the Governors of the BBC, was less cautious than most BBC officials when he wrote over-optimistically in 1947 that 'the cost of sets will come down to something perhaps £10 to £15 above sound receivers' and not optimistically enough that 'if development is vigorously undertaken television will be in 10,000,000 homes in twenty years'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*, 26 Aug. 1948; *Evening Chronicle*, 25 Aug. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 26 Aug. 1948. <sup>3</sup> *Financial Times*, 7 Feb. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Chronicle*, 10 Feb. 1946. 'I'm asked to tell people up there to create their own demand—to agitate for hustle', wrote Jonah Barrington.

<sup>5</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1948, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> L. Marsland Gander, *Television for All* (1949), p. 77. See also Pawley, *BBC Engineering 1922-1972*, p. 369.

<sup>7</sup> \*'Television Policy', Note by Lord Simon, 6 Nov. 1947. In Sept. 1949 Collins predicted 1/1½ millions in ten years' time ('Television: long-term view', 15 Sept. 1949).

The first forward push in BBC planning came in June 1949 after the Television Advisory Committee had been told by representatives of the Ministry of Supply that it was 'very much concerned' that the radio and electronics industry should be kept in 'an efficient state for defence purposes' and that it should be given plenty of work to 'maintain a large production capacity'.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, representatives of the industry kept up the pressure inside and outside London,<sup>2</sup> and in June 1949 the BBC was at last free enough, despite continuing restraints imposed on its investment programme, to evolve a 'five-year plan' for widening coverage. The plan was made possible only because an official decision had been taken that the BBC would be free in future to allocate the distribution of its capital expenditure as it wished within global totals settled with the Government. This was of the utmost importance, given that the BBC had been blamed since 1946 for delays outside its control. And once this was decided, the Treasury could welcome the BBC's decision to give television expenditure a high priority.<sup>3</sup> The plan was also accepted by a newly constituted Television Advisory Committee in September 1949<sup>4</sup> and in November 1949 by the Government.

<sup>1</sup> \*Television Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 8 March 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Ismay, 9 Sept. 1949, describing the actions of a 'pressure group' and their intention to see the Postmaster-General; Ismay to Haley, 9 Sept. 1949. Report of a meeting with an inter-party group of MPs at Broadcasting House, 7 Sept. 1949. The group was led by E. Marples (Conservative) and included Major N. MacPherson (C), V. Collins (Lab.), Mrs. J. Mann (Lab.), Brigadier A. R. Low (C), Lt.-Colonel Sir W. Smiles (C), and S. O. Davies (Lab.). They were all anxious, they said, to see television introduced as soon as possible. Other MPs had petitioned the BBC.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC General Advisory Council Paper, 'Report on the Development of the Television Service, March 1948-Dec. 1950'. Television Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 8 Sept., 4 Nov. 1949. Haley told the inter-party group of MPs of the limitations imposed by the Capital Investment Programmes Committee, but Bishop noted in the same year, before the change in government policy, 'My view is that the BBC is in a bad position and that in years to come we shall be unfairly blamed for delay.'

<sup>4</sup> \*The Committee had been reduced in size following the resignation of Lord Trefgarne as Chairman (Trefgarne to Haley, 9 May 1949) and the setting up of the Beveridge Committee (see below, pp. 291 ff.), and its terms of reference had been changed (Ismay to Haley, 5 Sept. 1949). It acquired a new Chairman, Sir William Coates, and its sole terms of reference in its restricted form were 'to advise the Postmaster-General on current development problems of the BBC's television service'. The Radio Industry Council protested against the change and threatened to boycott meetings (Press Notice, 22 Nov. 1949) after Morrison had announced it.

The main feature of the BBC's plan was to build four high-power transmitting stations within a three-year period and according to the following timetable:<sup>1</sup>

	<i>Coverage</i>	<i>Potential Viewers</i>	<i>Date Opened</i>
Sutton Coldfield	West Midlands Leicestershire Derbyshire Staffordshire Northamptonshire	9 million	17 December 1949
Holme Moss	North West Yorkshire Lincolnshire Denbighshire	11 million	12 October 1951
Kirk o' Shotts	Scotland (Central)	4.1 million	14 March 1952 (reserve transmitter) 17 August 1952 (high-power transmitter)
Wenvoe	Dorset Somerset Carmarthenshire Glamorgan Monmouth	4.3 million	15 August 1952 (reserve transmitter) 20 December 1952 (high-power transmitter)

The Post Office, which was to provide the links between the stations, required Government approval for its investment programme also, and both its plans and those of the BBC were interdependent. If plans were not implemented in time, there would obviously be difficulties.<sup>2</sup> The BBC's plan also envisaged the construction of five low-power stations within five years (near Newcastle, Southampton, Belfast, Aberdeen, and Plymouth, in that order), with the first being completed in 1951 and the last in 1954. Finally, it was acknowledged in the plan that there would have to be a new transmitter for the London area after the vacation of Alexandra Palace.<sup>3</sup> Once the high-

<sup>1</sup> See Pawley, *op. cit.*, pp. 366 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Television Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 8 Sept. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Ashbridge, 5 July 1950.

power stations were finished, 81 per cent of the population, it was claimed, would be served by television, and after the whole plan had been completed 86 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

At the opening of the first of the high-power transmitters at Sutton Coldfield on 17 December 1949, Simon told his audience—and the Press—that ‘the BBC plan for a single national network and for the concentration of studio building in London was not only the most economical plan but also the only practicable plan to secure within five years the maximum national coverage and the best possible studio accommodation’.<sup>2</sup> There were some representatives of the radio industry who took a different view, however, and C. O. Stanley, as critical of the BBC as ever, told the Television Advisory Committee that better progress could be made by putting up very small stations to start with, by using ‘canned programmes’, and by dispensing with Post Office links.<sup>3</sup> It was the BBC’s plan which went ahead, however, taking television throughout the country. By the end of 1951, therefore, the distribution of television licences (see pages 252–3) was completely different from that in 1947.<sup>4</sup> The Scottish figures had risen to 41,699 by December 1952 and to 144,273 by December 1954, the Welsh to 38,236 and 124,530, and the Northern Irish to 324 and 10,353.<sup>5</sup>

In the extension of the television audience, social and cultural factors inevitably came into the reckoning as well as technological development. The initial London audience was different in social composition and cultural orientation from the provincial audiences, although only limited information is available about it. At the end of 1947 it was estimated that 48 per cent of television sets in use were owned by the better-off 12 per cent of the population (Class I), 27 per cent by the 20 per cent of the population in Class II, and 25 per cent by the 69 per cent of the population in Class III.<sup>6</sup> During the

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Sir William Coates, 6 Jan. 1950, confirming the desire of the BBC to extend coverage on this scale.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Simon, *The BBC from Within* (1953), p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> \*Television Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 4 Nov. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> BBC *Annual Report and Accounts*, 1951–2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1951–2, 1952–3, 1953–4.

<sup>6</sup> This and further statistical information is derived from Audience Research surveys, backed by Hulton Surveys. See also R. Silvey, *Who's Listening?* (1974), pp. 154–7.

year 1948, however, the proportions in the three classes changed to 37 per cent, 34 per cent and 29 per cent respectively.

These figures reveal, however, that the television public in the London area was far from being a 'cross section' of the population either in 1947 or 1948. At the end of 1947 nine out of a thousand families in Class I had television sets as against less than one in a thousand families in Class III. The 'top heavy' effect was reduced in 1948, but it was still prominent until 1954 and 1955 when this volume ends.

This was never quite the whole of the story. Even at the end of 1947, 22,000 television sets were in Class III homes, more than in Class II homes. Moreover, in Class II (it was shown both in 1948 and in 1950), given two families of roughly equal economic status but of unequal educational level, those with the lower educational level would be likely to be the ones who bought television sets first. There was always greater 'sales resistance' to television among the better educated in Class II, although educational differences did not play any part in relation to television ownership in Class III.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1935, on the eve of the BBC's first regular television service, it had been predicted that 'educated and well-read persons' would not be 'much affected' by 'this new method of presenting ideas';<sup>2</sup> and in 1952 Robert Hutchins, formerly President of the University of Chicago, could write confidently to Barnes, just before a Barnes visit to the United States, 'When you get here, I shall explain television to you. I can do this with great ease and assurance because I do not own a set.'<sup>3</sup>

More detailed analysis began to be possible only after 1950, as Haley and his senior colleagues began to change their minds about the need for viewer research. Viewers' letters were rightly thought to present inadequate information, and their numbers had gone down since the service started.<sup>4</sup> 'At yesterday's meeting,' Sir Norman Bottomley, the Director of Administration, told Silvey in July 1948, 'the question was raised as to how far television is limited to the rich or well-to-do, how much

<sup>1</sup> 'Listener Research Report: 'Television: Some Points about the Audience', 14 July 1948.

<sup>2</sup> E. H. Robinson, *Televiewing* (1945), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> R. M. Hutchins to Barnes, 13 May 1952 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>4</sup> 'Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 11 March 1948; Audience Research Report, 'Viewers, Viewing and Leisure' (1955), p. 3.

DISTRIBUTION OF TELEVISION LICENCES

31 DECEMBER 1951

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Estimated Population (millions)</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Families (millions)</i>	<i>Television Licences</i>
<b>LONDON REGION</b>			
Bedford			12,875
Berkshire and South Oxford			19,403
Buckingham			15,704
Cambridge and Huntingdon			8,334
Hampshire (North-East)			3,932
London and Home Counties (Essex, Hertford, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey)			571,585
Norfolk (except North-East)			535
Suffolk (except Lowestoft)			3,079
Sussex			14,747
	14.77	4.22	650,194
<b>WEST REGION</b>			
Channel Islands			18
Cornwall and Devon			209
Dorset and Wiltshire			2,837
Hampshire (except North-East)			2,591
Somerset and South Gloucester			6,248
	4.30	1.23	11,903
<b>MIDLAND REGION</b>			
Hereford			2,325
Leicester and Rutland			29,399
Northampton			14,389
North Gloucester and North Oxford			8,671
North-East Norfolk (and Lowestoft)			447
Shropshire			6,856
South Derby and South Nottingham			47,537
Stafford and Warwick			166,520
Worcester			21,483
	7.27	2.08	297,627
<b>NORTH REGION</b>			
Cheshire, Lancashire and Isle of Man			108,855
Cumberland and Westmorland			525
Lincoln and North Nottingham			13,956
Northumberland and Durham			3,170
Yorkshire and North Derby			68,543
	14.96	4.27	195,049
<b>ENGLAND—TOTAL</b>	41.30	11.80	1,154,773

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Estimated Population (millions)</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Families (millions)</i>	<i>Television Licences</i>
<b>SCOTLAND</b>			
Aberdeen and Kincardine			—
Angus and Perth			12
Argyll and Bute			2
Ayr, Dumbarton, Lanark and Renfrew			54
Banff, Inverness, Moray and Nairn			—
East Central Scotland (Clack- mannan, East Lothian, Fife, Kinross, Midlothian, West Lothian and Stirling)			36
North Scotland (Caithness, Orkney, Ross and Cromarty, Shetland and Sutherland)			1
Border Counties (Berwick, Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Peebles, Roxburgh, Selkirk and Wigtown)			104
	5.10	1.46	209
<b>WALES</b>			
Mid-Wales (Cardigan, Merioneth, Montgomery and Radnor)			393
North Wales (Anglesey, Caernarvon, Denbigh and Flint)			4,914
South Wales (Brecon, Carmarthen, Glamorgan and Pembroke) and Monmouth			2,041
	2.60	0.74	7,348
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>			
Antrim and Down			29
Armagh			—
Fermanagh and Tyrone			—
Londonderry			—
	1.37	0.39	29
<b>GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	<b>50.37</b>	<b>14.39</b>	<b>1,162,359</b>

it is used as a means of entertainment as opposed to the cinema, theatre, etc., and also whether or not it constitutes a serious alternative to sound broadcasting. D.G. wishes an analysis to be made with a view to providing some general answers to the following questions: (a) What types of people at present buy television sets, e.g. what proportion are of the artisan (foremen etc.), professional and leisured classes? (b) To what extent are sets used? (c) How does their use compare with that of sound receivers in proportion to the numbers at present within the television range?"<sup>1</sup>

Collins and McGivern had followed Gorham in urging the need for such basic research as well as audience research on reactions to particular programmes, but Nicolls had refused to allow Silvey any extra staff, and the Listener Research Department itself said that it could not carry out a continuing as distinct from a single *ad hoc* inquiry.<sup>2</sup> What was decided upon, therefore, before Haley came into the picture again—and with some dissent from Littman, the Assistant Head of Listener Research—was an 'elementary form of viewer research' spread over a period of six weeks in which a number of viewers were asked to report their ratings of six particular programmes. *Radio Times* called this 'Vote for Viewers', and it was a quite different venture from that which Haley had asked for.<sup>3</sup> The results, as Littman had predicted, were not very useful. Perhaps the most interesting verdict was that on amateur boxing from Wembley. This received an equal number of A+ and C- votes.<sup>4</sup>

In 1948 and 1949 Silvey, like Littman, was critical of the idea of a regular survey of viewers' reactions. Yet he suggested that in the final transmission in the 'Vote for Viewers' series in June 1948 all viewers should be invited to apply for a general questionnaire about television. This would give a picture of current attitudes which could be tested more fully later. Approximately one thousand viewers applied, and of these nine

<sup>1</sup> \*Sir N. Bottomley to Silvey, 6 July 1948.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 216. \*Collins to Silvey, 8 Dec. 1947; McGivern to Collins, 11 June 1947; Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 11 Dec. 1947; Collins to F. H. Littman, Assistant Listener Research Director, 31 Dec. 1947; Littman to Collins, 24 Feb. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *Radio Times*, 9 April 1948.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 261, n. 6.



hundred returned their forms. They were not necessarily a representative sample, and Silvey preferred to regard them as 'broadly representative of the more enthusiastic viewers'. The replies came in the main from suburban addresses, and the written comment bore 'all signs of being predominantly middle-class'. The size of households (3.48) was close to the average size of family in the south-east of Britain. Sixty per cent had bought their sets during the previous year, and 23 per cent between October and December 1947.<sup>1</sup>

Viewers were asked how often their sets were used in the afternoons and evenings on weekdays, on Saturdays, and on Sundays. They were also asked how many men, women, and children usually watched television when the set was in use. Thirty-six per cent of sets were in use in the afternoons of Mondays to Fridays, 65 per cent on Saturday afternoons, and 64 per cent on Sunday afternoons, with the corresponding figures for evenings of 92 per cent, 94 per cent, and 93 per cent respectively. More people were viewing on Sunday afternoons (3.9 persons per set) than at any other time during the week, and the lowest figure, not surprisingly, was 2.2 persons per set on weekday afternoons. The practice of inviting friends to watch television was proved to be widespread. So, too, was the practice of allowing children to stay up late on Saturday nights. Thirty-one out of every 100 set-owners allowed them to do so as against 23 out of every 100 on an average week night, and only 17 out of every 100 on Sunday nights.

When questioned as to whether or not they watched a whole night's programmes from 8.30 p.m. to close-down at 10.30 p.m., as many as 91 per cent said yes. Viewing was not selective, therefore, even in the early years of post-war television. Before the war, the BBC's Director of Television had said that while it might be necessary eventually for the Corporation's glossary-makers to find a television equivalent for the term 'radio fan', there was no need to do this at present. The time had now arrived.<sup>2</sup> Addicts or not, a majority of the viewers were 'satisfied' with the service, and 69 per cent of them did not wish to see any change in the proportion of television time devoted to

<sup>1</sup> \*Listener Research Report, 'Television: Some Points about the Audience', 14 July 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Cock to C. F. Atkinson, 1 Oct. 1935.

entertainment, news, and information. The minority almost unanimously wanted more time to be devoted to newsreels and topical events. In general, reactions were 'much as might be expected from a middle-aged, middle-class group'—for example, 'enthusiasm for plays, but not morbid plays', and 'prejudice against dance music'.

A further inquiry was made later in 1948, this time with the help of a 'clustered' sample (1,062 homes) drawn from the Post Office's geographical tabulation of television homes at the end of May 1948, when there were 51,257 television licences in all. To analyse more fully the attitudes of viewers, a control group was set up side by side with the clustered groups of viewers, consisting of a group of persons (next-door neighbours) as nearly similar as possible to the television group except that the members of the control group did not possess a television set.

At a preliminary interview with people in the viewer sample and the control group, interviewers sought to gather certain basic facts about the family—its social class and age and sex structure, the educational level of its members, the nature of family viewing habits, the date when the television set had been acquired,<sup>1</sup> and the size of the screen. (The replies to the earlier questionnaire had suggested that about two sets in five had 9½" screens).<sup>2</sup> The interviewers also 'graded' the homes they visited by social class (A: well-to-do; B: middle-class; C: lower middle-class; and D and E: working-class). Viewers in every age group were themselves asked to co-operate by keeping a logbook recording not only their hours of listening and viewing but how they spent their leisure time and what time they went to bed.<sup>3</sup>

There was a remarkable amount of co-operation from viewers, and although no single individual was asked to watch for longer than seven days, information was, in fact, collected about viewers' and listeners' behaviour for twenty-one days between

<sup>1</sup> \*'Television: Some Points about the Audience'. 27 per cent had Pye sets, 20 per cent Murphy sets, 11 per cent HMV sets, 8 per cent Marconi sets, 8 per cent Bush sets, and 23 per cent other makes of set; 3 per cent were home-made!

<sup>2</sup> By 1952 71 per cent of families with television sets had 12-inch tubes, but this proportion fell to 32 per cent in 1953 and 6 per cent in 1954, when 50 per cent had 14-inch screens (BREMA figures).

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Listener Research Report, 'Television Enquiry', 1948.

Sunday, 22 October and Thursday, 16 December 1948.<sup>1</sup> Much of the information was of a kind which has since become familiar. Then it was new. Thus it was shown, for example, that viewers of sixteen to thirty-five tended to watch television less than their elders. No evidence was collected, however, about the habits of viewers below the age of sixteen; this was to be a major theme of later inquiries.

The viewer sample showed, as was already known, that while viewers were unevenly distributed through the different social classes, the class pattern was changing.<sup>2</sup>

Social Class	TV Group	London and Home Counties as a whole	TV Set acquired in		
			1948	1947	1946 or earlier
A	%	%	%	%	%
B	21	5	17	26	20
C	26	8	22	26	31
D	35	24	39	33	33
E	18	63	22	15	16

When the backgrounds of the sample of viewers were compared with those of the control group, the level of education was seen to be higher in Classes A, B, and C of the control group than in the viewer sample and higher in Classes D and E in the viewer sample than in the control group. In all groups the presence of children and old people in the home was an inducement to acquire a television set.

The evening viewing pattern brought out interesting differences between the habits of the viewer sample and the control group. Both groups listened to sound for about the same length of time during television's pre-transmission period, but at 3 o'clock listening began to die down in television homes, and between 8.30 and 10.30, television transmitting time, there was a strong contrast between what was happening in these homes and homes where there was only a wireless set. Control group listening reached its highest level (53 per cent between 9 o'clock and 9.15), while listening in television homes dropped to 14 per cent and viewing reached a peak of 49 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> The whole exercise was excellently described by Silvey in detail in a paper read before the Manchester Statistical Society in December 1950, 'Methods of Viewer Research employed by the British Broadcasting Corporation'.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 250.

The proportion of the viewer group not at home in the evening during the transmission period was slightly smaller than the corresponding proportion of the control group, 18 per cent against 20 per cent, while the proportion of the viewer group at home but not listening or viewing was very much smaller than the corresponding proportion of the control group (20 per cent as against 29 per cent). There were interesting differences also after the evening's television programmes had ended. Viewers did not at once become listeners again. Whereas 23 per cent of the people in control group homes continued to listen between 10.30 p.m. and 10.45 p.m. and 17 per cent between 10.45 p.m. and 11.00 p.m., the corresponding proportions listening in viewer homes were only 14 per cent and 13 per cent. Only after 11 o'clock did the activities of the two groups again converge. Between 11 o'clock and 11.45 over 80 per cent of both groups were in bed.

The researchers concluded that while television seemed to involve a greater concentration than sound broadcasting, the 'quantity of viewing' seemed much less closely related to programme content than the 'quantity of listening'. The proportion of viewers who gave their full attention to what they were seeing was twice as great as the proportion of listeners who gave their undivided attention to what they were hearing during the peak hours of the evening. The comparative use of time was set out in the following table:

ACTIVITIES OF VIEWERS AND LISTENERS  
BETWEEN 8.30 AND 10.30 P.M.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Viewers</i>	<i>Listeners</i>
Eating a meal	% 2	% 9
Domestic duties	5	21
Reading, writing, etc.	2	15
Playing games, talking, etc.	3	6
'Just viewing'	85	—
'Just listening'	—	43

It seemed from this evidence that viewing was being thought of far more as 'an end in itself' than listening, a conclusion also reached by a number of Mass Observation viewers in 1949. One of them said then that enforced concentration while 'viewing' was probably 'a good thing' since people were either 'forced to pay attention or not to view at all',<sup>1</sup> whereas 'listening' had often been no more than an accompaniment to reading, eating, or playing cards. Was this merely a 'phenomenon of TV's novelty', or did it follow from the inherent qualities of the medium itself? The evidence suggested the latter alternative. Veteran viewers, for whom the novelty of television had faded, were proving no more discriminating than new viewers. As in the United States, they were not reverting to their old habits. They were listening only about one-third as much during the time when television was available as was the control group, and they were willing to view anything.

COMPARISON OF THE AVERAGE BEHAVIOUR  
DURING TV TRANSMISSION TIMES OF THE TV GROUP  
ACCORDING TO AGE OF SET AND THE CONTROL  
GROUP

	<i>Television Set acquired in</i>			<i>Control Group</i>
	<i>1948</i>	<i>1947</i>	<i>1946 or earlier</i>	
Proportion viewing	% 51·2	% 47·5	% 41·0	% —
Proportion listening	10·7	13·3	16·2	46·5
In but not viewing or listening	19·4	20·0	20·9	30·8
Not at home	18·7	19·2	21·9	22·7

Such figures spoke—and still speak—for themselves, but they can be supplemented with the kind of qualitative impressions Silvey himself had given in reply to Nicolls's inquiry after one year of television.<sup>2</sup> There is also an undated set of 'Notes on Television 1946-7' in the BBC Archives, possibly prepared by Cecil McGivern, which reads:

<sup>1</sup> *Mass Observation Bulletin*, Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 216.

Every time the milky light spills across the screen, there is a sense of eager anticipation which even the most mediocre programme does not wholly dispel. The nightly devotional huddle in the darkened room is condemned by certain members of the family as anti-social. They are banished for the time being to 'another place' and the choice there of Home, Light or an uncertain Third. Eventually discrimination reasserts itself [did it?] and a better balance is struck between listening and viewing, though the quality of television sound is such that it is not easy to readapt one's ear to the imperfections of medium or long wave.<sup>1</sup>

The July 1949 Mass Observation Report on Television, already mentioned, provides a fascinating, if sketchy, picture of individual and family reactions at a time when television sets were still to be found in only three households in every hundred. Haley remarked at the time that the Report 'does not seem to tell us much',<sup>2</sup> yet in retrospect at least it tells a great deal. First, as many as one in three of people belonging to Mass Observation's panel were still saying that they would *not* like to have a television set. (Only one in fifty actually had one, and one in three had never even seen television.) Second, while the cost of sets was an inhibiting factor, it was not the only one. 'I have no desire whatsoever to have a set,' remarked a research worker. 'I think it encourages the growing tendency for passive pastimes. . . . Since it involves a semi-darkened room and concentration of eyes and ears, it is particularly crippling for any other activity.' 'One looks more and more and *does* less and less,' said another panel member. On the other side, at least one supporter of television, a farm worker, argued, like the BBC, that the concentration was useful. 'If they [the viewers] have to pay attention then they will demand transmissions that are really worth watching so that the quality will tend to be on the up rather than on the down grade.' Two in five of the panel thought that they would read less with television, and two in three that cinema-going would suffer.<sup>3</sup> There was less fear for the future of spectator sports. 'Whether or not sports meetings will be televised will depend on the stadium owners, but I think it is doubtful whether television can ever take away completely

<sup>1</sup> \*'Notes on Television, 1946-1947, by D.P.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Collins, 26 July 1949.

<sup>3</sup> The BBC 1948 Enquiry suggested that the effect of introducing television was to cut down viewers' cinema-going by one-third.

the thrill of actually seeing the game. I think sports have much less to fear than the cinema or radio.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the Director-General thought of this paper, both he and the Governors came round to the view in the same month as it was written that there should be organized viewer research. It should have the object, they agreed, of supplying the Television Service with information comparable to that provided by listener research for sound broadcasting. 'At last,' Silvey began a handwritten letter to Collins, 'I have just heard that the Governors have blessed my project for doing continuous research for TV.'<sup>2</sup> The start of a research system was deliberately delayed, however, first until after the opening of the Sutton Coldfield transmitter,<sup>3</sup> when the size of the audience increased, and later until Midland viewers had 'got used' to their sets.<sup>4</sup>

Silvey himself gave a televised talk about a viewer-research scheme in December 1949. It did not quiet Haley's worries about the medium, and when Collins saw the draft he also commented that it reflected 'one of the most depressing facts I have seen for years, namely that viewers spend six nights a week in front of their sets'.<sup>5</sup> The fact was to be corroborated when the new Television Panel was brought into being and 'logs' were circulated asking for 'reactions' (on a five-point scale) to particular programmes.<sup>6</sup> The 'reactions' seemed to confirm the dangers of 'video-culture'. Television, as Haley put it, might be 'a window looking out on the world', but if all that thousands of people did was to look out, the world would never become a better place. The greatest danger of television, it was argued, was that it would sap people's desire to participate and to act. 'If there is one responsibility that television heightens in broadcasting, it is to ensure that it does not, in the end, make people even more passive than they are already.' The last thing that Haley wanted to see was the great British public transformed irreversibly into a great audience—and nothing more.

<sup>1</sup> *Mass Observation Bulletin*, Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Silvey to Collins, 7 Sept. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Collins to H. J. Dunkerley (Controller, Midland Region), 20 Oct. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Silvey to Collins, 20 Oct. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Collins to Silvey, 5 Jan. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> *Television Panel Members' Guide*, Jan. 1950. 'B stands midway between A+ (extreme enjoyment or pleasure) and C- (extreme dislike). A lot of people—out of kindness of heart—are tempted to write A+ when they really mean A, or A when they really mean B. Please don't do this.'

A second introductory talk by Silvey on the new audience-research scheme in January 1952 was itself rated highly—in the 'A' category—by as yet unorganized viewers.<sup>1</sup> Over 24,000 of them asked to fill in questionnaires (paying their own postage) between 4 December and 16 January. Indeed, only 824 people out of a group of 19,439 who actually filled in the first questionnaires said that they did not wish to take part in a continuing viewer panel. They included many newcomers to television. One-third of the respondents had been viewing for five months or less, and only one in twenty had had a television set in June 1946, when post-war television had been restored.

Silvey was particularly interested in 'recovering the successive layers' upon which the public of 1949 had been built.<sup>2</sup> Was television influencing different intakes of viewers in different ways, and were viewers' habits changing? Curiously, more worries were expressed by programme makers about this new exercise, an exercise which they had so long demanded, than by viewers. 'I do not want to do anything in the way of keeping Viewer Research results away from producers,' wrote Collins, 'but I would like to ensure that the results are received through the Head of the Department concerned so that he can put the results into a reasonable perspective.'<sup>3</sup>

The survey showed that the income distribution of the television audience was gradually changing. Of those who had had their sets in June 1946, 24 per cent were in the over £1,000 a year income group, but among those who had installed them between July and December 1949 the proportion was now down to 9 per cent:

## INCOMES OF VIEWERS

<i>Income group</i>	<i>Viewers with sets in June 1946</i>	<i>Viewers who had sets between July and December 1949</i>
	%	%
Over £1,000	24	9
£650-£1,000	25	17
£350-£650	38	55
Under £350	13	19

<sup>1</sup> \*A viewer at Aveley suggested Silvey should 'do a Saturday night story' because he liked his 'voice and confident manner' (Madden to Silvey, 23 Jan. 1950).

<sup>2</sup> \*'The TV Public: Its Structure and Tastes at the End of 1949', pp. 4, 12.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Heads of Department, 20 Feb. 1950. Cf. McGivern to Madden,



Sets were 'used' most in the poorest and least in the richest houses. The larger the family, the more likely was it that the set would be switched on, particularly in the afternoons. There were some retrospectively curious correlations between income and education. Thus, one-fifth of television owners with incomes over £1,000 had had no full-time education after the age of fifteen. Professional families were evidently less involved with television than tradesmen and shopkeepers.

Each individual respondent was also asked to express the degree of his or her interest in television. Fifty-three per cent said that they were 'extremely interested', 35.6 per cent 'very interested', and, not surprisingly, only 0.2 per cent 'not interested at all'. Interest varied in different social groups. The lower the income, the greater the interest. Males were more interested than females. Viewers who had had their television sets for more than a year were even more interested than the 'new recruits'. Among the 7-11-year-olds, interest was very high, but it reached a low point among the 20-24-year-olds and another high point—its maximum—among the 30-49 age group. 'Nothing is clearer', the report on the survey stated, 'than that quite young children do frequently watch a wide range of TV programmes and hold opinions about them, opinions which, whatever the adult may think of them, should not be ignored in an analysis of this kind.'<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the setting up of the new panel, the survey provided a general conspectus of attitudes towards particular television programmes. Studio plays received 'A' votes from 83 per cent and 'B' votes from 11 per cent. They were, therefore, very widely popular indeed, with their popularity rising at every step up the age scale. By contrast, excerpts from plays relayed direct from the theatre were far less popular. In light entertainment 'cabaret' was the most popular and 'revue' the least, but since there were no 'situation comedies' in the week's programmes the range of choice was severely restricted. Forty-nine per cent liked ballet or solo dancing and 48 per cent actively disliked it. Opera divided the audience also—with

<sup>1</sup> \*'The TV Public', p. 8.

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19 Jan. 1950, 'What I want to know is more important than what Silvey wants to know.'

38 per cent in favour and 45 per cent against. Outside broadcasts of public and ceremonial events were more popular with women than with men, with the preferences reversed, not surprisingly, in the case of sporting events. The popularity of outside broadcast sport was greatest with the 12-14 age group. The highest proportion of 'A' votes for feature films came from the youngest viewers (65 per cent among 7-11-year-olds, and 66 per cent among 12-14-year-olds), but there were some viewers who said that they did not like old films at all.

Silvey was keenly interested in the question of whether or not this particular pattern of appreciation would persist. 'The popularity of O.B.s of sport and public events and studio talks is unlikely to alter,' he concluded, 'while that of documentary films will diminish because of the influx of less educated viewers. . . . The level of viewers' interest in television, already enthusiastic, is likely to rise in the future as the ranks of the present new viewers are replaced by still larger numbers of recruits drawn from those classes which already show the highest pitch of interest.'<sup>1</sup>

In each successive poll Silvey carefully studied the comparisons, and very quickly the system of regular viewing research began to operate as smoothly as listener research had done. Indeed, from 1 June 1950 onwards the title of the Listener Research Department was changed to that of Audience Research.<sup>2</sup> It was now for the 'Viewing Panel' to trace 'the daily fluctuations in audiences and reflect the viewers' opinions of the individual programmes that they see';<sup>3</sup> and it was the same Viewing Panel which noted 'trends', for example a substantial decline in summer viewing in 1950 which was not entirely attributable to the end of petrol rationing. Explanations were sought. The claims of the garden, it was suggested, were stronger than the claims of the car.<sup>4</sup> At the end of 1951 the daily interview survey came to be called the Survey of Listening and Viewing. Television had arrived as a topic of 'research'.

Three particularly interesting later reports dealt with the reactions of viewers in different parts of the country as coverage extended. 'Each time a new transmitter is opened and the

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Howgill, 16 May 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*'The TV Public', p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> \*'The Decline in Summer Viewing', 29 Aug. 1950.

service is brought to another area of Great Britain,' Silvey pointed out, 'the same question arises: to what extent will the public in the area newly opened up have special characteristics, needs and tastes of its own?'<sup>1</sup> The differences from area to area proved, in fact, to be surprisingly small. Whatever sub-cultural variations there might have been in London, the Midlands, and the North, they seldom registered. In relation to a series of individual programmes early in 1952, only *Music Hall* from Liverpool brought any significantly different reactions in different places, and even then there was roughly the same proportion of viewers everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

A further inquiry in the winter of 1952/3—this time in five areas—confirmed the fact that 'though viewers' tastes differ, these differences are *not* to be explained in terms of the part of Great Britain in which they live'.<sup>3</sup> In all the five areas the income distribution of set-holders interviewed was by then as follows:

## INCOMES OF VIEWERS 1952/3

	<i>Alexandra Palace</i>	<i>Sutton Coldfield</i>	<i>Holme Mass</i>	<i>Kirk o'Shotts</i>	<i>Wenvoe</i>
£1,000 per annum or more	2	2	2	2	1
£650-£1,000	18	21	21	21	22
£400-£650	45	51	49	41	43
£220-£440	23	21	20	25	23
£225 or less	12	5	8	11	11

Without making any guesses, Silvey concluded that most of the people who became viewers between September 1952 and March 1953 left school at not more than fourteen or fifteen and came from households where the income of the head of the household was *under* £11 a week.<sup>4</sup> By the end of that year the television public had grown to 22 per cent of the population

<sup>1</sup> 'A Comparison of the Tastes and Habits of Northern and Southern 1951 Viewers', 1951, p. 1. An earlier study had been made of the Midlands during the summer of 1950, 'A Comparison of the Tastes and Habits of Midland and London Viewers', which showed, for example, that since Midland families tended to be larger than London families, afternoon viewing was greater.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 'A Comparison of the Tastes of the Viewers in the Five Areas served by Television in the Winter of 1952-3', 15 July 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7.

(as against 14 per cent in December 1952) and programme hours had been extended.<sup>1</sup> Most of the viewers would doubtless not have known what a hot dog was, but they would have corroborated (with remarkable speed) Alistair Cooke's prognosis that television was for the millions. If nothing else, it would outdo the other media when it left the studios for the world. 'Where the newspaper must report in hackneyed jargon or interpretative prose, where the commentator must try and paint rapid word pictures of a circus, only one tiny fragment of which he himself has seen, where the radio can bring only the fulsome tones of the bigwigs making official sounds, television fulfilled the hungriest, the most irresistible of simple human wishes—the wish, when mighty and scandalous deeds are brewing, to be a fly on the wall.'<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Arts and Techniques

AUDIENCE reactions were neither the most persistent nor the most effective influence on television producers during the early period of post-war television. Something more than ratings mattered. There was, indeed, a strong sense of responsibility on the part of controllers, planners, and producers. It was very well expressed in a note by McGivern written in September 1948, only a few days after the Government had announced its intention to extend television coverage.<sup>3</sup> The disparity between 'good' programmes and 'bad' programmes was 'much too great', he said: 'our best were excellent, our worst were very, very bad'. 'Fifty per cent of our programmes (and at times more) were unsatisfactory. This was partly caused by the fact that television was capable at present of a limited effort only, and that our peak and best programmes absorbed too much of this effort to the great detriment of other programmes.'

<sup>1</sup> R. Silvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 164–5.

<sup>2</sup> Cooke, *loc. cit.* His ending was dramatic and prophetic. 'America is going to pay dearly for this constant privilege, but it certainly will pay, and the price will be undreamed of changes in the public behaviour of our leaders, perhaps in our institutions themselves.'

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 236–7.

But this was not the only cause. 'For many reasons we accepted too low a standard—in the ideas behind the programmes, in casting, in production.'<sup>1</sup> 'We must aim at making every programme a good programme,' he added on a later occasion at a Programme Planning Meeting. 'We must avoid the impression of having peak programmes and sustaining programmes.'<sup>2</sup>

This was straight talk in the presence of all concerned. Privately McGivern was just as sharp. So, too, were others. Yet they usually pointed also—and rightly—to the logistic reasons for the difficulties in achieving the best. Only occasionally, it was felt, could the producer overcome both 'deficiencies of the television medium' and the deficiencies of the operational system as it then existed. To overcome them was his 'constant worry', and, 'because he *must* fail often, a severe frustration and discouragement'. This sense of having to overcome something was felt to differentiate television and sound. And even as late as July 1949, when many of the restraints on the Television Service were being lifted, Peter Bax, the Head of Design, who had been an assistant stage manager at Drury Lane for ten years, complained that 'we are staffed and equipped to turn out an excellent second-rate service'. 'After long and careful consideration,' McGivern reported to Collins, 'I regretfully came to the conclusion that his remark was completely correct.'<sup>3</sup> Certainly staff were paid far lower salaries than in the film industry, on the grounds that 'any concessions to the BBC staff to pay some of the high salaries operating in the film industry would have immediate repercussions on many categories of staff both engineering and non-engineering'.<sup>4</sup>

Nor were pay rates the only problem. Just before Ian Orr-Ewing left the BBC, he drew up in February 1949 a list of improvements—not, as we have seen, the first of such lists—which he considered urgently necessary. The number of specialist engineering staff dealing with the supply of studio, film, and outside broadcast equipment was in his view far too small, and the rate of delivery of teleciné and film equipment, caption scar.ners, epidiascopes, and back-projection equipment was far

<sup>1</sup> \*Television Programme Planning Committee, *Minutes*, 9 Sept. 1948. See also above, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> \**Ibid.*, 24 March 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 20 July 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Comments made by Pym at a discussion at the Post Office on 23 Jan. 1947.

too slow. McGivern once said of *his* job that 'just to keep it going' was 'a headache',<sup>1</sup> and he and Orr-Ewing were in complete agreement with Collins that television required a single Director. They argued also that a Chief Engineer should report direct to the Director.<sup>2</sup>

One of the main limitations on development—studio space—remained particularly inhibiting: with only two studios in use at Alexandra Palace before the acquisition of Lime Grove in May 1950, each 25 feet high and measuring 70 feet by 30 feet, the camera rehearsals could usually take place only on the day of transmission, and earlier rehearsals had to be improvised in rooms all over London—in Marylebone High Street, for example, in an old schoolroom off Long Acre, or in the basement of a Methodist chapel. Not surprisingly, the search for premises was intense until Lime Grove was found. Yet Bax was right to point out not only that premises were scarce in post-war London but that in any efficient television station of the future 'step by step building' was essential. Before work began at the White City he stressed that 'a television station has certain affinities with stage, studio and broadcasting, but most of its requirements are peculiar to television and television alone. . . . It should be based on an over-all scheme conceived as a whole from the very start.'<sup>3</sup> Collins confirmed the need for this approach. 'It is the total floor space required by television studios and their ancillaries that determines the over-all size of a suitable television site.'<sup>4</sup>

To make each programme a good programme there not only had to be the right ideas and the right space but also the right kind of co-operation between engineers, producers, and designers. An Operations Meeting first met in July 1946, and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in R. Silvey, *Who's Listening?* (1974), p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> \*C. I. Orr-Ewing, 'Internal Restrictions affecting Television Outside Broadcasts', 3 Feb. 1949; Dorté to Collins, 8 Feb. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 237. \*Bax to Gorham, 6 Sept. 1948, 'New Television Station'. See also, for a very early statement from the engineers, D. C. Birkinshaw and D. R. Campbell, 'Studio Technique in Television' in the *Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers*, vol. 92, part III, 1 Sept. 1945. There was a discussion of an early Bax plan at Operations Meeting (*Minutes*, 21 Jan. 1947), long before the acquisition either of the White City site or of Lime Grove: it was agreed 'that this meeting was not the place to decide the final requirements of a future Television building'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 2 Sept. 1948.

its membership was subsequently extended to include all three groups. The kind of immediate, functional co-operation which was necessary was made clear at a very early meeting when there was a discussion as to whether the make-up of the announcer, Winifred Shotter, should be darkened or whether she should be 'shot' through black gauze.<sup>1</sup> At one of the first meetings he attended, McGivern asked the engineers how they could avoid the sense of an 'indoor acoustic' when people were being shown outside on the screen. He complained at the time that in a recent production of *Pleasure Garden* 'the left-hand side of the picture was good quality, while the right side was much lighter, often almost a flare'. Baker, admitting that this was due to unsatisfactory lighting, said that the difficulty could have been avoided had the producer taken his production scheme to D. R. Campbell and the engineers for early discussion.<sup>2</sup>

The early operational problems were varied and at times bizarre. Many of them pivoted on studio management, and it was suggested characteristically in July 1947 that the pre-war practice of using whistles for obtaining silence should be reinstated for a trial period. At the same time 'Baker will investigate the position now with regard to obtaining rubber-soled shoes for the studio engineering staff.'<sup>3</sup> The talk moved quickly at such meetings from wardrobe baskets to mercury arc lighting and studio noise and from studio noise to whether or not 'audience shows' should be preceded by a preliminary talk and a 'warming up' period. When it was argued that smoking should not be allowed—for safety reasons—Mary Adams, in charge of Talks and Discussions, said that it was almost essential if some contributors to talks programmes were to feel at ease.<sup>4</sup>

It is fascinating to trace some obvious technical improvements in the system, all of them retarded by shortages and financial restraints. There was no 'walky talk-back' for studio managers until the end of 1948, and even then it was not two-way.<sup>5</sup> A directional microphone was introduced soon afterwards.<sup>6</sup> A wind machine was ordered in April 1949, and a month later proposals were being made for an echo room.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile,

<sup>1</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 20 Aug. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \**Ibid.*, 17 June 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 8 July 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 2 Sept. 1947, 2 Nov. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 2 Nov. 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \**Ibid.*, 2 Feb. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> \**Ibid.*, 13 April, 4 May 1949.

camera work steadily improved with growing experience and improved cameras. On the occasion of the reopening of the service, before any new equipment was available, Gorham had told viewers of one technical improvement as compared with before the war. 'We can now not only mix from one camera to another but also cut.' He went on to demonstrate for the first viewers the kind of instantaneous change of cameras 'which is going to give our producers much greater scope than they ever had before'.<sup>1</sup> By November 1949, however, there was so much camera cutting in the studios that there were complaints that vision mixers were getting very little practice in the use of fades. There was an element of irony in a remark which was made that 'before the war when no facilities for cutting were available, vision mixers were extremely skilful in the use of fades'.<sup>2</sup> There was no irony, however, in the fact that there was still no wind machine at Alexandra Palace.<sup>3</sup>

The old 1936/7 equipment outside Westminster Abbey began to be supplemented or replaced in 1948, when new CPS Emitron camera equipment (first used at the Royal Wedding) was used in an improved version in the mobile control van of the Outside Broadcasts team for the July Olympic Games at Wembley Stadium. Never had television pictures been so good. The very high lighting levels needed in the studios of Alexandra Palace were no longer necessary for televising, and the pictures of the Games on the screen had a 'velvety' quality reminiscent of high-grade photographs. There were still a few operational risks, but from now on it was possible to take pictures in settings which had hitherto been too 'dim' to televise.

A year later a new device was introduced—the 'zoom lens'—which offered producers far greater freedom inside and outside studios. The new EMI cameras were fitted with 'turrets' holding four lenses and so offering the means of moving from long-shot to close-up, albeit with a gap in between during which another camera had to be used. Some excellent new cameras produced by Pye Ltd. also had this facility, but what was needed was some means of moving gradually from long-shot to close-up

<sup>1</sup> \*Speech by Gorham, 6 June 1946. He told Orr-Ewing in the summer of 1947, however, that there was little point in pushing further improvements 'when we are hoping to be able to order new equipment of improved design almost immediately' (Letter of 24 June 1947).

<sup>2</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 2 Nov. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 17 Aug. 1949.



with one lens only, a zoom lens. Birkinshaw regarded this as a first priority. By chance he had seen a zoom lens made in Germany before the war for 16-millimetre film cameras. So he approached a British firm of microscope manufacturers, W. W. Watson Ltd., showed them the type of lens, and asked them to design a zoom lens which could be used with television cameras. They were successful, and the first lenses, later to be much improved, were brought into use in 1949. They permitted an easier camera technique by which cameras did not have to be moved bodily to go into close-up and by which producers did not have to suffer the problems of 'turrets'.<sup>1</sup>

Studio work was inhibited for years by very complex camera arrangements. While one or two cameras could be pushed backwards and forwards—'tracking' it was called—on supports known as 'dollies', other cameras were mounted on 'iron men' and could be moved only between shots. There were inevitable difficulties, too, in keeping out of vision cameras which were not in use, while any kind of camera was always prone to 'go down' on producers. Severe limitations on programme-making were imposed also by the limited number of cameras available, almost as serious a problem at times as the limited number of studios. Not surprisingly, the cameramen often felt the strain after long productions: 'there was the strain of continuous focusing,' one of them, Stanley Luke, wrote, and 'the psychological strain because the camera viewfinder showed the scene upside down. Then there was the continuous panning from right to left.'<sup>2</sup>

New 'travelling-eye cameras', which came into use in 1949, were later to be supplanted by 'roving-eye' cameras, an immediately acceptable term invented by Leonard Miall: they could transmit picture while on the move. Their 'compactness', too, was a great advantage at a time when the equipment for a television outside broadcast required sixty times 'as much gear'

<sup>1</sup> \*Report on Television, mid-June to 30 Aug. 1948: Oral Note by D. C. Birkinshaw. The Image Orthicon Camera was being 'heavily publicised' in the United States at this time—like a new automobile—but Collins thought that the CPS Emitron would prove 'at least as good' given improvements in hand ('C. Tel.'s Report on American Television', Dec. 1948). The early Image Orthicon had a high 'noise level' ('a seething effect on the screen') and an obtrusive 'memory effect' ('lingering images on the screen').

<sup>2</sup> (Quoted in D. Horton, *Television's Story and Challenge* (1951), p. 123.

(120 hundredweight) as a sound outside broadcast and when mobile generators had often to be taken along in order to operate equipment and lighting in the absence of a mains supply. The new cameras made it possible at last to cover events at comparatively short notice.

Studios posed almost as many operational problems. The two Alexandra Palace studios had been designed as ballrooms, and as had become apparent even before the war, they were not big enough for really large-scale productions. Modern studios required, of course, a very wide range of facilities, including lights from gallery and pit or tank, and a large amount of ancillary accommodation and services—dressing-rooms and make-up rooms as well as control rooms. The minimum related sound equipment in 1950—after the acquisition of Lime Grove—was thought of as eight studio microphone channels, a gramophone channel, a teleciné film sound reproducing head, turn-table gramophone desk, two large and one small microphone boom, microphone stands, and talk-back apparatus.<sup>1</sup> Even small and cheap items of equipment were thought of as urgently necessary. Thus, Eric Robinson, as conductor of the Television Orchestra, had to spend valuable time trying to get eyeshields for the members of the orchestra,<sup>2</sup> and television script-writers always had to be kept informed of the limitations imposed on working in the existing studios.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, some of the most adventurous developments took place far from the studio. The coverage of the 1948 Olympic Games, the Fourteenth Olympiad, planned and executed by Orr-Ewing, Dorté, and Dimmock (who had joined the Corporation on 1 May 1946) in co-operation with T. C. Macnamara, Head of the Planning and Installation Department, and Birkinshaw, captured public interest in television—and that of the Press—to a hitherto unprecedented extent. Two mobile units controlled from a radio centre in the Palace of Arts—one unit in Wembley Stadium itself, the other at the Pool—each marshalled three cameras, with producers watching events on monitoring screens and drawing on the stories of a dozen commentators.<sup>4</sup> As many as seventy hours of television programmes were prepared in fifteen days—so many on one

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1951*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 13 July 1949.

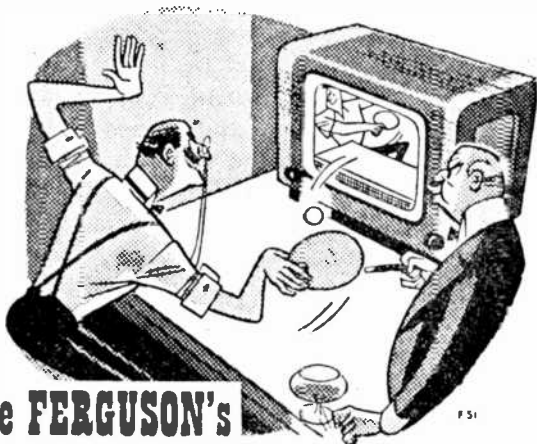
<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 18 Jan. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*BBC 'Television News', 14 Aug. 1948.

particular day (seven hours thirty-five minutes) that Collins was inspired to cable New York to ask whether the figure was a world record as well as a BBC record. He was told in reply that NBC and CBS had only exceeded this daily output during the American political conventions.<sup>1</sup>

A year later, for all the successes, it was a rare privilege for OBs when as many as eight cameras (including portable lightweight cameras produced by Pye Ltd.) could be employed to televise the Boat Race, supplemented by an independent camera crew installed on a moving launch to provide close-up pictures. For the first time viewers could see the whole race from Putney Bridge to Mortlake. The televising of the 1950 race, 'the biggest outside broadcast ever attempted in the country', was thought of as 'an enlargement of that of 1949'.<sup>2</sup>

*That's what  
I like about  
FERGUSON  
television  
... it's more like  
the real thing*



**Fine sets these FERGUSON's**

*Advertisement of Thorn Electrical Industries Ltd*

10. Advertisement by Thorn Industries in *Radio Times*, 6 October 1950

By then, the planned Television OB output was half as much again as in 1949, and there was talk of a further expansion in 'scope' to include 'satellite O.B.s' (with lightweight equipment and mobile control rooms) and 'roving O.B.s' originating from a point in motion.<sup>3</sup> Once again arts and techniques went along together—'maximum picture and minimum talk', given that

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to Reid, 12 Aug. 1948; Reid to Collins, 28 Aug. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1951, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 28 Feb. 1950.

'the average viewer knew all the time what the programme was in aid of'.<sup>1</sup>

Outside broadcasts were popular with viewers—'bringing poignant drama right into our parlours'<sup>2</sup>—and they probably did more than anything else to whet the public appetite for television. 'It is an accepted fact,' John Swift wrote in 1950, 'that it is the Outside Broadcast that "sells" receivers in the first place—the promise of the Cup Tie, the Test Match—and Don Bradman got a century at Leeds in his last year of Tests in Britain in 1948—the racing classics, visits to the theatre, and similarly the more comprehensive reporting of news events.'<sup>3</sup>

In addition, of course, television outside broadcasts also drew on some of the liveliest and most diversified talent in the BBC, as they did also in sound. Richard Dimbleby, for example, who was one of the main commentators at the Olympics, had already made four thousand broadcasts and recordings by 1948.<sup>4</sup> Yet he knew that he had to 'unlearn' most of what he had learnt from pre-war and war-time experience as he 'fumbled and groped after the right technique', that of 'the *annotator*, the man who puts helpful notes in the margin'.<sup>5</sup> There was much talk of the changing 'art of commentary' at this time and of the necessarily different approach on sound and television. In television, it was emphasized, commentators should speak only when they could 'add to the picture'. There should be no reference to the obvious. When one television commentator at a cricket match was rebuked for describing the obvious, all that he could say was that he was speaking for 'the benefit of the short sighted'.<sup>6</sup>

John Swift was one of the first writers to distinguish clearly between the arts and techniques of outside broadcasting and those of the film industry. What was presented in the cinema, he pointed out, was a carefully edited version of something that had already happened, while television by contrast was transmitting pictures as they were being made 'at the moment of impact'. Swift told his readers about production processes

<sup>1</sup> \*S. J. de Lotbinière to McGivern, 30 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Register*, 1949, p. 418.

<sup>3</sup> J. Swift, *Adventure in Vision* (1950), p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> G. Ross, *Television Jubilee* (1961), p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in J. Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby, A Biography* (1975), p. 218.

<sup>6</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1951, p. 53.

little known to 'non-professionals' in 1949 and 1950. Many of his readers, indeed, must have been surprised to learn how cameramen and commentators were 'controlled' by producers cut off from the scene of action, how they were informed and instructed by remote control, how they watched what was happening not directly but on monitoring screens. Television and film shared the same dependence on the visual, he pointed out, but their techniques were different. The same point was made by Haley himself, who wrote a lively and perceptive account of a visit across the Atlantic to different American television companies in July 1949. He noted first how 'Hollywood' had not made up its mind about television and second how much in American television depended on 'improvisation' of a kind that Hollywood shunned. 'The urge to get things on the air is so great that nothing is considered too makeshift or too small.'<sup>1</sup>

Given 'the most bitter antagonism between television and the films' in the United States, the only films other than ancient Westerns which were being made available to American viewers in 1948 and 1949 were British films distributed by Rank and Korda:<sup>2</sup> the television companies were slow, too, to move from 'live' programmes to deliberately filmed programmes. In Britain, both Rank and Korda were far more interested in 1947 and 1948 in the prospects of showing large-screen television in the cinema circuits they controlled than in selling films to the BBC, and 'deadlock' continued between Alexandra Palace and Wardour Street. Yet Collins himself did not want to see the BBC's Television Service converted 'into a home cinema' with films dominating 'our schedules'.<sup>3</sup>

Showing films was cheaper than making live programmes, but newly released seven-reel first features, which some viewers

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley, 'United States Television—July 1949'.

<sup>2</sup> \*'C. Tel.'s Report on American Television', Dec. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 2 March, 21 June 1948, describing lunches with Rank on 1 March and with Korda on 21 June; Notes by Collins on 'Television and the Film Industry', 3 July, 8 Oct. 1948. Rank controlled a circuit of 600 cinemas and managed 28 studio floors (out of 68 in the country) in 1947. He made 29 feature pictures in that year. Korda controlled a circuit of nearly 600 cinemas, managed 20 studio floors and made 7 feature films. The defensive attitude of the industry had become apparent when a deputation met the Television Advisory Committee on 17 September 1946. See above, p. 16. For different uses of film as 'stop gap', 'convenience', and 'record', see Swift, *op. cit.*, ch. XXV.

wanted, would have been far too expensive even had their makers given access to them. By 1949 viewers could see *The Blue Angel* or *The Birth of a Nation*, but not the latest Stewart Granger or Patricia Roc. Nonetheless, when more films began to be shown, the critic Harold Hobson asked a number of pertinent questions in *The Listener* in February 1949 which no one would choose to ask now. After watching James Stewart and Carole Lombard in *Made for Each Other*, he commented that 'television takes nothing from the film, but it adds nothing, varies nothing, either'. It had been 'good entertainment', but was it the business of television 'to provide lookers with an agreeable time' or 'to develop its own art according to its own laws'? His own answer was to fall back on common sense. 'The best thing of all is for television to entertain by being itself,' but, after all, 'Shakespeare himself did not keep always at the full artistic stretch: nor can television.'<sup>1</sup>

BBC Television itself began to make some films from 1947 onwards, concerned entirely with 'factual' themes, after insisting to Rank that it had no intention of selling them 'as celluloid' or entering the cinema 'newsreel business'.<sup>2</sup> BBC films were produced by cameramen travelling with the Royal Tour of South Africa in 1947, on which George Rottner represented the BBC, the first occasion on which such films were made at such a distance, and the operation was extended successfully between then and October 1949, culminating in the five-reel programme *Round the World in Eight Days* (with Edward Ward as Special Correspondent and Wynford Vaughan-Thomas as commentator). It was in 1948 that the first full-length BBC documentary, Robert Barr's *Report on Germany*, was made—with German cameramen under the direction of G. del Strother producing film inserts within twenty-four hours of the time of showing—and in 1949 the film *August Bank Holiday 1949* was one of the first full-length films to be produced for television transmission within a few hours. (Meanwhile Vizio Limited was producing films in London specially designed for international audiences—the first, *A Dinner Date with Death*, at studios in

<sup>1</sup> 'Critic on the Hearth', *The Listener*, 3 Feb. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of 13 Jan. 1947; Television Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 28 July 1947. Haley added, however, that he hoped 'to exchange films intended for televising with broadcasting organisations overseas'.

Marylebone, with Duncan Ross as scriptwriter, Eric Fawcett as director, and Roy Plomley as producer.)<sup>1</sup>

Other new departures in the arts and techniques of television were the use of a microscope on television in November 1948, of a telescope (showing the moon) in September 1949, and on a less dramatic plane the first televised weather forecast in 1949.<sup>2</sup> The first television relay from an aeroplane was in October 1950. The first BBC *Television Newsreel*, supported by special allowances, had been broadcast on 5 January 1948. Wardour Street's continuing ban on the use of news film provided an extra incentive for the BBC to go it alone, but it was neither a competitor of the cinema newsreels nor an anticipation of all the visual news bulletins still to come. There was only one programme a week at first—although it was soon a bi-weekly—and there were no 'quickies' as in the cinema. The BBC did not do its own processing, and at weekends no processing at all could be done because of trade union restrictions. 'News flashes' were added as tailpieces from the summer of 1948 onwards, however, and there was even some infant sense of the meaning of a 'scoop'. Thus, for the account of the United States election in 1948, in which Truman won a spectacular, unexpected victory, an NBC film was flown across the Atlantic.<sup>3</sup> There were also a number of interesting filmed documentaries in 1949, notably the *Foreign Correspondent* series (with Charles de Jaeger as cameraman). The question was already being asked by Grace Wyndham Goldie and others, 'What could sight add to [sound in] political communication. Vision was more concrete than sound; words were better suited than vision to conveying ideas. But could not the very concreteness of vision increase understanding of the actual world if it could be added to words? And was it not possible that vision could convey truths which words disguised?'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Roy Plomley's letter to *The Stage and Television Today*, 21 Jan. 1965. 'Adapting television technique,' he wrote, 'and ignoring warnings of "mains surge" we used long takes with two cameras shooting simultaneously and 23½ minutes of usable screen time were put in the can on the first day.' A second production, *Scotland Yard Reporter*, was 'shot on more conventional lines'.

<sup>2</sup> \*The weather forecast was television's first regular daily programme, and Collins asked Audience Research on 31 May 1950 for a report on it. Did viewers find the chart helpful and the words long-winded?

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 218, and below, pp. 590-3.

<sup>4</sup> G. Wyndham Goldie, *Facing the Nation* (1977), pp. 56-7.

Filming 'off the tube' to photograph television pictures had first been possible—after many experiments—with the Cenotaph Service in November 1947 and the Royal Wedding of the same month. The method was suggested by Dorté and was modified by H. W. Baker and W. D. Kemp in 1948 and 1949. 'Full development has followed considerable research,' Cecil Madden wrote in October 1949, 'and the real effect of these "telefilms" [a word used later in a different sense] will not become apparent until November 1949.'<sup>1</sup> A year later Dorté was distinguishing between 'television of this kind' (what the Americans called 'Kinescope Recording') and 'teleciné' (special film projectors turning pictures and sound recorded on film into electrical impulses fed to vision and sound transmitters and then broadcast).

Dorté claimed that British film telerecording on 405 lines was superior to the American 'kinescope recording'.<sup>2</sup> Yet it remained true, as Collins had noted on a visit to the United States in the company of the Chief Engineer in December 1948, that if 'the method which the BBC is developing is to be preferred to any of the methods at present employed in the States', television recording was nonetheless 'an operational commonplace in American studios' and in British studios it was not.<sup>3</sup> Only on big occasions, like the 1949 Boat Race, was a 'tele-recording' shown in the evening as well as at the time of the live broadcast. It was not until after 1950, indeed, that improved methods of recording were devised, and not until 1958 (following six years' research) that the videotape method was introduced using magnetic tape as the recording medium.<sup>4</sup>

Telerecording was always a complex and controversial issue during the early 1950s, although its importance to programme planners as well as to programme makers had been obvious

<sup>1</sup> \*C. Madden, 'Development of Television Programmes since the War', 10 Oct. 1949. There were several early trade names, which also included Teletranscription. Eastman Kodak was experimenting with 16 mm apparatus at a time when 35 mm recording was ahead. Paramount at that time was pioneering intermediate film methods for large-screen television with systems of rapid processing and developing.

<sup>2</sup> \*Dorté to Simon, 28 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*'C. Tel.'s Report on American Television', Dec. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering 1922-72*, pp. 492-5. Video recording (VERA) was demonstrated inside the BBC in 1956 and by Ampex of America at Redwood City in the United States in the same year. The latter event was recognized as a landmark by Sir Harold Bishop and Francis McLean who were both present.



enough almost from the time of the introduction of the television service. Collins stated firmly in September 1948 that 'the economic possibility of running an extended television service depends on recorded television programmes or the access to other sources of film material. Possibly on both.' He reiterated the same point after his visit to the United States. 'I regard the development of television recording as the first of the BBC Television engineering priorities, with development of micro-link as a close second.'<sup>1</sup> Recorded programmes would transform programme planning, particularly of news, and they could also be sold abroad, not least in the United States through a television transcription service. At a time when increased dollar earnings were a major objective of national policy, this was an extremely powerful argument.

It would be a mistake to conclude that the story of the development of the arts and techniques of television in Britain was always one of harmony and adventure with occasional glimpses, not always in envy, across the Atlantic. Instead, there were many signs of tension, springing not only from the lack of a fully autonomous Director at the top but from structural 'weaknesses' below. In particular, within the world of the studios themselves, McGivern became increasingly worried in 1948 about what he regarded as a failure on the engineering side of television. Engineering progress, in his opinion, was lagging 'behind programme standards and demands', and he felt that 'until matters were evened up', there would be 'dissatisfaction and trouble within television'.<sup>2</sup> 'It is frightful that the careful creative work of producers, lighting men and cameramen can be negated by the slow and imperfect reactions of racks engineers who really need the qualities of an artist and a creative being but who are not recruited for any artistic quality at all.'<sup>3</sup>

The engineers would never have admitted such general deficiencies, and, whenever challenged, they always felt entitled to retort that their service was bound to be 'mediocre' ('a polite description') so long as there were not enough engineers on the

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins, 'Television—long-term View', Sept. 1948; 'C. Tel.'s Report on American Television', Dec. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 20 Oct. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

staff. On one day in June 1948, when there had been complaints about engineering weaknesses in the production of the programme *Music Makers*, only three qualified engineers had been on duty at Alexandra Palace, two of them dealing with lighting.<sup>1</sup>

Engineers inevitably did not always see issues in quite the same way as the programme makers, and they were inclined to blame the latter for 'straining the television system' by 'stacking' sets, only some of which could be properly lit, by 'mixing and cutting at such a speed that the racks engineers were forced to shade the picture after it had appeared on the screen', and by seeking 'to shoot from many different angles people, objects etc. which theoretically could be lit correctly . . . from one angle only'.<sup>2</sup>

In the United States it was possible to by-pass the 'ever-vexed question' posed in London as to whether camera and lighting men should be classified as 'engineers' or 'programme staff' since both groups figured in the staffs of the Vice-Presidents of Television Operations.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Birkinshaw always emphasized, it was not so much demarcation disputes in Alexandra Palace as 'sheer lack of facilities' which made matters difficult.<sup>4</sup> 'I personally have always preached and practised the doctrine of knocking down walls between programme and engineering staff,' McGivern told Collins, who himself once said that he attached major importance to ensuring that 'narrow tribal prejudice between OB programme staff and engineering staff' should be curbed.<sup>5</sup> It was right, however, McGivern went on, that producers should demand the kind of lenses they wanted, which cameras, dollies, vans, lighting and sound effects, and should express their wants 'in technical language so far as they were able (and the further the better)'. His conclusion was provocative. '*At present* the programme side knows more than the engineering side what is needed for future television development.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*H. Walker to P. Bate, 9 June 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of a Meeting between Light Entertainment Producers and Engineers, 15 Oct. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*C. Tel.'s Report on American Television', Dec. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Birkinshaw to McGivern, 27 Oct. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 16 Dec. 1948; Direction Meeting, *Minutes*, 7 July 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 16 Dec. 1948.

Each 'side' tended to try to score points as the 'arts' and 'techniques' of television clashed. The engineers admitted, for example, that the use of several cameras at different angles was 'an inevitable and essential part of television production', yet they asked 'the programme side' to realize that the less this was done 'the better the results from the system as it is at present'.<sup>1</sup> This often galled programme makers who were making a 'constant effort to explore new programme material and new programme sources'.<sup>2</sup> Even the sound element in a studio programme often seemed unsatisfactory during the early years of television. The 'sound men' in the producer's gallery had to balance as well as control sound, and it was difficult to do both jobs satisfactorily. Many of them could not read a score. Nor was there always time for the producer to consult with them or with the television engineering Planning Assistant.

In the light of experience, McGivern had to remind everyone that 'the technical quality of a television programme, as opposed to the entertainment content, was vitally important. It was no good putting out major productions of which the programme content was excellent, if that content on the screen was made to look like an early film.' Strongly supported by Peter Bax, McGivern begged engineers to remember that it was 'nearly impossible' to control 'the creative urge' of the programme producers. 'Controlled it tends to die, to get drunk, to cut its throat or to join films.'<sup>3</sup>

It is possible to exaggerate the 'conflict'; possible, too, to dismiss it or even welcome it as inherently creative: certainly it was usually resolved.<sup>4</sup> Yet Orr-Ewing's BBC 'swansong' complained of 'the desire to wear belt and braces' among the engineers and their tendency 'to concentrate on making their paper work impeccable'.<sup>5</sup> It was certainly a distinctive factor of British television, for across the Atlantic there was far less recognition of the relationship between arts and techniques.

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Meeting between Light Entertainment Producers and Engineers, 15 Oct. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> \*C. I. Orr-Ewing, 'Internal Restrictions Affecting Outside Broadcasts', 3 Feb. 1949.

Many American programmes seemed 'underproduced', Collins thought, after visiting the United States in December 1948: they had 'not advanced beyond the stage of ordinary sound programmes with a camera supplementing the microphone'. His conclusion then was that there was nothing 'at the moment' that McGivern could learn from a trip across the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> 'Once a producer or writer had reached a certain stage of development,' McGivern realized, 'he was completely uninterested in a production or script which was a stage behind his own development and ability.'<sup>2</sup>

American television companies employed no full-time script-writers and relied on a great deal of 'ad-libbing'.<sup>3</sup> Nor were the programme directors in the same strong position as their counterparts, the British producers. Arthur Swinson's *Writing for Television* (1955) was a book which could not have been published at that time in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Nor were there American figures in features and drama comparable to Robert Barr, Caryl Doncaster, and Michael Barry. The first full-time 'Documentary Writer and Script Supervisor' in the world, Duncan Ross, was employed by the BBC in December 1947: drawn from the documentary film world of John Grierson and Paul Rotha, he was to go on to produce outstanding individual programmes, highly successful series (including *The Magistrate's Court* series in 1948, based on factual police reports and on Ross's own observation and research)<sup>5</sup> and one intricate magazine programme, *London Town* (1951), with easy switching from film to matching studio sets—and with the increasingly

<sup>1</sup> \*'C. Tel.'s Report on American Television', Dec. 1948. There were then three 'expensive' programmes in the United States—the Ford Theater, the Philco Playhouse, and the Texaco Star Theater. The last two were still going strong four years later, with the Philco Playhouse alternating a Sunday drama series with Goodyear Playhouse and with the Texaco Star Theater starring 'Mr. Television', Milton Berle (Barnouw, *The Golden Web*, p. 296). By then the programme *I Love Lucy* had achieved a runaway success.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of a Meeting between Light Entertainment Producers and Engineers, 15 Oct. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley noted this in his account of his visit to the United States, July 1949.

<sup>4</sup> The title of its first chapter was in the form of a question: 'The Nature of Television: is it a true medium for the writer?' The answer given was Yes, and would-be writers were told reassuringly that they need not be 'mechanically minded' (*Writing for Television*, p. 9).

<sup>5</sup> The *Evening Standard* critic called it 'the most realistic and absorbing television documentary I have yet seen' (18 Sept. 1948).

accomplished and prestigious Richard Dimbleby.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, John Grierson's film *UNESCO* (1948) linked the world of film and television broadcasting.

By 1950, the arts of television were being treated seriously in many places where there had hitherto been suspicion. 'Just as sound broadcasting had been made to play a part in combating the public's musical "illiteracy",' the *Annual Register's* chronicler generalized, 'so television was being explored as a medium for reducing its visual "illiteracy" in the arts, and many programmes were mounted in the year to guide the public in its judgments of ballet, painting and design.'<sup>2</sup> The lack of colour was a great handicap, as, for example, when Serge Lifar's *Guignol et Pandore* was brought over from Paris in 1949 or when eighteenth-century landscape paintings or even twentieth-century clothes were shown on the screen. Yet viewers were often enthusiastic about what they actually saw. In drama television offered a new sense of 'intimacy' to lovers of Shakespeare—with camera close-ups, and whispered soliloquies—and a new sense of experiment in a play like J. B. Priestley's *Time and the Conways*.

Producers were free to choose techniques within the limits of their programme budgets and available technical facilities. Thus, Royston Morley used film insets for *Mourning Becomes Electra*, while Eric Fawcett produced the American Irwin Shaw's *The Gentle People* (with Abraham Sofaer and Sheila Latimer) entirely in the studio even though it involved building a tank to act the water scenes. Other producers worked with concealed cameras, like Stephen Harrison in the presentation of Turgenev's *A Provincial Lady*, and Fred O'Donovan used only one camera for Patrick Hamilton's *The Duke in Darkness*. Charles Terrot and Michael Barry's *The Passionate Pilgrim* (about one of Florence Nightingale's nurses in the Crimea) was described

<sup>1</sup> Ross was at pains to establish that he was the first full-time scriptwriter, and in July 1965 wrote to all the American television companies which had been in existence in 1947 to see whether they had appointed such a person at that date. All of them said no, and most of them stated that they had never used full-time scriptwriters. NBC (12 July 1965) stated firmly that 'throughout the history of television it has not been the practice to have staffwriters working on entertainment shows'. Staffwriters were employed in News, but not before 1949. For a discussion of television 'firsts', which was started by Allan Prior in December 1964, see *Television Today*, 17 Dec. 1964.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Register*, 1950, p. 413.

enthusiastically as 'pure television'. For Fawcett, television was 'more mobile than the theatre, and more wordy than the film'. Yet he stated also that there had been too much talk of the limitations of the small screen and not enough recognition of the fact that it was the definition standard of British television which controlled the impact of screen size and limits.<sup>1</sup>

Actors sometimes found it as difficult to adapt to television as comedians or politicians. Stephen Murray, comparing work in sound and television, wrote in 1949 of the 'enormous' difference:

Compared with the unimaginable nightmare of the television studio—the lights, three or four times brighter and hotter than any one encounters in a film studio; the creeping, peering cameras, with their incredibly efficient, silent, headphoned crews, winding and cranking and tracking in and out at the orders of the unseen, unheard producer; the wild rushes down the corridor from one studio to another, while dressers tear clothes off one's back and throw fresh ones on and make-up girls mop one's streaming face—compared with this the peace and tranquillity of the broadcasting studio is like a rest-cure.<sup>2</sup>

By 1950, however, many actors were being drawn increasingly to television as a medium, knowing that already it had an audience far larger than that in the live theatre and a far wider repertoire than the commercial cinema. And while in Britain the actor was not quite treated as a 'star' on American lines, he could discover a new public. In this connection, Haley himself drew a contrast between the two sides of the Atlantic. In America, television plays were very rare—and ballet even rarer. Yet it seemed likely that American television would be 'built around personalities' and British television 'round ideas'. 'In America,' he went on, 'the attractiveness of the performer is everything, his material is secondary. In the BBC the position is first to look at the quality of the material. There is little interest in America whether television does plays or ballet or opera. There is every interest in who is becoming popular.'<sup>3</sup>

Programme content in London certainly reflected BBC attitudes towards priorities. So, too, indeed, did the way the Television Controller reported to the Governors about develop-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in K. Baily, *Here's Television* (1950), p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Radio Times*, 4 March 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Haley, 'U.S. Television—July 1949'.

ments. Thus, Norman Collins in his report on the summer programmes of 1948 had to explain that while it had been customary in earlier reports 'to consider serious drama before light entertainment', nonetheless the visit of Josephine Baker, her first to Britain since the war, had to be described first—before Stephen Harrison's production of *Volpone* and Royston Morley's *King Lear* (in two parts).<sup>1</sup> Collins referred also to the *Inventors' Club*, one of the undoubted successes of these years, which had been suggested by Leslie Hardern, broadcaster on design in the home: he had consulted and secured the approval of the Board of Trade and the technical services of Geoffrey Boumphrey, an inventor himself.<sup>2</sup> The final item on his list was some of the early news programmes, including *News Map* (with maps skilfully drawn by J. F. Horrabin and with Lord Wavell as one of the early contributors). After the General Election of 1950 Grace Wyndham Goldie, who was brimful of ideas about current affairs television, was delighted to receive a note from Collins saying that there was 'no question that the Television Service secured a very big success'. She passed on the message to one of her collaborators, Michael Balkwill, with the comment, 'I hope you take that to yourself, even if you are still in "steam radio"'.<sup>3</sup>

This appears to be the first use of the term 'steam radio' in the BBC archives, and it was a sign of the growing confidence of the television team in 1950, when Beveridge was already at work 'investigating' the BBC and considering proposals for the future of broadcasting in Britain. The same confidence was apparent, too, in the attitudes of Collins and his colleagues towards television training.

The idea of completely separate training for television producers had been rejected during the early years of television, when the belief was strong that enterprising people in Broadcasting House could be seconded from sound to television and given a six-month training period. Collins, like Gorham before

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins, 'Report on Television Programmes, mid-June to 30 Aug. 1948'.

<sup>2</sup> See L. Hardern, *TV Inventors' Club* (1954). Chapter 1 gives an excellent account of how it started in the middle of a 'crisis'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Grace Wyndham Goldie to M. Balkwill, 27 Feb. 1950. Norman Collins invented the phrase (Note to the author, 20 Aug. 1976). Another phrase applied to sound broadcasting which did not stick was 'blind radio'. See D. Horton, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

him, strongly disputed the view that 'selection shall be based on merit and seniority': 'to this I have to say: merit, yes; seniority, no'.<sup>1</sup> He did not want all the television posts to go to people outside the Corporation 'with film or theatre experience', yet he went so far as to argue that 'professional experience derived from sound radio is only of comparatively slight importance'.<sup>2</sup>

There was clearly a sharp difference of approach from that of the authorities at Broadcasting House, who urged that it was just as necessary for trainees to learn about both sound and 'the organisation and constitutional position of the Corporation to which they belong' as it was to learn about the arts and techniques of a new medium. Haley went even further in January 1950. 'Clearly the visual element in Television has to be served. Also it has techniques of its own which must be catered for. But while these are fully experimented with and developed, Television must avoid becoming the slave of its technique. Artistic creativeness, aesthetic judgment, the spark which resides outside technique or rather overcomes all technique must also be represented.'<sup>3</sup>

The language could be challenged, and certainly when it was translated by others the sparks could quickly go out. Not everyone in Broadcasting House appreciated much about either the techniques or the arts of television. Thus, C. J. Pennethorne Hughes, the Acting Head of Staff Training, narrowed the horizons when he argued in December 1949 that 'if, as the D.G. says, television is an extension of sound broadcasting, surely television producers should learn what sound broadcasting has to teach, and avoid the errors we have corrected after twenty-five odd years' experience'.<sup>4</sup> No Television Instructor was appointed until July 1951, and there was no distinctive television training in the Staff Training Department until November 1951.<sup>5</sup>

As the Beveridge inquiry into broadcasting proceeded, Haley

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to D. H. Clarke, 18 July 1949. See also above, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to H. J. Dunkerley, 28 July 1949; Collins to Nicolls, 20 Dec. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley, 'Television and Sound Staffs', 30 Jan. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*C. J. Pennethorne Hughes to Bottomley, 7 Dec. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*L. Page, 'Television Training', 9 July 1954. The appointment of a senior television instructor was agreed upon at the Director-General's Meeting on 9 July 1951, and Royston Morley was placed in charge of Television Training in November 1951. In August 1952 a second instructor, Roland Price, was appointed.



asked for a forecast of programme development and a critical assessment of television policy. Was it necessary, for example, to build television programmes 'on the one-big-show-a-night basis'?<sup>1</sup> For his part, Collins made it clear that they should seek to make the television services 'as good as, within present resources, they can be made'. This was not for the purpose of 'mere window dressing'. The opportunity should be grasped to 'take stock'. He included under the items needing attention '(a) Science (b) Art (c) Music (d) Literature (e) Classical as well as popular modern Drama (f) Light Entertainment developments, e.g. a scripted series (g) Ballet (h) Instructional Programmes, e.g. piano playing (i) Current Affairs (j) Children's programmes (k) Discussion Programmes, i.e. *The Brains Trust* or its equivalent'.<sup>2</sup>

It was an ambitious and wide-ranging list, yet Collins was writing in somewhat different language a few months later when—with the television audience expanding rapidly—he told McGivern that it should now be 'equated' as an audience with 'the Light Programme audience of Sound broadcasting rather than with our own conception of an audience composed of all the elements of the listening audiences of Light, Home, Third'. Collins looked now not at the kind of claims being made by scriptwriters, producers, and engineers but at the early conclusions of viewer research. 'The majority of our viewers are not satisfied,' he stated boldly. There were three main troubles—'shortness of programmes', 'the effect of staleness through repeat programmes on evenings when there is no new material', and 'the effect of lopsidedness in programme tastes'. He left on one side, he added, 'any reference to gloomy and morbid plays, "instructional" programmes, e.g. *Matters of Life and Death*, which make some viewers feel that they are being "talked at", and such programmes as ballet, where viewers feel that they are having Culture foisted upon them'. The way ahead required a new set of priorities. The proportion and—he hoped—the quality of 'light entertainment' should be increased and a 'vigorous start' should be made on 'programmes of topical discussions'. He would ask at once for an additional programme allowance of £1,500 a week.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 6 Sept. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 11 July 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 4 April 1950.

By the end of 1950, Collins had ceased to serve as Controller (Television) for reasons set out more fully below,<sup>1</sup> but his views about a new set of priorities were to influence some of the BBC's competitors—of whom he was to be one—when the television monopoly was finally broken in 1954. The break-up of the monopoly was not a recommendation of the Beveridge Committee, which had begun its inquiries in the summer of 1949 and which reported at the end of 1950. To understand first why it was not and, second, why nonetheless the monopoly was very quickly broken, it is necessary to turn in detail to the 'grand inquest' on British broadcasting; the most far-reaching yet taken. It was an inquest which, after all, had been pending from the time of the temporary renewal of the Corporation's Charter in 1946.

<sup>1</sup> \*See below, pp. 452-6.

# IV

## INQUIRY

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The Government considered that what was needed . . . was a Committee not of specialists but rather of persons of broad approach and a capacity for balanced judgment.

HERBERT MORRISON, in reply to a Parliamentary Question,  
24 May 1949

If the next Charter is not a good one, it will not be for want of much patient investigation.

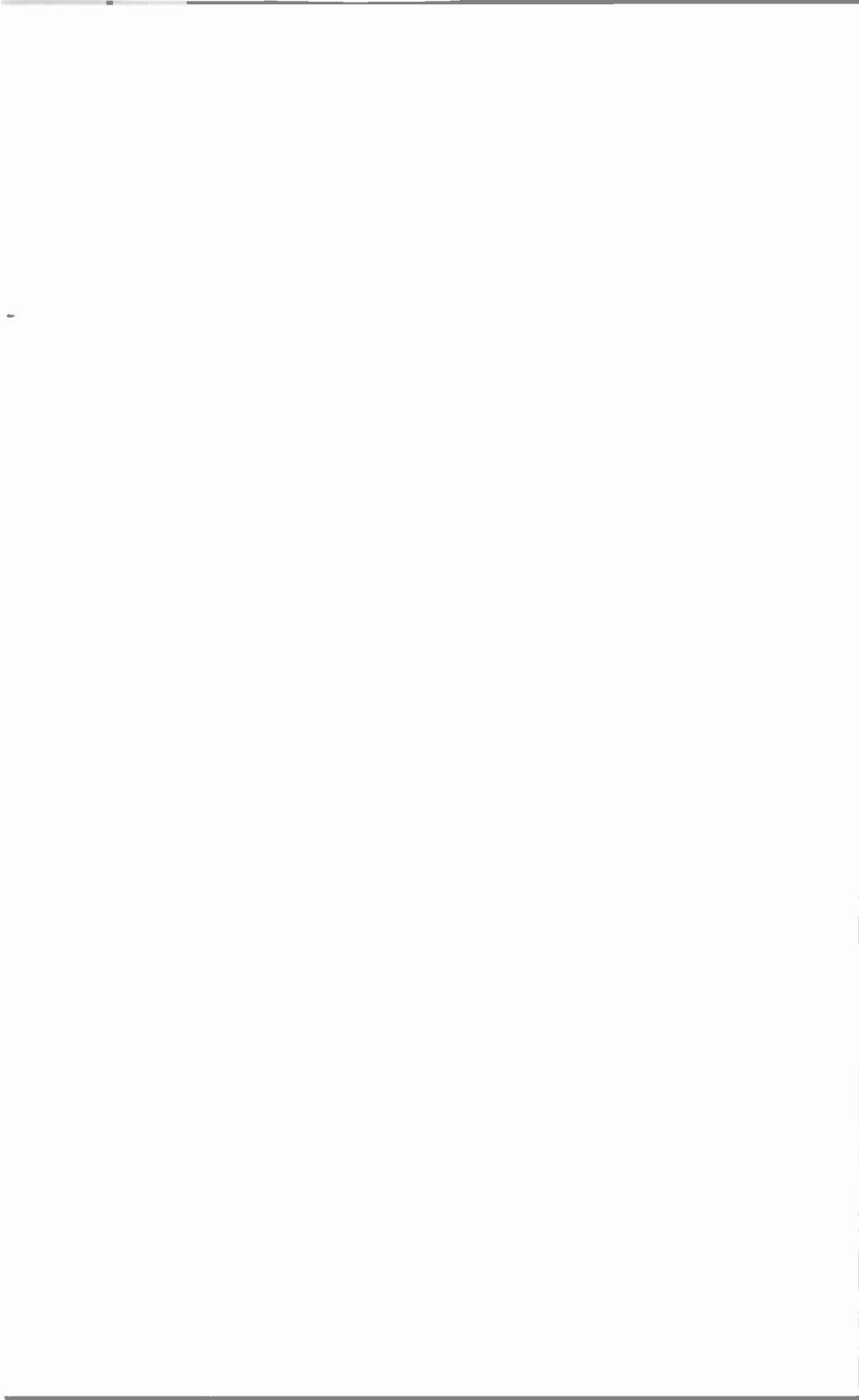
*News Chronicle*, 19 January 1950

We are not likely to need another enquiry of the same magnitude for a good many years.

*Manchester Guardian*, 18 January 1951

There was probably no other organisation in the country which was pulled up by its roots every ten years, and was so uncertain of its future.

SIR WILLIAM HALEY, November 1948



## I. Chairman, Members, and Procedures

LIKE many other official committees, the Broadcasting Committee 1949 seems almost inextricably associated with its Chairman, Lord Beveridge, a man of 'outstanding ability' and 'unlimited energy', as Lord Simon wrote, with 'an exceedingly forceful personality'.<sup>1</sup> (He was to note once in private that he could be impatient and show it and that his manners could be 'quite deplorably bad'.<sup>2</sup>) One of the members of his Committee, Mary Stocks, a distinguished and popular broadcaster in her own right and a favourite member for years of *Any Questions* teams, called him 'a very great man indeed', and in her autobiography described his life as 'remarkably significant and constructive'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1945 Beveridge listed another nationally known and, when it first appeared, sensational report among his formidable list of publications. The war-time Report on Social Security had made such a stir that as late as 1949 nine citizens out of ten would still have chosen the word 'report' if asked to name the first association that came into their minds when Beveridge was mentioned. Many of Beveridge's war-time ideas were being put into practice between 1945 and 1949, and in 1949, at the age of sixty-nine, he still had ambitions of guiding and influencing the nation's future. At the general election of 1945 he had failed to establish himself as a leading Liberal Party politician, yet he had never lost his public reputation as an intelligent liberal thinker, pragmatic in outlook but always prepared to examine the theoretical bases of policy making; it was also widely felt that he was capable of appealing in intelligible language to large numbers of people. He was keenly interested in the social sciences, without being a specialist in any one of them, and he had acquired what seemed to be an impeccable academic record—Oxford, London School of Economics, and back to Oxford—before he had chosen to

<sup>1</sup> Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within* (1953), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Papers, Note of 27 Oct. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> M. Stocks, *Still More Commonplace* (1973), p. 51.

plunge himself into national politics. It was believed, too, that since he had once been a civil servant, he was soundly experienced as an administrator.

It was curious, nonetheless, that in 1949 Beveridge was drawn to the chairmanship of the Committee from the pursuit of mediaeval price history. There were a few signs that he was impatient with 'ordinary life' in the twentieth century, as it was actually lived, and that he was possessed of a kind of academic innocence about how most people thought, felt, and behaved. He had broadcast often—far more often than most chairmen of national committees on broadcasting—but he was inclined to make too much of this experience when confronting witnesses with either less or more experience than he had himself.<sup>1</sup> He was generally thought to have the kind of balanced temperament which would prevent him from concentrating on 'the million trivial complaints'<sup>2</sup> surrounding day-to-day broadcasting and its personalities which received so much attention in the Press. Yet he started with some 'hard feelings against the BBC',<sup>3</sup> and long after his appointment he showed signs of concentrating far too much on very minor matters, some of them very personal to himself. Opinions about him conflicted—and still conflict—sharply. People tended to like him very much or not at all.

Beveridge was willing to read omnivorously, and from the start he asked to be supplied with lists of relevant books and articles on all the topics on his Committee's agenda.<sup>4</sup> Yet it was at writing that he excelled. He produced for his Committee two formidable sets of 'thoughts', both of them far too bulky to be contained in any little red book. It is possible to discern in these thoughts three sets of sometimes contending influences—a deep sense of civic duty or public service; a liberal distaste for 'monopoly', reinforced perhaps by economic theory; and

<sup>1</sup> See Lord Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (1953), p. 222, where he quoted a statement from the *Radio Times* that he was 'one of those rare personalities who combine expert knowledge with effective microphone technique'. He had first broadcast in 1930.

<sup>2</sup> *The Observer*, 26 June 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Stocks, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> \*Within days of his appointment being announced, he asked Farquharson to approach the Librarian of the BBC about books (Farquharson to Miss Milnes, 6 July 1949). On 9 August he met Haley, who was impressed by how much he had already read about American broadcasting (Note of 15 Aug. 1949).

a belief in what may best be called a 'university model' of broadcasting and its influence.<sup>1</sup>

Many of Beveridge's diagnoses and suggested remedies now appear limited, as much in broadcasting as in social security. Beveridge was almost too lucid about the 'principles' which underlay his recommendations, but many of them now seem dated. In 1949, however, when he became Chairman of the new committee, he stood out as an important public figure, progressively aligned in the social politics of his time.

He became Chairman, however, only by accident. The first choice of the Labour Government was Sir Cyril (later Lord) Radcliffe, the distinguished lawyer, whose clear mind, meticulous judgement and unswerving honesty ensured that he was almost permanently in demand for quite different kinds of assignments with a post-war succession of both Labour and Conservative governments. Radcliffe had played a key part in the war-time Ministry of Information and knew a great deal about the post-war BBC. Indeed, in 1948 he was Deputy Chairman of its General Advisory Council.<sup>2</sup> Herbert Morrison first approached him in July 1948 about the chairmanship of the Committee. Interestingly enough, the only person who did not seem to know about him at that time was the Postmaster-General, Wilfred Paling.<sup>3</sup>

The announcement of Radcliffe's appointment was made in January 1949, although it was stated publicly that the investigation would not begin 'for some time' and that the publication of the names of the members of the Committee would be deferred.<sup>4</sup> Before January 1949 rumours had already been circulating widely, however, and the *Sunday Times* had called him a 'model' chairman.<sup>5</sup> Yet even Radcliffe was not immune from parliamentary criticism, and when Lieutenant-Commander Clark Hutchison complained that he was not 'independent' enough of the Corporation, Morrison had to defend him 'as a perfectly neutral person'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, in Cmd. 8116, *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, paras. 613, 615.

<sup>2</sup> He resigned from this post in February 1949 (\*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 17 Feb. 1949); David Stephens to A. H. Ridge (General Post Office), 30 Sept. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Ink note, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 460, col. 1376, 31 Jan. 1949; see above, pp. 170-1.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunday Times*, 6 Feb. 1949. <sup>6</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 463, col. 2823, 13 April 1949.

Radcliffe's appointment as a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary on 27 May 1949<sup>1</sup> must have been a blow to Morrison, who now wished to start the inquiry as soon as possible. His first thought was to find another lawyer, but he soon came to the conclusion, as did the Law Officers, that legal qualifications were not of primary importance in relation to the job.<sup>2</sup> It was at this point that the name of Beveridge first emerged. Morrison had tried in 1943 and 1944 to win over Beveridge to the Labour Party,<sup>3</sup> and in 1948—two years after Attlee had made him a peer—Morrison had been told that Beveridge was anxious to take on additional public work. Morrison knew that there was a certain amount of prejudice against Beveridge in some quarters, including sections of the Labour Party, but he considered the prejudice 'unjustifiable'. On 30 May 1949, therefore, he wrote to Beveridge offering him the chairmanship. 'The primary qualification', he explained, 'is that the Chairman should be somebody who is capable of a really broad approach and able to look ahead to the future as well as to the present, and whose reputation will command public confidence. In both these respects . . . we can think of nobody who is better qualified than you.'<sup>4</sup>

Beveridge accepted, wisely asking from the start for the assistance of someone to 'devil' for him. He also told Morrison that he wished to encourage the public to 'put up ideas' to him. 'I didn't encourage this too much,' wrote Morrison, 'but I rather think there is a good democratic idea about it.'<sup>5</sup> Beveridge never got his 'deviller', although G. R. Parsons of the Post Office helped him a great deal.

The appointment was announced in Parliament late in June 1949.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it was stated that the Committee would

<sup>1</sup> He soon took over once again the Deputy Chairmanship of the BBC's General Advisory Council and was Chairman from 1952 to 1955 (\*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 July 1949).

<sup>2</sup> Minute of H. Morrison to C. R. Attlee, 27 May 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (1953), p. 337.

<sup>4</sup> Morrison to Beveridge, 30 May 1949. \*A day later Harman Grisewood (then Controller, Third Programme) wrote to a number of people inside the BBC saying that no substitute for Radcliffe had yet been appointed, but that members of the Committee should not be invited to broadcast in future. This ruling was rightly queried by Beveridge (Beveridge to Simon, July 1949).

<sup>5</sup> Note by Morrison of an interview with Beveridge on 12 June 1949.

<sup>6</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 466, col. 37, 21 June 1949.



start work in the autumn. There had been an inevitable delay in announcing the appointment of the other members of the Committee, with critics hoping that the main reason for the delay was the desire to secure the strongest possible team 'for one of the most important of current administrative tasks'.<sup>1</sup> All the members had been chosen, however, before Beveridge took over from Radcliffe, and their names had been announced to Parliament in May 1949.<sup>2</sup> So, too, had their very broad terms of reference—'to consider the constitution, control, finance and other general aspects of the sound and television broadcasting services of the United Kingdom (excluding those aspects of the overseas service for which the BBC are not responsible) and to advise on the conditions under which those services and wire broadcasting should be conducted after 31 December 1951.'<sup>3</sup>

The members of the Committee were chosen not as specialists in broadcasting but as persons of 'broad approach' and 'balanced judgement'.<sup>4</sup> Morrison explicitly excluded, therefore, a member with 'industrial experience in the radio field'.<sup>5</sup> He was apparently not perturbed by the rejoinder of Rupert Browne, the Secretary of the Radio Industry Council, that industrial experience in radio did not exclude balanced judgement. In fact, only one industrialist was chosen—Sir William Coates, ex-civil servant and a deputy chairman of ICI, who soon afterwards resigned from the Committee on being appointed Chairman of the Television Advisory Committee, which, following the appointment of the Broadcasting Committee, was given narrower terms of reference. Morrison had thought of overlapping membership between the two committees as being of use to each, but the idea was criticized in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 21 May 1949; *Hansard*, vol. 464, cols. 1995-6, 12 May 1949;

\*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 12 May 1949. Haley had been informed of the final list the day before in a letter from Max Nicholson in the Lord President's Office.

<sup>2</sup> The Postmaster-General discussed the list of names with the Lord President on 24 March 1949. A minute was sent to the Prime Minister with the names on 7 April. The Prime Minister's approval was given in a letter of 20 April.

<sup>3</sup> There had been considerable interdepartmental correspondence before the terms of reference had been agreed. Originally the phrase 'having regard to problems of research and development and to the stimulation of export of equipment' had been added. The Prime Minister approved the terms on 11 May 1949.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 465, col. 1050, 24 May 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Vice-Admiral J. W. S. Dorling, Chairman of the Radio Industry Council, to Morrison, 30 May 1949; reply from Morrison's Private Secretary to Dorling, 2 June 1949.

Press,<sup>1</sup> and in September 1949 Coates was replaced by I. A. R. (later Sir Ivan) Stedeford, Chairman of Tube Investments, before the Broadcasting Committee had considered any evidence submitted to it.<sup>2</sup>

Both Post Office and BBC had been collecting possible names for membership of the Committee for over a year before the Committee met, and on the very first list was the name of Lord Reith. Lady Megan Lloyd George, who became a member of the Beveridge Committee, with a formidable combination of qualifications—woman, Welsh citizen, and (then) a Liberal—was one of the few members actually chosen who figured on this first list. It is interesting to contemplate what would have been the influence on a Broadcasting Committee in 1949 of such diverse names as Lord Halifax, stalwart BBC supporter, G. M. Trevelyan, the Whig historian, Miss Myra Curtis, formidable academic, Julian Huxley, fresh from UNESCO, Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Malcolm Sargent, everyman's musician, or Sir Ralph Richardson, everyman's actor, not to speak of R. A. Butler, politicians' politician. All but one of these, Sargent, had disappeared by the time the second list was compiled.

The final list included unnamed Members of Parliament. The Conservative member of the Committee, as it was ultimately constituted, Brigadier Selwyn Lloyd, Member for Wirral, then forty-four years old,<sup>3</sup> was chosen after consultation with his Party. So, too, were the two Labour members, whose names were produced after consultations between Morrison, Paling, and the Labour Chief Whip. The first, Ernest Davies, Labour MP for Enfield, had written a book on nationalization.<sup>4</sup> The second, Joseph Reeves, Labour MP for Greenwich, was an Alderman and a Co-operator; he was also a humanist, and had corresponded with the BBC on behalf of Rationalist MPs in 1948.<sup>5</sup> A trade unionist was named too—

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 28 Sept. 1949. There had been suggestions that during Coates's absence in the United States Stedeford should act as Chairman of the Television Advisory Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Stedeford took over on 27 September 1949.

<sup>3</sup> G. R. Downes (Lord President's Office) to Osmond, 14 April 1949.

<sup>4</sup> See E. Davies, *National Enterprise* (1946). Davies had also worked for a time in the BBC.

<sup>5</sup> See below, pp. 787–8.

T. Bowman, who was soon replaced by J. Crawford.<sup>1</sup> It was thought to be a disadvantage that both Labour MPs represented London constituencies, and ten months later Davies was replaced (after becoming a junior minister) by Dr. Stephen Taylor, Labour MP for Barnet, who had been Morrison's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Lively and unorthodox, he enjoyed being on the Committee.

One Labour MP who asked to be considered and was not chosen was Wing-Commander Geoffrey Cooper, whose parliamentary role as a critic of the BBC has already been described.<sup>2</sup> Cooper wrote to Morrison that it would 'surely be appropriate' that someone who had taken an active interest in the strong representations made to him about the 'internal conditions' inside the BBC and who knew about the complaints from members of its staff should be on the Committee of Inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Cooper's representations were unsuccessful. So, too, were representations from Professor D. C. Savory, one of the Unionist MPs for Belfast.<sup>4</sup>

The other members of the Committee, which Lord Simon described as 'competent and representative',<sup>5</sup> were the Earl of Elgin, A. L. Binns, Director of Education for Lancashire, W. F. Oakeshott, Headmaster of Winchester, and Mrs. Mary Stocks, then Principal of Westfield College. The first person on this list seems to have had no obvious qualifications for appointment to the Committee, except that he was a Scot and a Conservative, and subsequently joined the BBC's General Advisory Council<sup>6</sup>—but the last, as we have seen, was to establish a nationwide reputation after 1951 as a regular and a very forceful broadcaster. The Wykehamist strain had been present in the pre-war BBC through the influence of a former Headmaster and BBC Governor, Dr. Montague Rendall, who had composed the

<sup>1</sup> Crawford took over on 23 February 1950.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper to Paling, 3 March 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Savory to Morrison, 30 June 1949; Morrison to Savory, 4 July 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Lord Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Stocks, *op. cit.*, ch. 7, pp. 64–73. Inevitably Morrison was asked in Parliament in May 1949 by Mrs. Jean Mann how many Scots were on the Committee. 'At first sight there is certainly one,' he replied, 'but we never know. Scots have a habit of turning up unexpectedly. There may be others' (*Hansard*, vol. 464, col. 1996, 12 May 1949).

Latin inscription in Broadcasting House.<sup>1</sup> Oakeshott seemed a worthy embodiment of it in 1949.

Not everyone favoured the inclusion in the Committee of individuals with broadcasting experience, and Beveridge, who made the most of his experience, must have been surprised—if perhaps flattered—to read a criticism of the choice of himself in *Truth* on the grounds that ‘if the Government were anxious to enquire into football pools they would scarcely appoint as chairman . . . a man who was known to be a frequent . . . pools winner’.<sup>2</sup>

Competent or not, the Committee was not fully representative. It did not include, for example, any spokesman of the world of entertainment or sport, and when Cooper pressed for the appointment of an accountant, Morrison refused.<sup>3</sup> A back-bench Conservative complained also about the absence of anyone concerned with ‘consumer selling’.<sup>4</sup> Sir George Ismay, Deputy Director-General of the General Post Office, had noted the absence of a scientist, but did not feel that this mattered if the Principal of Edinburgh University, Sir Edward Appleton, much in demand, could be a scientific assessor.<sup>5</sup> Initial Press comment both on the membership and objects of the Committee was sparse, and a bold headline like ‘Beveridge probe may rock BBC monopoly’<sup>6</sup> was so rare that it stands out historically as much as it stood out at the time.

There were, however, a number of interesting articles on the appointment of the Committee, particularly in the weeklies. ‘Lord Beveridge and his Committee have a grand opportunity to reshape British broadcasting and television on new and exciting lines’, wrote Peter Hampton in *Tribune*, the left-wing weekly which was criticizing the ‘monopolist position’ of the BBC as sharply as was *The Economist*. Yet while Hampton demanded the ‘unshackling of television’, he added that the BBC’s shortcomings were as nothing compared with the awful prospect of commercial radio.<sup>7</sup> *Time and Tide* more conven-

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 426, 459; J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (1949), pp. 117–19, 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Truth*, 25 Nov. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 465, cols. 1050–1, 24 May 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from I. J. Pitman to *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Post Office Minute, 24 March 1949.

<sup>6</sup> *Cavalcade*, 3 Sept. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> *Tribune*, 30 Dec. 1949. Too much power, the article went on, was concentrated in ‘the hands of a small and somewhat isolated group’ which determines ‘what listeners shall hear’.

tionally pressed for competition within the BBC, arguing that 'it is on the relations between Sound and Vision that public interest is likely to concentrate' and rightly complaining that the BBC never referred adequately to 'the crux of this issue'.<sup>1</sup>

Beveridge's early reading included both periodicals and books, and he encouraged Haley to send him comments on R. H. Coase's pioneering study of the history and current policies of the BBC,<sup>2</sup> a book which challenged the BBC interpretation of history. Yet he had admitted to Simon whom he met at dinner earlier in the year that he and his wife never listened to the Third Programme.<sup>3</sup> He was completely free to make his own arrangements for the procedures of the Committee, and on 24 June 1949, three days after the announcement in Parliament of his appointment, and before he had had time to read much, he summoned his Committee to their first meeting, the first of what was to prove a series of sixty-two.<sup>4</sup> On the same day he issued a Press Notice inviting representations from all persons interested in the work of the Committee to be sent in by 1 October.

All in all, 223 memoranda were received.<sup>5</sup> There were also large numbers of letters. Eight out of ninety-seven received by March 1950 expressed general appreciation of the BBC, four condemned it 'root and branch', and eighty-five criticized some specific aspect of BBC programming. Many of the letters came from elderly listeners; and Farquharson, Head of Secretariat, who was all too familiar with such correspondence, described

<sup>1</sup> *Time and Tide*, 24 Dec. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Beveridge to Haley, 4 Oct. 1949. He especially wanted a comment on Part III, 'particularly the statement about insistence on programme monopoly involving in the last resort acceptance of a totalitarian philosophy'. Haley replied on 11 Oct. 1949 saying that he had read Coase's book 'with great interest' and would take up its points. See below, pp. 369, 376. Coase wrote an article in *Time and Tide* (7 Oct. 1950) in which he stated that Beveridge and his Committee were surveying 'a field which has hitherto lacked an authoritative critical examination'.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Papers, Note of a Dinner, 15 March 1949.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 464, cols. 1996-7, 12 May 1949. At the beginning, meetings were planned on Thursdays and Fridays of each month. There was a break in February and early March 1950 because of the General Election, and some meetings had to be postponed (\*Parsons to Farquharson, 24 Jan. 1950).

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 81, p. 21. Wing-Commander Cooper asked in Parliament for the 'utmost publicity' to be given to the Beveridge Committee's request (*Hansard*, vol. 466, col. 201, 22 June 1949). See below, pp. 344 ff. A second invitation was put out by the Committee in January 1949 with a list of various bodies that had so far given evidence.

the batch as 'less interesting than those that we receive through the post . . . from listeners any day of the week'.<sup>1</sup> One letter criticized *Mrs. Dale's Diary*. Two complained about *Much Binding in the Marsh*. Two liked it very much. Two requested more music. One requested less music. Five wanted more talks and discussions. Two wanted fewer. The most specific request was that the Book of Haggai should be broadcast in *Lift Up Your Hearts*.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly the Committee was not helped much in this way. Yet it also found itself frequently concerned with matters of detail. The Chairman himself would write from time to time to Simon or Haley saying that he had been concerned about the content of a particular item in the daily *Children's Hour* programme or an offensive element in a particular television programme, and at his first meeting with Simon after his appointment he asked why the BBC did not use Priestley more.<sup>3</sup> Most of the members of the Committee had radio sets, but a television set had been specially installed in the Committee's headquarters at Iron Trades House in Chester Street. It seems to have been fully used, although Mary Stocks complained later that the Committee's headquarters had been too sumptuous.<sup>4</sup> Beveridge was interested also in the daily work of the Overseas Services, and in January 1950 was asking for details of a sample week of BBC programmes to Germany and Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> Later Farquharson was to say that nothing, including discrepancies, escaped his 'eagle eye'.<sup>6</sup>

On matters of principle—whether they concerned the philosophy and organization of the BBC or the procedures of the Beveridge Committee itself—there was never any shortage of memoranda. The regular meetings were only one expression

<sup>1</sup> Farquharson to Bottomley, 29 March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*The last fifty-four included one criticism of *The Card* 'on moral grounds', one letter complaining that there was too much noise 'particularly when the stories are being broadcast', one request that all sermons should be unscripted, one criticism of the broadcasting of Bing Crosby records on the grounds that they had a 'bad effect' on a son aged nineteen who was in the Army, and seven criticisms of *How Things Began* from anti-Evolutionists.

<sup>3</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 9 March 1950; Farquharson to Parsons, 13 March 1950; Haley to Simon, 4 April 1950; Simon Papers, Note of a Meeting, 14 July 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Stocks, op. cit., p. 61; \*Parsons to Farquharson, 22 Dec. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Baker to Farquharson, 20 Jan. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Farquharson to J. H. Arkell, 16 June 1950.

of the zeal of the Committee. Beveridge made it clear from the start that he wanted 'to get to know the main BBC officials as human beings as well as titles'.<sup>1</sup> In addition, individual members or groups of members would travel round the country visiting BBC staff of all types and grades, and several of them crossed the Atlantic to study American radio and television.

A. L. Binns, who felt that broadcasting was 'much too high-brow', on more than one occasion insisted that there could be just as big a gap between north and south in Britain as between Britain and the United States. He liked to communicate the views of 'ordinary men and women' in the north to the southerners, explaining, for instance, to Wellington and Mary Somerville that somebody had told him in a Yorkshire pub that broadcasting consisted of 'posh voices talking down to us'.<sup>2</sup> Either 'classless voices' should be selected or more use should be made of the voices of intelligent working men speaking as 'authorities in their own right'.<sup>3</sup>

There was an obvious difference between Binns's approach and that of Oakeshott, who looked at Broadcasting House from the angle of Winchester College. In January 1950 Oakeshott visited a television studio, the first he had ever seen, and very quickly he interested himself in the progress of communications technology. By June 1950 he was meeting Sir Noel Ashbridge and Sir Edward Appleton who, although not appointed to the Committee, was very much in-the-know, a BBC consultant, and chairman of its Scientific Advisory Committee, along with Sir Archibald Gill, Sir Robert Watson-Watt, the pioneer of radar, Dr. Stephen Taylor and Beveridge himself, to discuss television engineering and VHF.<sup>4</sup> Oakeshott recognized that technological progress had regional and cultural implications. 'We want to know', he told Ashbridge, 'how much we can suggest . . . in the way of regional television as well as national television, and whether we can suggest local programmes to be distributed on VHF wavelengths as well as national programmes.'<sup>5</sup> Later,

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 15 Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Simon to Barnes, 30 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Jean Rowntree, Report of a Lunch Meeting between Binns, Mary Somerville and others, 13 July 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ashbridge to Oakeshott, 21 June 1950; Oakeshott to Ashbridge, 16, 22 June 1950; Oakeshott to Ashbridge, 2, 14 July 1950. The meeting had originally been planned at the Athenaeum.

<sup>5</sup> \*Oakeshott to Ashbridge, 16 June 1950.

Oakeshott wrote a paper on this subject on which Ashbridge scribbled comments.<sup>1</sup>

Meetings and visits were important in the history of the Committee since they usually involved exchange of ideas as well as of information. Thus, Mrs. Stocks wrote to Haley on 2 August 1949 asking if she could visit Alexandra Palace 'to get some visual picture of its possibilities and difficulties'. She made the first of two visits on 9 August and left a deep impression, Collins writing that he was unprepared for the fact that she was 'apparently fully acquainted with the discussions as to the proper status of television within the overall framework of the Corporation'.<sup>2</sup> Collins always kept Haley well informed about the comments of all his visitors. Thus, after Oakeshott's visit he remarked that Oakeshott had been anxious to acquire 'off the record but concrete evidence' about both technology and organization. He had also raised a number of general questions—for example, whether the BBC had become 'inert' through lack of the stimulus of competition and whether the Staff Association was a 'tame' or an independent body.<sup>3</sup>

When new members of the Committee were appointed, their visits were perhaps of special significance. They were going back to the beginnings; the BBC was summarizing and sometimes restating. When Dr. Stephen Taylor, who had joined the Committee late, explained that he had 'arrears to make up',<sup>4</sup> he was given careful briefing. He also knew from other members of the Committee which visits were thought to be particularly illuminating. New pairings became possible. Thus, he and Oakeshott, acting as a sub-committee, 'spent five concentrated hours in Birmingham' in April 1950,<sup>5</sup> and this visit was followed up a few days later with a long talk with George Barnes, during which Taylor questioned Barnes closely about 'organisation; how talks originate; how far there was Regional autonomy

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to Haley, 22 Aug. 1950; Ashbridge to Farquharson, 30 May 1950.

<sup>2</sup> She visited Alexandra Palace again on 18 March 1950. For her impressions of her visit and her sense of 'boiling enthusiasm kindled by a driving force' (Norman Collins), see *Still More commonplace*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 9 Jan. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 12 April 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dunkerley to Nicolls, 24 April 1950. One of the questions they asked was whether 'the quantity of broadcasting from the Regions could with advantage be increased'.



... the strain on producing staff . . . and the danger from passive listening'.<sup>1</sup> Soon afterwards, Taylor was attending—at his own request—a meeting of the BBC Dance Music Policy Committee.<sup>2</sup> Stedford was another visitor to the Midland Regional Office in Birmingham and from the start was given personal responsibilities to unravel the complexities of BBC finance.<sup>3</sup> It was at the special request of Beveridge that he saw Thomas Lochhead, the BBC's Finance Controller, to discuss informally a questionnaire on basic financial questions.<sup>4</sup> Beveridge himself was pressing at the same time for 'full details of the programmes which are broadcast from the different regional stations and where these programmes originate'.<sup>5</sup>

It is not possible to trace in detail the activities of each of the individual members of the Committee over the eighteen months between their being appointed and their reporting, but in the light of what was to happen later the visit of Selwyn Lloyd to the BBC on 6 June 1950 is of particular interest. Lloyd wanted to 'sense the atmosphere' and talked to a lot of people.<sup>6</sup> According to Farquharson, he started the day with two preoccupations. First, 'why . . . did the BBC object to the idea of sponsored programmes "suitably controlled?"' and, second, 'the BBC is a monster, i.e. too powerful', what can be done about it? On the first point, few people then knew what sponsoring meant—the presentation of particular television programmes by identified commercial sponsors—and against the second question Haley scribbled hopefully, 'I hope you demonsterised us!'<sup>7</sup>

Selwyn Lloyd had not then visited the United States with

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 26 April 1950; Barnes Papers, Report of Interview, 26 April 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*R. J. S. Baker to Farquharson, 12 May 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Michael Standing to Farquharson, 26 May 1950. The main function of this Committee was to consider in advance of publication popular song material submitted by music publishers. See below, p. 755.

<sup>4</sup> \*Dunkerley to Nicolls, 16 May 1950, describing Stedford's visit. 'The object of most of his questions to me', Dunkerley wrote, 'was . . . to help him judge whether the BBC could with advantage put rather more money into regional broadcasting, particularly by using it to introduce a more genuinely competitive element within the all-over framework.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Baker to Farquharson, 1 April 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Record of a telephone conversation between Parsons and Farquharson, 2 June 1950; Farquharson to Haley, 8 June 1950.

<sup>7</sup> \*Ibid. At Dr. Stephen Taylor's meeting with Barnes on 26 April 1950 he too had suggested that the Corporation was too big. He also referred to 'cultural bias'.

Mrs. Stocks, a visit which was followed a month later by a visit of Lord Elgin and Alderman Reeves. Such visits were of special interest at that time. The United States was thought of as a necessary destination largely because of the 'bigness' of TV there and because of the 'zip and zest' associated with it.<sup>1</sup> To many people it was a 'portent of the future', and Simon had set an example for the Beveridge Committee by visiting it for six months in the autumn of 1948. He sent a copy of his account of the visit to Beveridge who read it with 'the greatest interest and enjoyment'. 'Is there any reason why the other members of my Committee should not have the benefit of your report?' he asked. 'It is just the sort of thing that the Committee ought to have to set them thinking on fundamental problems of monopoly and competition, and of who ought to decide in what interest what is to go on the air.'<sup>2</sup> A month later he told Haley that 'any endorsement of BBC kind of broadcasting should come after a thorough examination of other systems'.<sup>3</sup>

The Beveridge 'pairs' of visitors to the United States had also listened, along with other members of the Committee, to recordings of American radio programmes specially sent over to Britain. They were presented, too, with a list of examination questions by the Chairman before they set out, with Elgin and Reeves enjoying the benefit of having read the joint answers of Selwyn Lloyd and Mrs. Stocks before they presented their own.<sup>4</sup> Their various notes were not intended for publication although they were to be published *in toto* as an Appendix to the final Report.<sup>5</sup>

The most forthright critic of advertising was Reeves, who stated simply that American television programmes 'do not compare with ours'. 'They are positively ruined', he went on, 'by obtrusive and objectionable advertising matter.'<sup>6</sup> By con-

<sup>1</sup> See the interesting article by L. Marsland Gander in the *Daily Telegraph*, 30 Sept. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Beveridge to Simon, 2 July 1949, 30 Sept. 1950. Simon published the account of his visit in *The BBC from Within* (1953), ch. XV. In January 1949 he had agreed that his account should be privately circulated (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 6 Jan. 1949) and would not go to the BBC General Advisory Council (Simon to Beveridge, 5 July 1949).

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Haley, 15 Aug. 1949. <sup>4</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 26 July 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8116, Appendix G, pp. 287-321. Beveridge added a conclusion, *ibid.*, pp. 320-1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

trast, Mrs. Stocks found 'advertisement slogans' on radio 'surprisingly lacking in originality or ingenuity'; they seemed 'on balance mildly tedious'. Her criticisms went deeper also. Sponsoring of individual television programmes was bad for anyone interested in quality. 'An advertising agent with whom we talked claimed that the advertising agents were the "true experts" in popular taste. In fact, the advertising agencies are the main recruiters of talent in the radio show business.' 'There is considerable difference', she concluded, 'between merely selling spot time to advertisers for purely revenue reasons at prices related to the popularity of the programme in which the spot advertisement is inserted, and allowing the sponsors, or rather their agents, to get control of the production side of the business. The first might irritate listeners and should only be contemplated as a revenue-producing expedient if alternative resources are inadequate—as might conceivably be the case in British Television. The second is calculated to bedevil the whole system and in my opinion it is doing so in the United States.'<sup>1</sup>

Selwyn Lloyd concurred on one major point. 'We would not willingly agree to British listeners being subjected to the full blast of U.S.A. radio advertisement.'<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he did not think it impossible 'to devise rules which would make it more tolerable'.<sup>3</sup> He liked certain features of the American broadcasting system, including 'competition to produce good programmes' and 'the capacity of small local stations "to promote community spirit and local interest and to perform the function of the local newspaper in Britain" but rather more attractively and effectively'.<sup>4</sup>

Interviewed in New York before returning to England, neither Selwyn Lloyd nor Mrs. Stocks was prepared to say whether they thought sponsoring desirable. Yet Selwyn Lloyd did go so far as to point out that 'one must take into account differences in national temperament which are reflected in national styles of advertising. It cannot be assumed that if we had advertising on British Radio the result would be exactly the same as in America.'<sup>5</sup> Later, he was to comment that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. L. Marsland Gander in the *Daily Telegraph*, 30 Sept. 1950. 'No English viewer . . . would willingly submit to the vulgar intrusions that occur here.'

<sup>3</sup> *Cmd.* 8116, p. 307.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>5</sup> *Irish Times*, 23 Sept. 1950.

everywhere in America 'the idea of a public monopoly laying down the law as to what people were to hear or see filled them with horror'.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to collecting notes about competitive broadcasting from members of his Committee, Beveridge also collected the views of C. A. Siepman, who had worked with the BBC in a senior position before the war, who had studied regionalization, and whose book *Radio, Television and Society*, a comparative study, was published in New York in April 1950 while the Committee was deliberating.<sup>2</sup> Siepman, like Coase before him, attacked what he called 'the secrecy' of the BBC. 'The listener in Britain, or the student of broadcasting, or even a people's representative in Parliament' was unable to obtain from the BBC 'facts that might be considered of legitimate interest to the public'.<sup>3</sup> It was a charge which continued to be levelled against the Beveridge Committee itself during the course of its deliberations. Indeed, the very first decision the Committee had to take was whether to hold its inquiry in private or not.

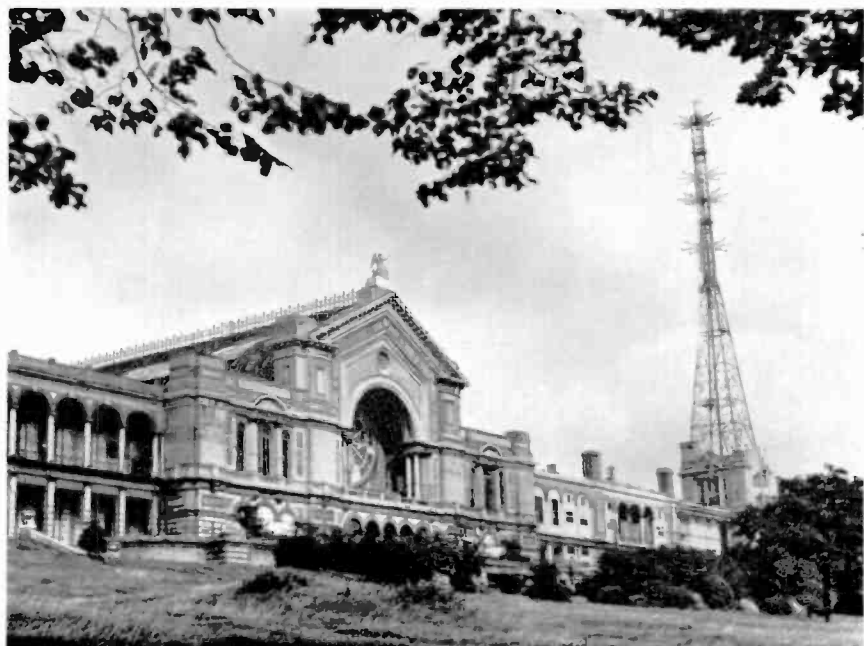
When pressed by Wing-Commander Cooper from the Labour Party and Sir Waldron Smithers from the Conservative Party in January 1949, Morrison had refused to recommend that the inquiry should be held in public 'to allay criticism'. He described as 'unfortunate' Cooper's 'state of mind' concerning the BBC, and when Smithers talked comprehensively of the 'increasing left-wing tendency of all broadcasts', he said that he did not consider Smithers to be 'an impartial judge'. Yet neither critic could be easily silenced. Cooper harked back to the absurdly 'gentle enquiry' conducted by Sir Valentine Holmes in Broadcasting House which had done so little, he argued, 'in putting things right inside the BBC'.<sup>4</sup> Smithers was even more aggressive. He deliberately did not grasp the status of the new inquiry and wrote a letter to Simon as late as

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> C. A. Siepman, *Radio, Television and Society* (New York, 1950), p. 135. Beveridge had asked the BBC in July 1949 for a list of people in America 'who have thought seriously about radio' (\*Farquharson to Beveridge, 5 Aug. 1949).

<sup>3</sup> Simon quoted Siepman's *Radio's Second Choice* (1947) which bitterly attacked the BBC and described the American system as 'infinitely preferable to the British system' and 'the best system and the best service in the world'.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 460, col. 1376, 31 Jan. 1949. See below, p. 320.



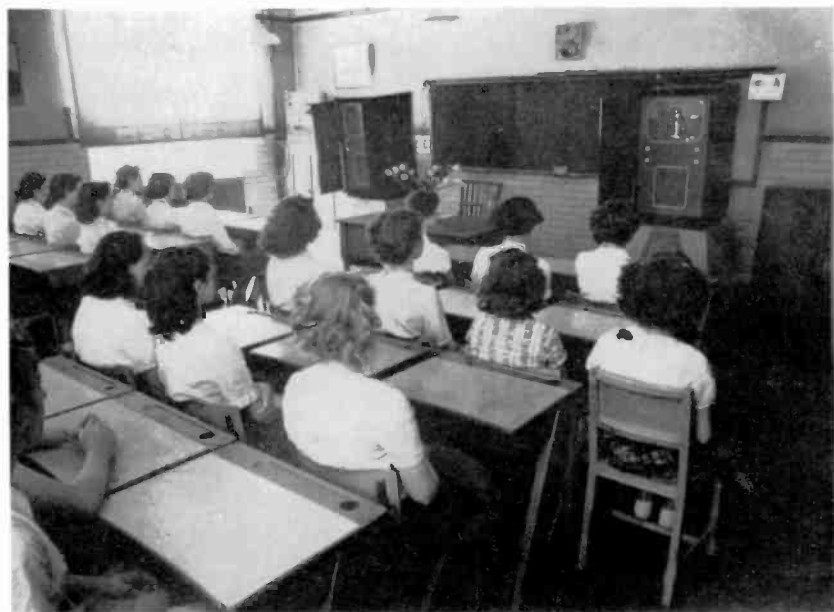
5a. Alexandra Palace, 1946



5b. Television Centre, Scenery Block, 1955



*a.* Music and Movement, 1953



*b.* School Television Experiment, 1952

## 6. For the Schools

September 1949 describing the Beveridge Committee as 'your BBC Committee'.<sup>1</sup> He hoped that there would be 'a storm of criticism' if Committee meetings were held in private, and continued to ask further questions in Parliament on this subject and to urge other MPs to do so later in the session and during the next session.<sup>2</sup> Morrison replied on each occasion that the Government was following precedent and that 'better and franker advice' would be given in private than in public.<sup>3</sup>

In his published Report Beveridge himself gave two reasons for sticking to the precedents of 1923, 1925, and 1935. First, to hold meetings without the Press being present contributed to 'greater freedom of discussion and frankness in expression of opinion than if every casual remark by a witness in the process of thinking aloud is liable to be reported with or without its context'.<sup>4</sup> Second, paper-rationing would have made 'fair reporting' of 'voluminous' proceedings impossible.<sup>5</sup> Not everyone agreed. *The Star* in London was particularly hostile; and if there was no national storm, there was certainly a continuous undercurrent of criticism throughout the inquiry. 'They keep it dark at the BBC,' the *Daily Mail* was grumbling as late as March 1950.<sup>6</sup> In general, there was far more complaint on the part of the Press than on that of the public. The notion of a 'public hearing', familiar across the Atlantic, seemed strange in the London of 1949.

Because of the 'secrecy', much of the Press comment on the deliberations of the Beveridge Committee was gossipy and some of it was ill-informed. There was much talk at times of the BBC

<sup>1</sup> \*Sir Waldron Smithers to Simon, 5 Sept. 1949. See also his letter to *The Times*, 4 Oct. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 463, col. 2044, 6 April 1949. Lt.-Com. Clark Hutchison put the inevitable argument—'that the enquiry should be in public in view of the public money involved'. On the second occasion Smithers asked why 'a learned judge or prominent K.C.' had not been chosen as Chairman. 'Why all this secrecy? Is the Rt. Hon. gentleman afraid that the Communist activities of the BBC will be so intense?' He went on to describe the 'secrecy' as a 'Soviet technique'. *Hansard*, vol. 468, cols. 1322-3, 26 Oct. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> The same point was made by its Secretary, G. R. Parsons. 'Parsons had said that his Committee was sitting in private in order that its witnesses may talk quite freely, but the Committee does not ask its witnesses to keep mum about what happens' (\*Farquharson to Bottomley, 8 Nov. 1949).

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Star*, 1 Feb. 1949; *Daily Mail*, 7 March 1950.

'handing over' television,<sup>1</sup> and as the evidence of some of the witnesses to the Committee was published, necessarily haphazardly, particular issues were taken up, most of them—like the demand for more Roman Catholic broadcasts—to be dropped very quickly.<sup>2</sup> What seemed clear to most commentators was that 'the probe is going very deep' and that Haley himself was deeply concerned about its outcome.<sup>3</sup> This last aspect greatly worried *The Observer*, which coupled Beveridge and Reith as 'powerful racket busters' and feared that Beveridge's desire to produce a 'great report' rested on the totally false premise that the BBC somehow could be thought of as 'a racket'.<sup>4</sup> It offered its sympathies not to Beveridge but to Haley. 'Question Mark Over the BBC' was the characteristic title of an article in the *News Chronicle* in the summer of 1950,<sup>5</sup> although by then the *Daily Mail* had told its readers that the 'BBC inquiry is over—now the hard task starts'.<sup>6</sup>

It is not clear exactly when the Beveridge Committee decided to produce a Report in two volumes, although this is said to have been 'confirmed' at the beginning of September 1950.<sup>7</sup> It was certainly decided then that the ordering of the contents of Volume II, a collection of evidence presented to the Committee, would have to be determined in the light of the progressive drafting of Volume I. The first chapter in Volume I, that on 'British Broadcasting To-day', remained to be completed, while the second chapter had already been completed a little earlier in August 1950<sup>8</sup> and had been read by Haley and by a number of other people, some of whom submitted 'constructive criticisms'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Star*, 27 Sept., 12 Oct. 1949; *Reynolds News*, 13 Aug. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 30 June 1950. An interesting debate concerning a wide range of issues was organized by the English Speaking Union in the spring of 1950 (see the *New Review*, 6 April 1950). Orr-Ewing, now a Conservative MP and a critic of certain BBC policies, took part. So did Margery Fry.

<sup>3</sup> *Everybody's*, 1 July 1950.

<sup>4</sup> *The Observer*, 30 April 1950.

<sup>5</sup> *News Chronicle*, 24 Aug. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Aug. 1950.

<sup>7</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 1 Sept. 1950. Farquharson had written to Bottomley raising the question of what parts of the BBC's written evidence should be published with the Report. Parsons wrote to Farquharson on the same subject, 21 July 1950, saying that he did not think the oral evidence would be published *verbatim*.

<sup>8</sup> \*Parsons to Haley, 25 Aug. 1950.

<sup>9</sup> \*Haley to Parsons, 1 Sept. 1950. Haley corrected a reference to the Third Programme which said it was losing audiences. 'Has lost' would be more accurate.'



When he read it, Haley knew that the *News Chronicle's* question mark had disappeared and that the Committee had taken the critical decision to continue the BBC monopoly. This must have made the readers' tasks far lighter. Indeed, in Simon's picturesque language, he, Haley and his colleagues 'no longer felt like criminals in the dock'.<sup>1</sup>

Beveridge himself prepared large sections of the complete draft of the Report with a secretary after having retreated into the country during the summer of 1950. He took with him everything he could by way of relevant materials, including a new set of maps showing the extent to which there could be practical competition between the regional home services, a question to which he had devoted much of his own labours. He said that he would be 'greatly surprised' if 'the real position' was illustrated by the first maps produced by the Corporation; they certainly did not convey what was really happening at his home in Northumberland.<sup>2</sup>

There were three months of Committee discussion of the Beveridge draft, with several members of the Committee adding notes of their own and reservations and with Selwyn Lloyd preparing his minority report. Certainly the work of the Committee did not contract during this period, when the visits had ceased. Thus, long after the first draft was ready, Beveridge was bombarding the BBC with questions. Some were historical—about the role of Vernon Bartlett in 1933, for instance,<sup>3</sup> or Reith's part in the General Strike<sup>4</sup> or on his own role as a broadcaster. 'Lord Beveridge says can you explain why there are now no News Commentators. He was once one himself.'<sup>5</sup> Some of them were concerned with current issues—like exactly what had happened in the affair of *Party Manners*<sup>6</sup> or whether

<sup>1</sup> Lord Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 28 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 2 Oct. 1950; Farquharson to Reith, 9 Oct. 1950; see also *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 146–7. See also V. Bartlett, *This is My Life* (1937).

<sup>4</sup> \*Baker to Farquharson, 11 Oct. 1950. See also A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 360 ff.

<sup>5</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 2 Oct. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Beveridge to Simon, 10 Oct. 1950.

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he observed. 'For the time being the trend has stopped.' The correction was made in the published Report (Cmd. 8116, p. 21).

or not D. N. Pritt had broadcast from Radio Moscow.<sup>1</sup> The resignation of Norman Collins in October, a historic date, was raised as an issue not by the Committee but by Simon,<sup>2</sup> and it was the BBC Governors also who complained in June—somewhat belatedly—that the Corporation had been given only one and a quarter hours to discuss television during the whole course of the hearings.<sup>3</sup>

In these last stages, Farquharson told Haley that Beveridge had no plans for releasing the Report to the BBC before it went to Ministers. He had not revealed whether it would be ready for signature by mid-December, as had been planned, or whether Ministers would be anxious to have it published as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup> Haley himself, however, was given an account of the likely timetables and told the Board of Management in December that the publication of the Report would probably be on 10 or 11 January 1951.<sup>5</sup>

In fact the final meeting of the Committee, followed by a cocktail party, was held on 15 December. The number of guests attending the party exceeded the hundred recommendations which the Committee finally made.<sup>6</sup>

The Cabinet received the Report before Christmas, and the Chairman and Governors of the BBC on 8 January. It was on 11 January, however, the date Haley had forecast, that G. R. Parsons, the indefatigable Secretary of the Committee, who had been assisted by R. J. S. Baker, his Post Office colleague, wrote to Farquharson:

Now that we have travelled the long distance from the Beveridge Committee starting point to sending the Report to Ministers, one thought uppermost in my mind is the considerable debt I owe to you. . . . I admired greatly the masterly way in which you accomplished the heavy task in preparing and presenting the Corporation's evidence and I often marvelled at the speed and good humour with which you met the many demands for additional information.

<sup>1</sup> \*Baker to Farquharson, 11 Oct. 1950; Farquharson to Baker, 17 Oct. 1950. Pritt had broadcast after his fourth visit to the USSR since 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Simon to Beveridge, 14 Oct. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Parsons, 23 June 1950. Collins met the Committee on 30 June 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Farquharson to Haley, 13 Nov. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Wellington to Regional Programme Heads, 15 Dec. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 2 April 1955.

. . . I am now looking forward to resuming our friendly relationship on my more normal run of work.<sup>1</sup>

For its part, the Committee thanked Parsons 'in no conventional terms'. 'His ability, industry and courtesy', they stated, 'have been beyond praise.'<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The BBC Evidence

BBC evidence to the Beveridge Committee ran to 640,000 written and spoken words. Yet, as Beveridge told Simon at the outset, 'in order to preserve the complete independence of our Enquiry we are bound, in principle, to treat the Broadcasting Corporation as one witness among others, though needless to say the most important witness.'<sup>3</sup>

The first of the written words had been prepared long in advance of the summoning of the Committee. As early as March 1948 it had been expected that an inquiry would begin 'at the end of 1948 or early 1949' and that it would 'cover a great number of complex questions . . . over a wide field'—'constitution, organisation and administration, programme policy, television development, regional devolution, financial control, staff relations, public relations . . . trade unions and wavelengths', a comprehensive list in somewhat unusual order.<sup>4</sup>

'We should start preliminary work at once,' wrote Sir Norman Bottomley, the Director of Administration, in this interesting memorandum on 'Preparatory Work'. 'We cannot wait for definite indications of the directions in which it will turn.' Every effort had to be made to ensure that the members of a future committee of inquiry would be 'fully and accurately informed'.<sup>5</sup> These words were set down a year before Sir Raymond Birchall of the Post Office wrote to Haley that 'moves about the Inquiry are now taking place. It would be helpful if you could let us have your memoranda as quickly as possible.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 11 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 12.

<sup>3</sup> \*Beveridge to Simon, Oct. 1949 (no day given).

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Bottomley, 17 March 1948; see also above, pp. 170-1.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Bottomley, 17 March 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Sir R. Birchall to Haley, 26 March 1949.

In the interim Simon had written to the Postmaster-General in June 1948, 'I understand the Committee of Inquiry into the BBC may be appointed about the end of this year and we are making every effort to be fully ready for it.'<sup>1</sup>

With this end in view, a working party was set up inside the BBC in March 1948 to prepare what eventually came to be called the 'General Survey of the Broadcasting Service'<sup>2</sup> or more briefly 'BBC/1'. It was headed by Farquharson, to whom Parsons was to pay such a warm tribute,<sup>3</sup> and it included J. G. L. Francis (who was to be Lochhead's successor) to deal with finance, F. C. McLean (who was to succeed Bishop) to deal with engineering, R. D'A. Marriott, then Head of Section, European Liaison Office, to deal with European and Overseas broadcasting, and James Langham to deal with Home programming.<sup>4</sup> The timetable was based on the assumption that a Committee of Inquiry would soon be appointed and would call for information by the beginning of 1949.<sup>5</sup>

The Working Party met for the first time at the end of April 1948 and decided at once to prepare a general paper.<sup>6</sup> It agreed also to avoid 'long memoranda' and 'unnecessary meetings'. It would seek to devise a system for classifying information to enable it to deal with *ad hoc* requests, but it deliberately limited its scope. A distinction was drawn between producing material required by or for the Committee of Inquiry and material which would assist decision-making inside the BBC.<sup>7</sup> 'By autumn,' Farquharson told Bottomley, 'we shall have some results to show.'<sup>8</sup>

Marriott was one of the first off the mark with a paper on the Overseas Services:<sup>9</sup> in a covering note he defined as one of his main objectives an effort to demonstrate that 'the whole system is good and ought not to be changed'. His memorandum went

<sup>1</sup> Simon to Paling, 3 June 1948 (P.O. Archive).

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 1-90.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 22 March 1948; Bottomley to Farquharson, 12 April 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Memorandum by Bottomley, 12 April 1948; Farquharson to the members of the Working Party, 24 Aug., 17 Sept. 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 27 April 1948. J. T. Campbell was added to the Working Party after BBC/1 was produced (Farquharson to Campbell, 30 June 1949; *Minutes of Working Party Meeting*, 7 July 1949).

<sup>7</sup> \*Draft Minute of a Meeting between Haley and Farquharson, 28 May 1948.

<sup>8</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 27 April 1948.

<sup>9</sup> \*Paper of 15 July 1948.

through many different versions before it was completed, as useful information was collected from the wide range of readers who saw it privately in its different drafts.<sup>1</sup>

Another very early matter selected for detailed investigation was finance. The licensing system was taken for granted, but it was considered 'imperative' from the start that the Corporation should resist 'the arbitrary restrictions imposed by Income Tax'.<sup>2</sup> Haley anticipated from the start that this was one of the few matters on which there might be a difference of opinion between the BBC and the Post Office, and took an intense personal interest in the subject.

The first direct exchanges with the Post Office were made in August 1948, when Birchall suggested a division of labour in the preparation of memoranda for the Committee.<sup>3</sup> All BBC drafts and Post Office drafts should be exchanged before being circulated, differences should be kept to a minimum and joint memoranda could, if necessary, be prepared.<sup>4</sup> This made the most of a common approach to key issues by what critics called the two monopolies, yet inevitably there were times when the approach of BBC and Post Office diverged. Eventually it was agreed, not surprisingly, that no joint memoranda should be prepared.<sup>5</sup>

The differences emerged, for example, in Post Office and BBC drafts on 'the development of television for public showing'. After reading the Post Office draft, Farquharson had to point out that while 'the Post Office intention is clearly to present the position in a judicial and impartial way . . . the Corporation, on the other hand, is decisively opposed to the incursion of the film industry into live television production'.<sup>6</sup> On VHF also there were differences which became apparent

<sup>1</sup> 'I always thought your redrafts a vast improvement on the original even when I have been the author,' he wrote to Farquharson, 23 Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum, 'Payment of Income Tax by the BBC', 17 Dec. 1948; see below, p. 318.

<sup>3</sup> \*Birchall to Haley, 7 Aug. 1948; see below, p. 320.

<sup>4</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 18 Nov. 1948 (with Appendages) and 4 Feb. 1949. The first batch of Post Office drafts was received in February 1949 (Haley to Birchall, 3 March 1949).

<sup>5</sup> \*F. C. McLean to Bishop, 11 Feb. 1949; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 11 April 1949; Bottomley to Farquharson, 21 April 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Farquharson, 4 Feb. 1949. There were differences, too, in relation to engineering documents (Note of a telephone conversation between Farquharson and Bishop, 25 Feb. 1949).

when the Post Office's first paper was received.<sup>1</sup> Ashbridge wrote an extremely interesting memorandum in which he suggested that the Post Office, 'in an effort to make a truly objective survey of the possibilities of VHF broadcasting, have tended, no doubt unintentionally, to somewhat cloud the really important facts'. The question of whether a large number of low-power or a small number of high-power stations should be used for countrywide development was open, and the objection that the wholesale use of FM might lead to the abandonment of foreign listening was new to him.<sup>2</sup>

As far as the preparation of BBC drafts was concerned, the chain of authority was clearly defined inside Broadcasting House.<sup>3</sup> Farquharson was directly responsible to Bottomley and Bottomley was directly responsible to Haley. 'You will have your finger on the pulse of the Committee's work,' Bottomley told Farquharson, in asking him to keep him fully informed about implementing Haley's requirements.<sup>4</sup> Haley himself not only reserved a number of key matters to himself—including television and film—but read carefully through everyone else's drafts. Later in the course of the inquiry he himself wrote a number of important memoranda supplementing BBC/1, and in order to impress the Committee with the speed and efficiency of the Corporation he often took decisions as to whether papers required by the Committee in a hurry need go first to the Board of Governors or the Board of Management.<sup>5</sup>

Simon, too, was deeply interested both in the methods of collecting evidence and in framing what he thought were important strategic questions. He asked, for example, for information from BBC officials about broadcasting organization and finance in countries with populations similar to that of Scotland. Nor did he drop his interest when Haley told him that other countries' experience was 'not really relevant'. He had his own particular concerns and his own points of contact outside the

<sup>1</sup> \*McLean to Bishop, 11 Feb. 1949; Record of a telephone conversation between Bishop and Farquharson, 25 Feb. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ashbridge to Haley, 30 Sept. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*See, for example, Haley to Bottomley, 23 Sept. 1948; Bottomley to Farquharson, 27 Sept. 1948; Farquharson to the members of the Working Party, 29 Sept. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Bottomley to Farquharson, 25 April 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Bottomley, 14 Oct. 1949.

Corporation, including contact in the House of Lords and outside with Beveridge himself.<sup>1</sup>

The timetable of the Working Party had to take account of the fact that Simon had decided to go to the United States in September 1948,<sup>2</sup> and it was for this reason that Farquharson was asked to prepare the first draft of the substantial 'general survey' paper by 2 September.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the first draft of BBC/I was not completed until November. Work had been carried out on a 'part-time basis'—everyone on the Working Party still had his job to do—and it had been properly pointed out that both Controllers and Heads of Department needed adequate time to comment on drafts if full account was to be taken of their knowledge and experience.

The paper as it emerged was thorough and authoritative. It included only eighteen pages out of eighty-five on television, but an 'appreciation of television' had been commissioned separately as an additional assignment after the Working Party had been summoned. The fact that it was not written by a member of the television staff was itself significant.<sup>4</sup> Television was still being kept in its place. Haley asked for the 'appreciation' to be 'comprehensive' in scope, 'dealing with past history, present position and future policy . . . programmes, engineering, manpower and finance . . . and television's ultimate relationship to sound'.

Farquharson invited G. E. Morey of the Research Unit, News Information, to produce the 'appreciation',<sup>5</sup> and the first draft was ready by mid-August.<sup>6</sup> The paper was out-of-date, however, by the time BBC/I was prepared,<sup>7</sup> and it was not submitted as such to the Beveridge Committee. As television loomed larger on the agenda, new material had to be requested, including 'an enquiry into Television Viewing' by Robert Silvey,<sup>8</sup> an extensive inquiry with charts of the kind Beveridge

<sup>1</sup> \*Simon to Haley, 22 July 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Bottomley, 22 June 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 1 Oct. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Farquharson to J. A. C. Knott, 20 July 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Farquharson to Collins, 16 Aug. 1948. It was read by Collins, who sent a first note to Farquharson on 20 Aug. 1948.

<sup>7</sup> \*Farquharson to Francis, McLean, and Marriott, 28 April 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Cmd. 8117, 1951, pp. 242-6; see also below, pp. 324-5.

liked and which he said that he would treat as a necessary research base.<sup>1</sup>

It is fascinating to trace through the bulky BBC files devoted to 'compilation of evidence' the accumulation of material of every kind incorporated first in BBC/1 and later in the massive written BBC evidence, more than thirty papers in all which were presented to the Beveridge Committee. The organization was always keen and efficient, and, despite the hurry, Farquharson kept matters in perspective and insisted that two copies of the draft of each document should be placed in Registry Archives.<sup>2</sup>

There had been no similar exercise on such a scale at the time of the Ullswater Committee, when it was still possible for Reith himself as one man to 'explain' how the BBC worked as well as how it was governed.<sup>3</sup> What was remarkable in 1948 and 1949 was the attempt at the same time to collect necessary detail and to reinforce principles. The two tasks were seen as complementary. The accumulation of detail about staffing matters, a likely bone of contention in the Committee given the line of Cooper's questioning, is scarcely surprising.<sup>4</sup> Nor is the material on high-frequency broadcasting, a matter of great interest to all students of the new electronics. Yet what is surprising, at least at first sight, is a note of thanks from Farquharson to the Controllers of the Home, Light, and Third Programmes which includes the remark that it had been 'an unaccountable lapse' to fail to give 'any description of what we are doing by way of broadcasting poetry'.<sup>5</sup> 'It will not be possible', Farquharson concluded modestly, 'to devote more than one paragraph of our report to this particular subject.'

Perhaps less surprising was a note to the Head of Music, Sir Stuart Wilson, asking him to revise his initial draft. Farquharson added that although he himself was 'terribly twisted up

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Beveridge, 20 Sept. 1949; Parsons to Haley, 28 Sept. 1949. Twenty-five copies of Silvey's article on the subject in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IV, no. 4, were sent to Parsons to be circulated to members of the Committee.

<sup>2</sup> \*Farquharson to Francis, McLean, and Marriott, 28 April 1949. 'As usual,' he wrote in a note of 27 Jan. 1949, 'we are in a hurry with the necessary redraft destined for the Board of Governors.'

<sup>3</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 482-7.

<sup>4</sup> \*Farquharson to Pym, 14 Oct. 1948: 'My impression is that staff matters will be likely to loom fairly large in the Enquiry.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Farquharson to Wellington, Collins, and Barnes, 17 Dec. 1948.



in the writing up of television', he felt that 'we could hardly exaggerate the importance of making a good statement about music in our evidence'.<sup>1</sup>

Such items concerned with content jostle with notes on the international distribution of wavelengths and the comparative organization of broadcasting systems (including Luxembourg), the extent of home coverage and, in a very different but necessarily important field, ministerial responsibility for the BBC.<sup>2</sup> Since one document could go through three or four editions, there was continuous interchange of ideas and opinions before the final draft was ready. At times the process seemed endless, and there was an undoubted note of relief in a comment by Marriott in October 1948 that, while it was Farquharson's job to edit all contributions, 'I think he will leave ours untouched'.<sup>3</sup> Haley himself was involved in the process at many points, preparing papers on the most thorny subjects, adding large numbers of general comments in ink on papers prepared by other people and redrafting them in their final form. Some of the papers were scanned also by the solicitor and many of them by the BBC's accountants.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most important initial questions for the accountants—so important that it was also dealt with in a separate paper submitted to the Governors—was whether or not expenditure on sound and television should be shown separately in future accounts. 'It is suggested', Farquharson wrote to Bottomley in March 1949, that when this paper comes before the Board, 'the D.G. may wish to raise this question with a view

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to Sir Steuart Wilson, 3 Jan. 1949. He wrote to him again on 10 March 1949 asking him to add sections on auditioning of performers, on 'the effect of broadcast music on concert going and music making', and on the BBC as a patron. Wilson to Farquharson, 22 March 1949, dealt with these and other points.

<sup>2</sup> \*Farquharson to Ashbridge, 14 Dec. 1948; Miss Singer to Farquharson, 13 Dec. 1948. One of the most interesting papers is called 'Advertising Programmes Addressed to British Listeners from Abroad'. It was written by Marriott and in its first draft, dated 14 Feb. 1949, it ended with a remark that 'the future of Radio Luxembourg is somewhat obscure. . . . It has not itself signed the Copenhagen Convention, but the pressure on wavelengths is such that there will certainly be no long wavelength vacant for it to seize.' (Farquharson to Bottomley, 2 March 1949.)

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Marriott, 15 Oct. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*e.g. J. G. L. Francis to Farquharson, 14 Jan. 1949; Haley to Farquharson, 28 March 1949.

to obtaining a decision' as to the Corporation's policy on it.<sup>1</sup> To Haley himself he observed that this might be a useful question to settle inside the BBC even if he did not wish to take the initiative in raising the point with the Beveridge Committee.<sup>2</sup>

On the income tax issue, which had been examined in 1946 when the renewal of the Charter was imminent,<sup>3</sup> a memorandum had been prepared as early as December 1948,<sup>4</sup> which showed that the crux of the matter was not accounting but the provision and disposition of resources. Haley did his best to view the finances of the BBC as a whole, and eventually two supplementary BBC memoranda on finance were to be submitted to the Beveridge Committee, along with eight items relating to staffing. These were all to be printed in Volume II of the Committee's Report.

The staffing question, like the financial question, had been raised more than once in discussions between the BBC, the TUC, and the post-war Labour Government,<sup>5</sup> and the Governors preferred to deal with some of its most important aspects, including unionization, outside the Committee of Inquiry.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, in March 1949 the Governors had agreed to refer a reply they had made to Vincent Tewson, the Assistant Secretary of the TUC, to 'the next Committee of Enquiry',<sup>7</sup> and a section on staffing—to be supplemented by later memoranda—was included in BBC/1. It drew a sharp distinction, not always appreciated outside the BBC, between 'staff' (established and unestablished) and 'performers', making it clear that unionization influenced relations with both.<sup>8</sup>

For Haley, the question of the adequate financing of the BBC was as fundamental as the question of monopoly was to Beveridge, and his paper 'on the payment of income tax' raised all the basic financial issues confronting the Corporation. 'The amount of the licence fee must be such that, taking into account both the probable number of licences which will be issued and the proper development of the service in the public interest, it will provide the funds needed.' Only the BBC itself could

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 24 March 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Farquharson to Haley, 25 March 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 21 March 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*'Payment of Income Tax by the BBC', 17 Dec. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 Feb. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid.    <sup>7</sup> \*Ibid., 17 March 1949.    <sup>8</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 60-6.

properly judge what the funds needed really were. In 1949 and 1950 it was being forced first to 'make good the leeway in normal development and replacement due to the war years'; second, 'to carry on with major developments, such as television'; and third, to push forward technical development, including the development of VHF, 'which might render existing methods obsolete in a few years' time'.

This was a formidable commitment, yet the borrowing powers of the Corporation were severely restricted—to £1 million—and it would be expected to pay at least £10 million in income tax during the period of expansion from 1947 to 1958.<sup>1</sup> The increased income from television licences would obviously not be sufficient to enable the BBC to operate effectively, to plan ahead, and 'to maintain its high place in world broadcasting'.<sup>2</sup>

Such issues were explained in the very last paragraph of BBC/1, which outlined a ten-year capital development plan with detailed financial forecasts. The conclusions were plain. The BBC should retain 100 per cent of net licence income—i.e. the Government should not get a 'cut'—and it should be absolved from payment of income tax.<sup>3</sup>

The Governors of the BBC may have been imperfectly informed in 1949 of the detailed distribution of BBC recurrent expenditure—certainly the public was—but they knew thoroughly from past experience all about the general relationships between income and capital. They knew, too, how many representations had been made to the Post Office. When they commented on the draft of BBC/1, therefore, their comments did not touch on such major issues, and for the most part they were prepared to accept what had already been written. Following a meeting of the Board in March 1949, Farquharson listed their comments, which ranged from a request for maps showing coverage areas for the different BBC services to a proposal to delete (because it was thought to be 'too sweeping') a reference to the BBC's disc recorder being 'universally' acknowledged to be 'the finest in existence'. With such minor changes,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102–5; \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 28 April 1949, report the approval by the Governors of a Ten Year forecast. Income tax had been demanded since 1927, and the BBC's case against payment had been heard and rejected by the Special Commissioners in 1930 (Francis to Farquharson, 30 March 1949).

<sup>2</sup> \*T. Lochhead to Parsons, 23 May 1950.

<sup>3</sup> *Cmd.* 8117, p. 74; see also above, p. 313.

therefore, the final version of BBC/1, the 'General Survey of the Broadcasting Service', was sent to the Post Office in May.<sup>1</sup> It was warmly welcomed by Birchall who called it 'an admirable review of the problems of the BBC' with all the technical information set out in interesting and readable form. 'So far as I can see,' he added, 'there is practically nothing of importance in the memorandum on which, if the Post Office witness is asked by the Committee to state his views, there is likely to be any of seriously different stress from that in your memorandum.'<sup>2</sup>

One month after the Post Office had received BBC/1, what were described as papers BBC/2 to BBC/5 were sent to the Beveridge Committee which was now formally in existence.<sup>3</sup> A large number of other supplementary papers were also ready by then: nine were numbered and twelve others had been scheduled.<sup>4</sup> Three days after the first meeting of the Committee, Simon and Haley had an interview with Beveridge, during which they were told of his projected timetable,<sup>5</sup> and there was a further meeting between Haley and Beveridge on 9 August. It was at these meetings that Beveridge made it clear that he would wish to receive oral evidence not only from the Chairman and the Director-General but from 'a number of officials' and that the first oral interviews would be on 13 and 27 October.<sup>6</sup>

At the second of these informal meetings Beveridge talked about other matters besides the timetable, passing controversially to what he described as the 'scandals' in the post-Ullswater history of the BBC: they included dropping Priestley's postscripts during the Second World War<sup>7</sup> and the Neilson case, which had led to the allegations of Cooper and the Holmes

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to McLean, 9 March 1949. Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 March 1949; Farquharson to Miss Singer, 24 March 1949. Haley did some of the redrafting (Haley to Farquharson, 28 March 1949) and Barbara Ward reworded the introduction.

<sup>2</sup> \*Birchall to Haley, 4 May 1949.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 295; \*Parsons to Farquharson, 28 June 1949; Farquharson to Bottomley, 1 July 1949; BBC/1: 'General Survey of the Broadcasting Service'; BBC/2: 'Constitutional Position'; BBC/3: 'A Copyright in Broadcasting'; BBC/4: 'The BBC Staff Association and the BBC's Relations with the T.U.C.'; BBC/5: 'Payment of Income Tax by the BBC'.

<sup>4</sup> Committee of Enquiry, Transcript of 12 May 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 27 June 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 21 July, 15 Sept. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 320-2.

Report.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Beveridge recalled his own war-time experiences<sup>2</sup> and asked directly why he had not been allowed to broadcast more frequently. 'He would like to have the history of his own case reported,' Simon told Haley, 'as an illustration of the way speeches [*sic*] are handled. Why was he asked? Why was he dropped?'<sup>3</sup>

At a third meeting Beveridge returned again to his own experiences, this time even earlier experiences, and asked why the BBC had not planned more programmes like *Family Forum* in which he had taken part back in 1932. Such programmes had an 'access' element, had drawn in listeners through a questionnaire, and had ultimately led to the publication of a book, *Changes in Family Life*. Were not listeners now becoming 'more passive' than they used to be?<sup>4</sup> Nicolls looked back sardonically to the 1932 programme: 'apparently we got thousands of people to fill up forms—the kind of thing, of course, that makes Beveridge really happy.'<sup>5</sup>

The BBC had no choice but to follow up such detailed inquiries, and Haley added six other attached papers to the BBC's written evidence—a statement of the constitutional position of broadcasting in the main countries of the world; two factual notes, one giving details of political broadcasting arrangements and the other details of religious broadcasting; a report on the BBC's experiments with group listening and further education; a memorandum on methods of appointing staff; and a description of pension schemes.<sup>6</sup> Two days later he added listener research and Forces' Educational Broadcasts to the list.<sup>7</sup>

The most important general points raised by Beveridge himself centred on the questions of monopoly and television. 'He proposes to go thoroughly into the question,' Simon wrote of the first, 'how far is it desirable? What kinds of competition are possible?'<sup>8</sup> On the second, Haley wrote, 'he sees the social implications that television may make listeners even more passive.' Yet Beveridge was not well informed on television finance and organization. 'He referred to the criticisms being made of

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> \*Simon to Haley, 14 July 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Barnes, 26 Sept. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> \*Haley to Bottomley, 23 June 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 606, 614-15.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Haley, 9 Aug. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Haley to Bottomley, 21 June 1949.

<sup>8</sup> \*Simon to Haley, 14 July 1949.

our slowness in spreading television through the Kingdom. I explained that it was Plowden plus Post Office communications that were the governing factor.' He asked for a BBC paper by 1 October, while disclosing 'no line of thought beyond an appreciation of its social implications'.<sup>1</sup> This was the period when Beveridge was formulating his 'seven fundamental questions'.<sup>2</sup>

Haley had already put to the Governors in 1949 three notes on 'the constitutional position' of the BBC in which the question of the monopoly was briefly discussed 'in a minor key'—with headings on 'advantages' and 'safeguards';<sup>3</sup> and the Governors had asked for only a few changes to be made, including more references to early history.<sup>4</sup> Farquharson did not find it easy to meet their wishes, as Haley explained to one of the Governors.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, after studying all the relevant documents Farquharson came to the same conclusion as Coase on the early history of the monopoly. 'The Crawford Committee [of 1926] made no recommendation in favour of a monopoly. They took it for granted. The only question was what sort of a monopoly should there be.'<sup>6</sup> As for the Ullswater Report of 1936, there was only one 'slanting reference' in it to monopoly.<sup>7</sup> 'The fact is that the broadcasting monopoly has never been seriously challenged. If we now put forward the case in favour of it, it will show that we expect an attack on it at this stage—and a serious one. I take it that is the Governors' intention.'<sup>8</sup> Haley, reporting Farquharson's conclusion, added that whether or not monopoly would become a key issue in the Inquiry, he thought that 'there is a great deal to be said for ourselves not making it the major issue'.<sup>9</sup>

Given Beveridge's personal interests, it was not possible for the BBC to play monopoly in a 'minor key' for long, and after the Committee sent on a questionnaire to the Corporation in January 1950, answers were prepared and a further paper on

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 9 Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Essentials of constitution as laid down in Government Documents', 'The Whitley Document'. For the last of these, see below, pp. 341-2.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 March 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Barbara Ward, 22 March 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, read by Haley, 16 March 1949.

<sup>7</sup> See above, pp. 36, 46.

<sup>8</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 16 March 1949.

<sup>9</sup> \*Haley to Barbara Ward, 22 March 1949.

'Monopoly and Competition' was produced for the Committee in April. It stood as the BBC's final contribution to the debate on 'fundamental questions' which Beveridge had asked for.<sup>1</sup> It was somewhat different in tone from the contribution of Lord Reith on the same subject,<sup>2</sup> yet it emphasized, as Reith did, public service criteria.

So long as broadcasting is continued as a public service, conducted by one independent, impartial, single instrument, that organisation will be free, without any over-riding obligation, to discharge all the responsibilities to the community that broadcasting involves. They are many and varied. They include the responsibility for impartiality, for the greatest possible freedom at the microphone, for the preservation of standards and the re-establishing on a broader basis of a regard for values, for the use of broadcasting as an educational medium and a means to raise the public taste, for the discharge of broadcasting's duty to and in all the arts, for the encouragement of all artistic endeavour whether of creation or performance, for the use of broadcasting to develop true citizenship and the leading of a full life.<sup>3</sup>

Under competition, the BBC claimed, all these responsibilities would be blurred or destroyed. Gresham's Law was used, as it was to be used so many times later—Lord Halifax was perhaps the first person to use it—to suggest that in broadcasting, as in currency, 'the good, in the long run, will inescapably be driven out by the bad'. 'It is inevitable that any national educational pyramid shall have a base immeasurably broader than its upper levels.' This was the language of Haley, and a Press analogy was immediately brought in, if not very convincingly. 'The truth' of the Gresham's Law argument would be seen by comparing those national newspapers which had circulations of over four million with those whose circulations were counted in hundreds of thousands. 'And because competition in broadcasting must in the long run descend to a fight for the greatest possible number of listeners, it would be the lower forms of mass appetite which would more and more be catered for in programmes.' The same result would follow if the competition were

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 363–6. Reith's paper, 'submitted with respect', was written at the request of the Chairman and Members of the Beveridge Committee.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 234–40.

not between commercial stations and a public corporation but between different public corporations, and even if a regulatory body were set up to watch standards it would not, in fact, be able to preserve them.

The argument that monopoly in Britain rested on a shortage of wavelengths counted for less, therefore, in the BBC's statement than it had done in pre-war statements, although it was mentioned briefly. Social and cultural factors were touched on, but what really mattered, it was maintained, was the BBC's own performance. The really effective check against the dangers of monopoly was 'the critical attitude' the monopoly engendered and 'the public vigilance' it fostered. The memorandum considered at length 'impartiality', 'regard for minorities', 'range of programme output', 'relations with staff, artists and contributors', and 'efficiency and complacency', all topics within the context of monopoly which it was known interested Beveridge. The conclusion was pragmatic. Whatever might be written, as Coase had written, about the theory of competition, what was at issue was the record, and it was on its record that the BBC should be 'judged'. 'Surely it is better that the monopoly should have been established for administrative reasons and have been ultimately proved to be right in principle . . . than for it to have begun as a theory and to have been found subsequently wrong in principle and a failure in practice. The power of wise, empirical development is one of the most valuable requisites of British genius.'

The main line of argument included a brief reference to television. The suggestion that sound and television broadcasting should be separated 'would solve none of the problems posed by the sincere doubters of the monopoly'. 'This', the memorandum went on, 'is not the BBC's view alone. . . . The Corporation submits that the question of monopoly or competition in broadcasting can only properly be decided for broadcasting as a whole, sound and television being ultimately complementary parts of that whole.'

In talking to Beveridge in August 1949, Haley had also provided a separate paper on television. There was also a note on 'Television and the Cinema', which stressed that 'the real place of television is in the home', and Silvey prepared a general report on television viewing. The main document, however,



was an article Haley was already writing for the *BBC Quarterly* in the autumn of 1949. The title, 'An Extension of Broadcasting',<sup>1</sup> drew attention to what Haley thought of as the 'crucial point'—that television was an extension of sound.<sup>2</sup> Exactly the same 'responsibilities' were involved in the development and management of each. 'They are complementary expressions within the same medium. They are parts of one whole.'

Never could an argument based on social purpose have been put so seriously. Television should be a 'vital' not a 'lethal' agency. 'When it is possible every evening for every citizen in this country not only to hear but to see what has been happening in the world that day; when the great events of nations and in the international field can be remotely "attended" by the inhabitants of any town and village; when the colour, the excitement, the variety, and the worthwhileness of everyday life can be communicated to the richest, the poorest, the loneliest and the most gregarious; when harmony, design and grace can be visually as well as audibly taken into every home; then there must surely be something added which, working with all the other beneficial influences within the community, will have the capacity to make for a broader vision and a fuller life.'

The language made Haley himself pause. 'There will be those who say that so *entertaining* a stripling should not be loaded with so much purpose; that these are high responsibilities with which to face anything so young.' His reply was more cheerful than Reith's would have been. 'A consciousness of true purpose never bowed down any man or any enterprise. Rather does it fortify them to withstand the knocks.'<sup>3</sup>

The basic BBC memoranda on monopoly and competition and on television were not the only pieces of written evidence prepared during the summer of 1949. Throughout the early stages of the Beveridge Committee the pressure was intensified to produce many further papers, for example on religious broadcasting,<sup>4</sup> and to answer specific questions posed by the

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IV, no. 3.

<sup>2</sup> \*Cf. Mary Stocks's view as expressed to Collins that 'the affinity of television was with the films rather than with sound broadcasting' (Collins to Nicolls, 20 March 1950).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> \*Rev. F. H. House to Marriott, 7 July 1949.

Committee, for example on the role of Advisory Committees.<sup>1</sup> Some of the relevant papers were produced at great speed. So, too, were organization charts with names filled in, lists of radio critics employed by magazines and periodicals,<sup>2</sup> and papers on subjects like the record of Forces Educational Broadcasting, where the BBC itself wished to take the initiative. Haley was anxious throughout, as in his article on television, 'to put in whatever counterweights we can on the side of our serious . . . purpose against the storm of trivial nonsense',<sup>3</sup> and Simon, too, often took independent initiatives. In September 1949, for example, he suggested the preparation of a paper on radio 'features', 'a remarkable contribution to entertainment and education', from the point of view of 'interesting Beveridge in education'.<sup>4</sup>

During the course of its inquiries the BBC also collected evidence from abroad—from its North American Representative, N. G. Luker, in New York,<sup>5</sup> from Charles Moses of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Sydney,<sup>6</sup> and from and about European broadcasting organizations. The United States, where the 'comedy show' was said to be 'the centre piece of American radio',<sup>7</sup> seemed to offer less relevant information than Australia and New Zealand, where public service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting existed side by side.<sup>8</sup>

For this reason, William Yates, the Assistant Director and

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to Regional Controllers, 8 July 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*The names of 28 national radio critics and 4 television critics were listed alongside 16 radio critics from the North Region, 16 from the Midland Region, 5 from the West Region, 11 from Scotland, 6 from Wales, 3 from Dublin, and none from Northern Ireland.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Barnes, 29 Aug. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Simon to Haley, 21 Sept. 1949. Haley thought such a paper 'worth trying'. 'It would need to be well written,' he said, 'with rather more colour than the final papers' (Haley to Simon, 21 Sept. 1949).

<sup>5</sup> \*Luker to J. W. MacAlpine, 27 Sept. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Charles Moses to Haley, 28 Sept. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> \*Luker to MacAlpine, 27 Sept. 1949. Luker referred also to compèred shows in the United States, like Arthur Godfrey's, and 'Stop the Music', with its giant jackpot prizes, to soap operas, and to *Meet the Press*. He also mentioned news commentators such as Drew Pearson, Elmer Davis, and H. V. Kaltenborn.

<sup>8</sup> \*Notes were also collected on Canada. They went back to the experimental period before the CBC came into existence and included a bibliography. In 1943 CBC had started 'CBC Wednesday Night', similar in objectives to the Third Programme.

Director-designate of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, talked at length to Cyril Conner, then the Head of the BBC's Overseas Programme Services, in February 1949, and notes of his views were passed on to Lord Simon.<sup>1</sup> Yates was against commercial broadcasting under private control, judging also from his own experience that if the advertising business was left to a public or semi-public body, that body might lose in 'dignity and capability': the tendency would always be for 'the sales message to be given with the greatest urge'.

Australia seemed to point to equally relevant conclusions. The existence of a dual system of public and private broadcasting there, as in New Zealand, was obviously likely to be of direct interest both to Beveridge and to those members of his Committee, like Selwyn Lloyd, who did not believe that the American system was the only alternative to the British. Haley pressed his Australian colleagues to say whether or not 'the existence of the private commercial stations alongside the ABC' really was 'a happy solution' and whether or not it was true that 'they have no effect whatsoever on the policy of the ABC or its ability to improve public taste and do general educational work in the cultural field'.<sup>2</sup> Four years earlier R. J. F. Boyer, the Chairman of ABC, had told Lord Simon's predecessor, Sir Allan Powell, that 'the mass taste' was 'both being fed and conditioned by commercial practice' while the ABC had been forced into providing minority listening.<sup>3</sup> Haley asked whether this was still true, adding that he did not think that the question of 'the sponsoring of BBC programmes' would arise 'in any strong fashion' before the Beveridge Committee.<sup>4</sup>

Boyer's carefully worded reply made it clear that 'the dual system' had its safeguards. 'One's evaluation of the unitary or dual methods', he went on, 'would revolve around the degree of importance one would place on efficient and cultural development' on the one hand and 'safety [*sic*] of possible misuse'

<sup>1</sup> \*Conner to Simon, 4 March 1949. Commercial broadcasting had been introduced in New Zealand in 1935 by the new Labour government and Scrimgeour, who became Controller of the commercial broadcasting organization, had stressed the demand for 'the brighter and breezier type of programme that would be available to the people'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Moses, 5 Oct. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*R. J. F. Boyer to Sir Allan Powell, 12 Nov. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Moses, 5 Oct. 1949; Moses to Haley, 18 Oct. 1949.

on the other.<sup>1</sup> The situation had changed in Australia, and the main concern in 1945 was the likely role of a Broadcasting Controlling Board seeking to bring together two systems, if need be by some sort of co-ordination of programmes. The issue was to arise in the distant future in Britain, outside Haley's immediate range of concern.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that in those parts of the BBC's evidence dealing with 'monopoly and competition', as eventually they were presented, there was only one paragraph on foreign broadcasting, a paragraph which covered Canada, New Zealand and Australia and left out the United States altogether. Boyer's earlier letter of 1945 was quoted, not his comments of 1949, and the references to Canada, about which little direct evidence had been collected, were longer than those to Australia. 'The fate of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation', it was pointed out, was 'a major issue in last year's Canadian General Election.' As for New Zealand, 'where both systems are part of one monopoly under the same executive control, there is no competition in the sense supporters of it in this country advocate.'<sup>3</sup>

By September 1949 the BBC had prepared all its main papers—Beveridge had set a deadline of 1 October<sup>4</sup>—and although further papers were requested from time to time until the very end of the inquiry, closer attention was now given to other ways of influencing the Committee—particularly through interviews. The responsibilities of different officials in relation to the inquiry were divided and defined,<sup>5</sup> and efforts were made to ensure that the right people were available at the right time to present evidence. The seven Governors, five Directors, eighteen Controllers, eighty heads of departments, and thirty-one Chairmen of the Advisory Councils and Committees could be thought of as an identifiable 'power' group. Less certain was the position of the eight hundred persons 'actually responsible for putting all programmes on the air'. How they could best give evidence

<sup>1</sup> \*Boyer to Haley, 2 Nov. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*'Personally,' Boyer wrote in a note of great long-term importance, 'I feel that if a dual system is to be adopted it should be frankly recognised that the broadcasting character of each is indeed distinctive, and that, if they are to run in parallel, both national and commercial stations should contribute to the overall field by those sessions for which they are naturally geared and fitted and neither should ape the other.'

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 199.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 299.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Haley, 5 Oct. 1949.

was discussed with the Committee.<sup>1</sup> So, too, was how best the Corporation could supply a flow of listener and viewer research material, including what Haley called 'informed criticism'.<sup>2</sup>

Even before he had formulated his seven 'fundamental questions', Beveridge expressed particular interest in 'programme planning', and it was for this reason that he was advised to see—in order—Mary Somerville in charge of Talks, Michael Standing in charge of Variety, Val Gielgud in charge of Drama, and Laurence Gilliam in charge of Features. They were to be followed by Wellington in charge of Home Broadcasting, Chalmers in charge of the Light Programme, and Grisewood in charge of the Third.<sup>3</sup>

The first BBC oral evidence was given on 13 October, as arranged, when Simon, Haley, Nicolls, Bottomley, and Barnes were the BBC representatives and some frank questions were asked both about structures and programming.<sup>4</sup> Within the next fortnight further interviews took place according to plan with Talks, Variety, Drama, and Features producers. These proved the first of a series of both formal and informal meetings, with the BBC supplying in advance on every occasion detailed biographical notes about the participants. By March 1950 the subjects being discussed were adult education and listener research, with Simon, Nicolls, Barnes, and Farquharson attending two meetings on these topics on 10 March and with Mary Somerville in attendance at the first and Silvey at the second. 'Mr. Barnes', Simon, trying to be helpful, explained at the first to the four members of the Committee present, including its Chairman, 'is in charge of what you call W.E.A.'<sup>5</sup> By the end of the day, however, when Selwyn Lloyd also was present, Barnes was being deployed on a far wider front and was finding it necessary to explain how the BBC was not content with statistical research of the kind Silvey organized. 'When in Talks, I

<sup>1</sup> Committee of Enquiry, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, Note by the Director-General, 23 May 1949. He had made preliminary suggestions as to who should give oral evidence and 'who the Committee should also be invited to hear, if they wish'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of a Meeting in Haley's office, 2 Nov. 1949; Farquharson to Parsons, 8 Nov. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*Farquharson to Parsons, 7 Nov. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Papers, Note on the First Day's Evidence, 14 Oct. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Committee of Enquiry, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 24th Meeting, 10 March 1950. Oakeshott, Mrs. Stocks, and Crawford were present.

constantly wrote to people saying "I hope you will listen to this series and talk to me when it is concluded".<sup>1</sup>

There was criticism from the Committee on both occasions. At the first, the BBC, which had made much of its 'controlled experiments' in adult education,<sup>2</sup> was pressed as to why it did not have an Adult Education Advisory Committee, and Barnes was driven to concede that there had been 'a retreat in the field of systematic adult education from the early hopes'. At the second, Beveridge and his colleagues seemed to be pressing for more comprehensive 'self-criticism' inside the BBC, with Beveridge characteristically blending individual experience and generalization. 'The last discussion I took part in, if when I had my cheque for it I had had a form to fill up, "What do you think about this?" or "what suggestions have you to note?" I think I could have sent you something quite useful . . . I was not asked to do it; I did not then know you would want it.'

The methodological questions on this occasion were very well dealt with by Silvey, but there were some odd questions from the Committee members—for example, about the 'social classes' and about 'the weighing of opinions' on the merits of particular programmes when questions were being drafted. When Beveridge asked how different opinions were 'weighed', Simon wondered whether he was asking 'how much more important the middle class are than the working class', but Beveridge replied characteristically that he meant 'how much more important some people's opinions are than others'. A few minutes later he was talking of 'expert criticism' and 'the criticisms not of ordinary people but very intelligent critical people'. Mrs. Stocks made her own value judgements explicit when she asked, as a supplementary question, how the BBC disentangled the views of listeners as to 'say, for example, whether they get too much American smash-and-bang music'.<sup>3</sup>

By April 1950 Beveridge had seen most of the people he wished to see and was ready for further discussion of the crucial issues of television and monopoly on 5 May.<sup>4</sup> Yet these were

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 25th Meeting, 10 March 1950. Oakeshott was not present but Selwyn Lloyd and Reeves were there in addition to the other members who had been present in the morning.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 813 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Committee of Enquiry, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 25th Meeting, 10 March 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 20 April 1950.

not the only lively issues between then and the preparation of the report. As the situation unfolded, there were many sub-plots. Thus, when its work was nearly completed, the Committee, anticipating the debates of a future generation, began to take an active interest in 'morbid' and 'sordid' plays.<sup>1</sup>

There were, of course, problems also, sometimes recurring problems throughout the inquiry. Some of the newspapers suggested that members of BBC staff giving evidence might be penalized for what they said,<sup>2</sup> and inside the Corporation the matter was taken up with Haley by T. L. Littlewood, the General Secretary of the BBC Staff Association. Would a staff member within the terms of his contract 'be entitled to volunteer evidence at all and, if so, within what limits'? If evidence were given, how far would his employment 'be prejudiced by such action'? Haley replied that there was nothing in a staff contract to stop a member of staff giving evidence nor would his employment be prejudiced by what he said.<sup>3</sup>

Other problems for the Corporation were those of keeping staff and others fully informed of what was happening and of relating both the daily operational activities of the BBC and current policy discussions to the inquiries of the Committee. As far as the first was concerned, all senior BBC officials were sent copies of the various memoranda submitted to the Committee,<sup>4</sup> and Simon kept in close touch about items presented before the Committee not only with the Governors but with Lord Halifax, the Chairman of the General Advisory Council.<sup>5</sup> There was also a small sub-committee of the General Advisory Council which looked at all BBC documents submitted to Beveridge.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Haley recognized throughout that the BBC General Advisory Council might be 'a powerful aid to the BBC at some appropriate moment either before the Enquiry closed or before the next Charter'.<sup>7</sup>

As far as the second problem was concerned, communication

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to Baker, 5 June 1950. See below, pp. 692 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Sunday Express*, 7 Aug. 1949; *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Aug. 1949.

\*Sir Waldron Smithers took up the same point in letters to Simon, 5 and 16 Sept. 1949. He said that he feared 'suppression of evidence'.

<sup>3</sup> \*T. L. Littlewood to Haley, 26 July 1949; Haley to Littlewood, 8 Aug. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to E. C. Robbins, 16 Sept. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Simon to Lord Halifax, 2 Sept. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid.; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 1 Sept. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 23 May 1949.

was never easy. Thus, after reading Press reports in July 1949 that talks between the BBC and the film industry had broken down, Farquharson himself asked Collins to put him in the picture.<sup>1</sup> This, moreover, as we have seen, concerned a matter of such crucial and urgent importance to the future of television that the BBC had at one stage felt obliged to press for the speedy beginning of the inquiry to deal with it.<sup>2</sup>

The collection and presentation of regional evidence also posed problems of a complex and sensitive character. The BBC wished to prove that it was a body which depended on public participation and had its support in all parts of the country. At the same time, it did not wish to have its Regional Advisory Councils presenting recommendations from the Regions which ran counter to general BBC policies. It laid down, therefore, that Regional Advisory Councils should give evidence 'through the BBC' if they wished to give collective evidence. As far as individual evidence was concerned, it recognized that members of the Councils could give evidence 'in a private capacity' if they chose.<sup>3</sup>

A special note was prepared on 'the place of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the Broadcasting system',<sup>4</sup> explaining what was common to the Regions and what was distinctive about each of them. It was stressed, of course, that 'all the Regional staff, from the Controllers downwards, are very conscious of the duty—and are equally imbued with a natural desire—to reflect worthily the life, industry and culture of their own areas'.<sup>5</sup> As far as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were concerned, the note went on, the Controllers were serving not regional but national audiences and 'the proportion of the BBC staff to the population' was higher than that in any of the English regions.

In line with this note, Regional Controllers were told before members of the Committee visited the Regions that the Committee was placing 'great emphasis . . . on the extent of freedom that the Region has in developing its programmes on an independent basis'. All the collective regional submissions paid

<sup>1</sup> \*Farquharson to Collins, 13 July 1949. He was referring to the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers, 6 July 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> \*Minute of a Liaison Meeting with Regional Programme Heads, 29 June 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 156-63.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Farquharson, 16 Jan. 1950.



tribute to the 'high purpose which animates the BBC': all, too, suggested, if not as explicitly as the North Region, that 'it would be a major disaster if . . . commercial interests won the day' by attracting the support of 'idealists who opposed monopoly in principle'.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Regional evidence passed beyond this issue. The Midland Regional statement, for example, unexceptionable from a central BBC point of view, included the sentences, 'We cannot imagine that our people would like their entertainment seasoned with, or made the medium for, advertisements of face powder, breakfast food or patent medicines. Even in our cinemas, where the advertising element enters, it is a thing apart, occupying only a brief space of time and not allowed to intrude upon or to influence the picture programme.'<sup>2</sup>

Most of the statements expressed a sturdy sense of independence. Before the issues were brought into the open in Scotland and Wales, they had already been raised in the North of England where, at a meeting of the North Regional Advisory Council, 'the special case for the North' was pressed.<sup>3</sup> An attack was made also on the limited scope for artists within 'the existing monopoly system' and on 'dictatorship of matters of opinion and taste from London'. The final submission to the Beveridge Committee was a forthright statement of the Regional argument that 'a much wider freedom' was desirable than that which was granted in 'the present system of closely linked programmes'. John Coatman's ideas had obviously shaped the evidence, and there was a further demand for the more active encouragement by the Corporation of 'competition within monopoly'.<sup>4</sup> Regions should be directly represented on the Board of Management and, as television developed, some programmes should be planned and produced in the North Region so that the screen in Manchester or Leeds would not be 'merely an extension screen for the London programme'.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, the West Regional evidence was submitted only

<sup>1</sup> \*North Regional Advisory Council, Evidence to be submitted to the Beveridge Committee, 24 Nov. 1949. The evidence was sifted and collected in London and a note was prepared on 31 March 1950 presenting the material.

<sup>2</sup> \*Midland Regional Advisory Council, Material to be submitted, 26 Jan. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*D. Stephenson to Barnes, 11 Oct. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> \*North Regional Advisory Council, Evidence to be submitted to the Beveridge Committee, 24 Nov. 1949.

to the Corporation and was not passed on to the Committee, Haley himself attending the meeting of the West Regional Advisory Council on 24 October at which the Council's written evidence was discussed and the decision was taken not to appear before the Committee unless summoned.<sup>1</sup> The evidence was less forcibly expressed than that of the other Regions, particularly in its sections on television, and it was stated cautiously that 'whether under the present state of affairs regionalisation has gone far enough is probably a very controversial matter'.<sup>2</sup> The memorandum did not favour the adoption of a 'wholly federal system', although it advocated increased autonomy in staffing, finance, programmes, and technical control. A 'London Regional', it suggested, would be 'a centrally produced programme' and not that of a region, and arguments based on its future development would be irrelevant in the provinces. This was a side kick, like the protest in the evidence of the North Region against the continued and anachronistic sharing of the same wavelength by north-eastern England and Northern Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

The Midland Regional statement was more general. 'It is the opinion of the Council that the Regions provide, within a monopoly, programme competition which is healthy because it is not influenced by any mercenary motive.'<sup>4</sup> A small increase in staff was necessary only 'at points of pressure'.

A few comments survive by Regional Controllers on the visits made by members of the Beveridge Committee to their Regions. In Bristol Mrs. Stocks and Alderman Reeves, who spent three hours visiting the studio and talking to the staff, were said *not* to have asked the Controller about 'the worthwhileness of the regional job we are doing, the strength of demand for a Regional service or the extent to which we were satisfying that demand'. All these points seemed to have been taken for granted. They had asked, however, whether it was

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 24 Oct. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*West Regional Advisory Council, Representations to the Beveridge Committee, 18 Oct. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*The North Regional Controller had written a letter to the Governors protesting against the sharing of the wavelengths (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 March 1949).

<sup>4</sup> \*Midland Regional Advisory Council, Evidence to be submitted to the Beveridge Committee, Jan. 1950.

possible 'to mitigate the BBC's monopoly by a greater degree of Regional autonomy . . . and, if so, what form should that autonomy take'. Was there 'a heavy hand from London'? To what extent could greater resources or a dispensation permitting more flexible use of resources produce a larger or better output of programmes? Gerald Beadle, the Controller, had told his staff to answer such questions frankly but not to take the initiative in making representations, and according to him, the Committee had left satisfied. They had said they had the impression of 'a happy and unfrustrated staff, which they put down to the more personal atmosphere of a small unit. . . . They thought we were extremely fortunate to be working in a series of houses built for residential purposes. It engendered a more friendly and human atmosphere than is ever to be found in steel and concrete buildings of the functional type.'<sup>1</sup> The point was to be taken up in the final Report.<sup>2</sup>

The Scottish Advisory Council's paper stated that 'the life, character and culture' of Scotland had been 'handled with a much greater degree of thoroughness' since 1945 than ever before, but that current staffing and equipment were insufficient.<sup>3</sup> There should be better coverage, a separate treatment of Scottish political affairs on the Scottish Home Service, and a Scottish edition of *The Listener*. Beveridge thought the Committee's visit to Scotland had been 'particularly useful', but Dinwiddie's view of his own meeting with the members was that the discussion had been somewhat 'diffuse and did not get beyond the routine of day-to-day working'.<sup>4</sup>

Wales pressed to be considered as 'a national broadcasting unit within the pattern of British broadcasting', and the Welsh Advisory Council proposed a television transmitter on Welsh soil and a television studio in Wales. There was a 'compelling need for more staff and more studios', it went on, in order to secure 'more Welsh broadcasting in both languages'. In particular, it regretted that many Welsh-speaking areas were

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Beadle on the visit, 1 Feb. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 383.

<sup>3</sup> \*Scottish Advisory Council, Evidence to be submitted to the Beveridge Committee, 3 Dec. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Dinwiddie to Haley, 25 March 1950. Beveridge was accompanied by Elgin, Dr. Taylor, and Parsons. They had already heard evidence from the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Society.

'almost entirely deprived of a radio service in their own language'.<sup>1</sup> This statement did not go far enough to meet Welsh nationalist claims, even though it included a sentence that Wales, with its 'national identity', should not be considered 'a mere region of the BBC'.<sup>2</sup> Lady Megan Lloyd George had the opportunity, the nationalists claimed, 'to secure the beginning of a new period in Wales . . . the period of her own radio corporation';<sup>3</sup> and there was considerable interest in the visit which she and three other members of the Committee—the Chairman, Mrs. Stocks, and A. L. Binns—paid to the Welsh Regional offices at Cardiff in March 1950.

Northern Ireland was described by Andrew Stewart, its Controller, as 'an area of the United Kingdom which has remarkably little in common with the English Regions or with Scotland and Wales'. Differences between left wing and right wing were less important than the differences between the majority intent on maintaining 'the constitutional position with Northern Ireland a part of the United Kingdom' and the minority wishing 'incorporation in the Irish Republic'. 'The BBC', he went on, 'has to try to present fair and free speech on matters of importance and general interest. In Northern Ireland the BBC can be justly described as the only impartial organisation through which listeners can hear something of all sides of a question, remembering that this has to be done with common sense circumspection to avoid the risks of disorder.'<sup>4</sup>

This was an important statement about the special political circumstances of an area which was then superficially 'quiet', and it had long-term significance. As far as cultural matters were concerned, however, there were fewer specificities and Stewart raised very similar points to those made by A. L. Binns, the member of the Committee who had drawn the attention of his colleagues to what was being said about the BBC in the Yorkshire pubs. Northern Irish speech mixed Gaelic idiom and place names with English and Scottish dialect and turns of phrase. There was a gap between what was being broadcast

<sup>1</sup> Welsh Advisory Council, Statement to the Beveridge Committee, 6 March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 383.

<sup>3</sup> *Y Faner*, 5 April 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Stewart, Controller, Northern Ireland, to Nicolls, 16 March 1950. Stewart had been appointed Controller in February 1948 after working as Head of Scottish Programmes.

and what people actually said. 'In the main Cockney humour is not understood.'<sup>1</sup>

Simon visited Belfast in May 1950 to meet the Controller, members of the Northern Ireland Advisory Council, and Northern Irish Ministers. While there were some complaints about the wavelength shared with north-eastern England, one high-placed politician deviated from the usual line and claimed that it ensured Northern Ireland having 'a hearing among listeners in part of England'.<sup>2</sup> The visit of the Committee, 'of the friendliest character', took place a month later, with Lord Elgin, Dr. Taylor, and Binns in attendance. *Haute politique* was left on one side<sup>3</sup> when three secretaries, who asked for an interview, 'made the point that since they were "creative" workers they should be paid as much as the secretaries working for "more senior officers".' What the Committee members said was not reported, but Stewart stated that 'Lord Elgin was remarkably silent throughout'.<sup>4</sup>

During the later stages of the inquiry, while Beveridge was thinking about his draft report, the BBC was questioned particularly closely about Regional policy.<sup>5</sup> Controllers were asked specifically, for example, how they reached their decisions. Were they influenced more by advice or pressure from the centre than by consultations on the spot? And the BBC centrally was asked to furnish a sample analysis of Welsh and Scottish programmes, showing in what ways, if at all, the programmes of the three National Regions were distinctive.

Beadle told the Committee from Bristol that 'when you live in a Region all the time you are . . . constantly on the look-out for people who would be useful on [advisory] committees',<sup>6</sup> and that the Advisory Councils were lively and helpful. In a note for the BBC Board from Birmingham the Midland Regional Controller added, 'I encourage the whole of the Regional Programme Staff to be on the alert for potential members of the Advisory Council'.<sup>7</sup> It was during this period of question

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Stewart to Nicolls, 24 May 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*They had asked about the numbers of Unionists, Nationalists and Socialists, and had remarked on the absence of working-class representatives among those they had seen (Stewart to Nicolls, 29 June 1950).

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> \*R. J. S. Baker to Farquharson, 1 April 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note from Nicolls to Regional Controllers, 31 May 1950.

<sup>7</sup> \*Dunkerley to Nicolls, 1 June 1950.

and answer that Beveridge was coming to the conclusion that the Regional Advisory Councils were too 'limited' in size and that 'the proportion of the regional programme originating within the Region itself is comparatively small'.<sup>1</sup>

Regional problems seem to have interested Beveridge more than television, which was not discussed orally with the BBC until the thirty-first meeting of the Committee on 5 May 1950. The Committee was very fully represented on that occasion, however, with only Oakeshott absent, and there were thirteen BBC witnesses led by Simon and three Governors—Lady Reading, Dr. Whitfield, and John Adamson. The party also included Collins (who does not seem to have been properly summoned and arrived late) as well as Haley and Nicolls. Even then, television was not the only subject on the agenda. Beveridge had set aside one and a quarter hours for a discussion on staffing to follow the one and a quarter hours devoted to television.<sup>2</sup>

Simon raised seven points by way of introduction—capital expenditure on development, including the development of the White City site where an 'exciting building' would be put up; 'the organisation by which television is to be controlled, a matter to which we have always been giving the most serious consideration'; finance, including the development plan; long-term programme policy, covering hours and the relationship both with radio and the film industry; current administration and policy which was under 'the full control' of Collins; relations with trade unions, 'far from unimportant'; and relations with outside interests, notably 'people like sports promoters'.

Beveridge responded by asking his first question, about the future of television not in the home but in the cinema as 'a public spectacle', and continued this line of questioning for a large part of the session. He elicited from Haley that the BBC was strongly opposed to film interests being allowed to make 'a direct television', even of sporting events, first 'for fear they would make a corner in them and take them out of the home' and second because they would form the basis of an alternative 'broadcasting service'. 'Expensive competition would be inevitable in the short run and in the long run there would be a

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Committee of Enquiry, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 31st Meeting, 5 May 1950.



a. The Archers



b. The Grove Family

7. Two BBC Families



8a. Visit of Delegation from the Supreme Soviet, USSR, March 1947



8b. *All Your Own*. A Japanese girl talks to Huw Wheldon



rival and sponsored general television service. The alternative was for the BBC to supply its own television programmes of sporting and other events for the cinemas.' 'We feel', he concluded, 'that we can actually give far more to the cinema than we can get from it.'

Under further questioning, Haley admitted the force of the argument of sporting interests, particularly those arranging 'small events', that live attendances might fall as a result of television, but he insisted that BBC and sporting interests were at one in trying to keep out 'the pirate cinema'. And when Beveridge for once asked a very pertinent question about future programming—whether it was not possible to televise 'big events' later in the day when the smaller events were not taking place—Haley doubted whether people would wish to see the Cup Final (he did not mention other football matches) once they knew the result.

Further questions by Beveridge showed little appreciation of future social trends, although he pointedly asked Simon how many Governors of the BBC were 'ardent viewers'. (Two of the three present said quickly that they were, though Simon suggested in best *Brains Trust* fashion that it all depended on what you meant by 'ardent'.) In discussing finance (very briefly) Beveridge referred to sound 'subsidising' television and queried the assumption that all listeners would soon become viewers. It was left to Haley to state finally that 'we are assuming the overwhelming proportion of them will be one day. We are in fact developing a public service of television for the public as a whole. We believe that eventually television will be as ubiquitous as sound broadcasting.'

It had been generally agreed that the 'question of the organisation by which television is to be controlled' was to be left to a meeting planned with the Governors alone *en bloc*, and by June 1950 Beveridge attached a great deal of importance to this meeting if only because he had come to the conclusion that the rôle of the Governors was too modest a one. Nonetheless, it was Lady Megan Lloyd George, not Beveridge, who broached the main internal issue. 'You say here,' she told Haley, referring to the BBC's written evidence, that 'it is the corporation's intention to appoint at the appropriate moment a Director of Television, who will have a seat on the Board of Management.

Can you tell us what you consider to be the "appropriate moment"?" Haley's reply was inevitable, if also unforgettable. 'The appropriate moment is, in a way, the moment when it seems appropriate to do it.'

Simon came to the rescue by pointing out that it would be up to the Governors—'that is what we are here for, to decide that sort of question'. He added that this appointment was the most important the BBC could make. And Beveridge, too, came to his and Simon's rescue after Lady Megan had refused to accept their answers on the grounds that 'the whole development of television may be in some ways restricted or encouraged and developed by the set-up under the Corporation'. What factors would be taken into account in determining the decision and its timing? 'I think', said Beveridge, 'we must be content with the answers you have given us. I think we are bound to be. You recognise the importance of television.' 'Yes,' said Simon, 'very fully', making it clear that he would reply more fully on 29 June.

This important meeting with the Governors had been postponed from early in the year on the grounds that three new Governors recently appointed to the Board—Lord Clydesmuir, Lord Tedder, and Barbara Wootton—would find it useful to acquire experience of BBC government before appearing;<sup>1</sup> and Beveridge told Simon on the eve of the postponed meeting how much his Committee was looking forward to 'frank and informal' discussion.<sup>2</sup> In addition to 'the organisation of television in relation to the rest of the BBC's work', another matter discussed was the nature of the work of the Governors and the making available to them and by them of more detailed information as to the financial working of the Corporation, including information about 'the salaries of the higher staff'. Haley had given his own views on finance on 14 June and had reserved his answer on the last point.

The Governors had been involved to only a limited extent during the earlier stages of the inquiry, and the Beveridge Committee as a whole had already been devoting some time to a consideration of their future constitutional position before 29 June, the day of the meeting in the House of Lords. This

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Farquharson, with ink note by Haley, 2 Jan. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Beveridge to Simon, 15 June 1950.

was perhaps the most important of all the issues which they wished to raise. Each Committee member had not only studied 'the Whitley Document', setting out the functions and duties of Governors, which every new Governor had to sign, but at Beveridge's request had been provided by their secretary with a note concerning its history.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Whitley Document', named after the second Chairman of Governors of the BBC, had its origins in 1931, when it had been drafted by John Reith and approved by Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, and Sir Kingsley Wood, the Postmaster-General.<sup>2</sup> Its use had been dropped during the war, but it had been revived at the suggestion of the Director-General of the Ministry of Information in February 1946, and later in the same year it had been changed in order and in content following discussions at the time of the publication of the Labour Government's July White Paper.<sup>3</sup> An important clause was added then that 'the Governors should be as representative as possible of the public they serve, and it is their duty, in exercising their responsibilities, to take an active interest not only in the programmes but also in the financial and staff policy of the Corporation'. They were also to be given the responsibility, while still acting 'primarily as trustees', for 'developing and exploiting the service'. At the same time, an important earlier clause was omitted: it had stated (on Reith's insistence) that the suggestion sometimes made that Governors should be appointed as experts or specialists in any of the activities covered by the Broadcasting Service was 'not regarded as desirable'. What remained in the amended Whitley Document was the central clause, although it was shifted from the second sentence

<sup>1</sup> Broadcasting Committee, 'The History of the Whitley Document, with a preparatory note by Beveridge', 9 June 1950. He had also asked Parsons to prepare comparative material on the Boards of nationalized industries.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (1949), p. 156. A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 430-2. The idea of the document had first been canvassed when MacDonald was Prime Minister of the Labour Government and Attlee the Postmaster-General (Whitley to Attlee, 30 July 1931), but the National Government had been formed by the time the draft was sent on 20 Nov. 1931 (Whitley to Sir Kingsley Wood). Reith is not correct in saying that there was only one amendment to his draft—the inclusion of the word 'then'. In fact there were others, including the recommendation that among the Governors 'there should be included . . . a person or persons with financial and commercial experience'.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 6852 (1946); see above, pp. 45-7.

to a lower position in the paragraph: 'Their functions are not executive, their responsibilities are general and not particular, and they are not divided up for purposes of departmental supervision.'

Simon had never liked the Whitley Document, which he thought of as 'unfortunate',<sup>1</sup> and frequently he quoted Morrison's terse statement following the publication of the White Paper on Broadcasting in 1946 that 'the Governors are the BBC'.<sup>2</sup> Morrison held it to be 'wrong doctrine' that the Director-General ran the management of the Corporation and that the Governors acted as 'a kind of consultative body';<sup>3</sup> and the original as well as the later version of the document had, in fact, included the words that 'the Governors should be able to judge of the general effect of the service upon the public and . . . are, of course, finally responsible for the conduct of it'.

In their evidence to the Beveridge Committee, the Governors recommended that the Whitley Document as such should no longer be circulated and that their responsibilities should be defined solely in the Charter. They said very little, however, about the composition of the BBC's Governing Body except that the dates at which new Governors were appointed should be 'staggered' so as to provide adequate continuity. 'They are particularly anxious to avoid the situation which has grown up since the war,' they remarked, 'in which the Board is, inevitably, divided into two nearly equal groups of Governors—those with considerable experience on the one hand, and those who are relatively new to the work on the other.'<sup>4</sup>

After having heard the Governors, Beveridge was more or less ready to prepare his draft. He had asked the BBC earlier in the same month of June whether or not it was satisfied that the Corporation had said all that it wished to say before the Committee, including supplying answers to points raised by its critics.<sup>5</sup> He had lunch with Simon in mid-October, when he told the Chairman that the Report would be 120,000 words in length and that he hoped two of the members of his Committee

<sup>1</sup> Lord Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 425, cols. 1079-80, 16 July 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Cmd. 8117*, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 6 July 1950; Farquharson to Bottomley, 13 June 1950.

would become BBC Governors.<sup>1</sup> Between then and the publication of the Report in January 1951 all the BBC's initial doubts had been dispelled and the Corporation was fully prepared for what the Committee had to say. Haley encouraged the fullest possible publication of evidence, therefore, given that the proceedings of the Committee had been held *in camera*.<sup>2</sup> Yet, with Morrison's support,<sup>3</sup> he did not anticipate making an immediate statement or initiating a public discussion as soon as the report appeared.<sup>4</sup> The most that would be permissible, he felt, would be non-official comment in participating programmes like *Any Questions*.<sup>5</sup>

'BBC keeps up the secrecy,' *The Recorder* complained,<sup>6</sup> although the *Daily Telegraph* noted that no ban had been imposed by the BBC on television jokes by comedians about Beveridge, the Report, or the BBC's reactions to it.<sup>7</sup> When Mary Somerville told Lindsay Wellington in December 1950 that the BBC's Current Affairs Group were unanimously of the opinion that an 'informative' radio talk should be given immediately after the publication of the Report, Haley scribbled in ink on the letter, 'I do not see how any "informative talk" can escape the suspicion of being an attempt on the part of the BBC to put itself in a good light. We should, therefore, keep to our decision . . . regarding discussions by outside teams, if they wish to do it, but do nothing else.'<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Simon Papers, Note of a Lunch, 10 Oct. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Farquharson, 26 July 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Morrison to Simon, 9 Dec. 1950: 'I realise that as soon as it is published you and Beveridge will be besieged by the Press for statements both on and off the record.' He hoped he could 'rely' on the BBC following the lead of Beveridge in not making 'any comments whatsoever to the newspapers' (Note of 13 Dec. 1950).

<sup>4</sup> \*Wellington to Regional Programme Heads, 15 Dec. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*The *Any Questions* team was having a break from 28 December to 19 January, and the next team for 19 January consisted of Ralph Wightman, Maurice Edelman, MP, Wilson Harris, and Lord Elton. The last-named of these, a friend of Ramsay MacDonald, had been a member of the Ullswater Committee and had criticized the BBC's monopoly. Yet 'short of putting a BBC man on the panel,' a BBC official noted, 'this seems to us to be a reasonable panel.' (Cable of 19 Dec. 1950.)

<sup>6</sup> *The Recorder*, 20 Jan. 1951; cf. *Time and Tide*, 20 Jan. 1951.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 19 Jan. 1951.

<sup>8</sup> \*Mary Somerville to Wellington, 20 Dec. 1950.

### 3. Other Witnesses

IF THE BBC emerged happier at the end of the Beveridge hearings than it had been at the beginning, what of the other witnesses? From the start, the Committee had insisted that it wished to hear as wide a range of witnesses as possible, and at its very first meeting it had invited representations 'from all persons interested'. In response to its general invitation and to a few specific invitations it had received 223 memoranda by 1 October 1949.<sup>1</sup>

The first outside witnesses were seen a month later—the Radio Writers' Association, an affiliated body of the Society of Authors, and the Listeners' Association, an extreme right-wing organization, which submitted a tendentious memorandum beginning with a long section on 'the BBC and Communism' and urging unequivocally that commercial broadcasting should be introduced 'independent of the BBC's services'.<sup>2</sup> Sir Waldron Smithers, who shared the same philosophy, was the first private individual to give evidence, which included the daunting sentence 'The young "intelligentsia" of the BBC have far too much power and very many of them are Communists and extreme left-wing Socialists.' A still more provocative statement was that 'the BBC should not use its revenue to pay for meals and drink for people who broadcast and receive fees for doing so'.<sup>3</sup>

The Beveridge Committee's Report was to flatter some of the non-BBC witnesses—the 'critics', as it called them—by saying that it agreed with many of their 'aims' but rejected their answers: 'we differ . . . on means rather than ends'.<sup>4</sup> It was also to suggest devices for relating future 'criticism' more directly to the daily functioning of the BBC.<sup>5</sup> Yet it was to repudiate totally the approach of the Listeners' Association, which talked of BBC bias and seemed to be asking for more intervention by Government with a view to vetoing left-wing

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116, *Report of the Broadcasting Committee*, 1949, paras. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 303–8. Colonel Wigg created a Democrats' Listening Association to look for anti-Labour bias in BBC broadcasts (*Daily Herald*, 20 Jan. 1951).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 315. <sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 179, p. 46. <sup>5</sup> See below, p. 382.

programmes,<sup>1</sup> and it was to yield little to the pressure groups which were urging that commercial broadcasting should be introduced in Britain.

Beveridge did not himself use the phrase 'pressure group', which was more fashionable then in relation to American than to British politics.<sup>2</sup> He relied rather on an ancient liberal and utilitarian distinction between 'opinion' and 'interest', and classified his witnesses—too neatly—as 'disinterested outsiders', 'minorities with a message', 'inside interests', and 'outside interests'. The first group included people as different as the intolerant Sir Waldron Smithers—scarcely 'disinterested'<sup>3</sup>—and the experienced debater Geoffrey Crowther—known for long as an opponent of the BBC's monopoly<sup>4</sup>—while the 'minorities with a message' encompassed bodies as different as the Welsh nationalist Plaid Cymru and internationalist Christian Scientists. Dr. Marie Stopes was treated not as a 'disinterested outsider' but as a minority of one in herself,<sup>5</sup> while some religious bodies like the Baptist Union, with very strong views about how other people should behave, were considered to be 'disinterested outsiders'.<sup>6</sup>

The 'inside interests' included not only BBC staff but such organizations as Equity, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, and the Musicians' Union, all of which had wider interests than those of BBC employees.<sup>7</sup> As for the 'outside interests', one

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116, p. 164; cf. p. 170. 'So far as we have been able to examine particular cases ourselves, we have no doubt that the charges of bias made by the Listeners' Association are unjustified.'

<sup>2</sup> J. D. Stewart's *British Pressure Groups* and S. E. Finer's *Anonymous Empire* were not published until 1958.

<sup>3</sup> He had been critical of the BBC since the mid-1930s, and was extremely irritated by the treatment he purported to have received in a Brains Trust in French in 1946. His conduct on that occasion had been intolerable to his fellow participants.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 31. As early as 1943, before the publication of the war-time articles in *The Economist*, a BBC official had noted of Crowther that he was an admirer of the American radio system and a confirmed opponent of the monopoly system in broadcasting, claiming that 'it makes for monotony, dullness of output and feebleness in controversy' (\*Note by A. J. P. Hytch, 2 Sept. 1943).

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 135, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 405.

<sup>7</sup> 'We do not claim a specialist knowledge,' the British Actors' Equity Association evidence stated, but 'our members have considerable practical experience of broadcasting. . . . They stand, as it were, between the BBC's administrative hierarchy and the public. . . . They all share a sincere belief in the possibilities of the two media [broadcasting and television] and a deep concern to realise these possibilities in the service of the public.' (Ibid., p. 498.)

group, to which a whole chapter was devoted, was concerned solely with commercial broadcasting,<sup>1</sup> while other groups, like the Theatres National Committee and the Newspaper Society (a 'competing service'),<sup>2</sup> were anxious to restrain or restrict all kinds of broadcasting, commercial or otherwise, or, like the West End Theatrical Managers' Association, to ban all theatrical criticism.<sup>3</sup> The Newspaper Proprietors' Association joined the Newspaper Society in opposing sponsored radio or television even if it were under the sole control of the BBC.<sup>4</sup> One outside interest, the Performing Right Society, stated that its relations with the BBC were 'friendly and harmonious'.<sup>5</sup>

The BBC had plenty of experience of dealing with these different outside groups and interests. With some of them, like the Theatres National Committee, it had had tough battles, many of which were still in progress while the Beveridge Committee was sitting.<sup>6</sup> For others, like the National Anti-Vaccination League, it seemed to have nothing to offer. For a third group, like the Performing Right Society, it was a source of livelihood, and it was possible for public corporation and voluntary association to be on excellent terms.<sup>7</sup> For a fourth group, like the Composers' Guild of Great Britain, which believed that it was 'failing to do all it should in the propagation of our national heritage of music', the BBC was a popular target.<sup>8</sup>

One influential body with which the BBC had had protracted dealings did not at first send written evidence to the Beveridge Committee. The Musicians' Union said that it preferred to deal directly with the BBC in relation to the issues which really mattered to its members.<sup>9</sup> It was in the course of complex negotiations with the BBC in 1949,<sup>10</sup> and its memorandum was not completed until May 1950.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 514-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 553.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 578-82, for the evidence of the Theatres National Committee, of which the Society was a member; \*Donald Boyd to McGivern, 28 March 1950, sets out details of the attempts to ban broadcasts, the last as recent as 1949, and of the Corporation's response.

<sup>4</sup> *Cmd.* 8117, pp. 553-5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 583.

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> The BBC had negotiated a new agreement with the Performing Right Society after an old one expired on 31 December 1948.

<sup>8</sup> *Cmd.* 8117, pp. 494-8, sets out the evidence of the Composers' Guild.

<sup>9</sup> \*W. L. Streeon to Bottomley, 17 Jan. 1950.

<sup>10</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 17 March 1949. <sup>11</sup> *Cmd.* 8117, pp. 515-18.



There had been some talk in the professional Press of a coalition of all the allied entertainment professions, the Variety Artistes' Federation, Equity, the Musicians' Union, the dance bands, the Songwriters' Guild, the Music Directors' Association, even the Music Trades Association. 'They all NEED sponsored radio,' *Musical Express* argued. 'Collectively they should appoint a Select Committee for the express purpose of airing their views when the BBC Charter comes up for revision.'<sup>1</sup> Not all these bodies followed such a line, however, and while the Music Directors' Association demanded an 'alternative system' to supplement the BBC,<sup>2</sup> the members of the Concert Artistes' Association were divided about sponsoring, and the Songwriters' Guild asked instead for a Council on Broadcasting and a Bureau of Listener Opinion independent of the BBC. Its case was colourfully expressed. 'Failure to give practical encouragement to writers and composers writing in the British style will result in damming up the stream which has flowed through the centuries from the first folk song to *Tipperary* and *Roses of Picardy*. The popular song of today may become the folk song of tomorrow.'<sup>3</sup>

The Musicians' Union favoured 'the continued state ownership and management of broadcasting', maintaining that it was 'not without significance that commercially-sponsored broadcasting has not developed in European countries, where there are deep-rooted cultural traditions'. "'Commercial" broadcasting is undoubtedly most firmly established in the United States of America, where there is a well-recognised tendency to "commercialise" everything, including even religion.'<sup>4</sup>

When Haley first read the evidence of such bodies, he wrote that it would be necessary for the BBC to prepare 'a much fuller and less complacent paper on our relations with the artists' unions'.<sup>5</sup> He himself had first-hand knowledge of most of the issues, yet so wide was the spectrum of groups and interests involved in radio and television that very different people inside the BBC had regular dealings with them or attempted to sort out sudden, emergency problems. Haley was

<sup>1</sup> *Musical Express*, 8 April 1949. The Songwriters' Guild praised the Musicians' Union evidence for its 'style and spirit' (*Melody Maker*, 10 Feb. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 513-14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 507.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 513-16.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Bottomley, 30 Aug. 1949.

not alone, however, in recognizing how sensitive outside bodies could be. While the Beveridge Committee was meeting, there were protests, for example, from the National Bookmakers' Protection Association that 'disparaging' comments had been made about bookmakers in a *Friday Forum* programme. The complaints when investigated did not seem to bear out the charge, 'unless to compare the Bookmakers' Protection Association with the Lord's Day Observance Society' was held to be disparaging.<sup>1</sup> Yet one of the specific questions put by the Beveridge Committee to the BBC was, 'What answer would the Corporation give the bookmakers' protest that they are discriminated against unfairly?''<sup>2</sup>

The second volume of the Beveridge Report consists entirely of memoranda submitted to the Committee from the BBC and other bodies. Not all the evidence submitted was printed, but the non-BBC witnesses had 313 pages of evidence published as against 260 pages of BBC evidence. Thirty pages of the 313, however, were taken up by 'official' evidence from Government Departments, Post Office, Treasury, Central Office of Information, and Colonial Office; and the Foreign Office's evidence was not published.

The Post Office, like the BBC, had been preparing memoranda long before the Beveridge Committee was appointed.<sup>3</sup> They dealt with such subjects as the improved coverage of Home Service programmes, VHF, and the working and future of the Television Advisory Committee. Drafts on some of these subjects had been presented to the BBC in February 1949.<sup>4</sup> The BBC was informed also about questions Selwyn Lloyd had put to the Post Office about its 'policy directives' to the BBC.<sup>5</sup> The close co-operation with the BBC in relation to the preparation of written evidence<sup>6</sup> was extended throughout in relation to oral evidence, so that Sir George Ismay told Haley as soon as he had seen the Committee what kind of questions he had been asked when he appeared before the Committee. They

<sup>1</sup> \*S. D. Spicer to Barnes, 23 March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> The bookmakers' memorandum to the Beveridge Committee was not printed in Cmd. 8117. Was this discrimination?

<sup>3</sup> \*Birchall to Haley, 7 Aug. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Farquharson to Bottomley, 4 Feb. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Beveridge Committee, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 3rd Meeting, 12 Oct. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Haley to Birchall, 3 March 1949. See also above, pp. 313-14.

ranged from VHF to the Government's powers of prohibition, which had been the subject of Post Office memoranda,<sup>1</sup> and to the 'banning of Churchill before the War'. 'It was all very friendly,' Ismay added, 'and far more orderly than most committees in his experience.' But he had gathered 'from side remarks' that the 'BBC was going to be tackled on the monopoly'.<sup>2</sup>

Some official memoranda were sent in without invitation. These included memoranda prepared by the Colonial Office and the Central Office of Information which referred specifically to relations between the cinema industry and television. Other memoranda were specifically asked for by the Committee. Thus, the Treasury was invited in August 1949 to submit views on four questions—the relationships of the Corporation with Parliament, Government, and different Civil Service departments; financial controls imposed on the BBC by or on behalf of Parliament or Government, including controls on borrowing and capital expenditure; the internal administration of the BBC and the differences between its staffing policy and that of Civil Service departments; and the liability of the Corporation to income tax.<sup>3</sup> Answers to these questions were set out in a Memorandum dated 20 October, and after oral evidence had been given, supplementary written evidence was offered on request a month later.<sup>4</sup>

The Treasury evidence was as unhelpful to the development of broadcasting in this country and overseas as Treasury views usually have been in the history of the BBC,<sup>5</sup> and Haley rightly described it as reflecting a '*laissez-faire* attitude'.<sup>6</sup> First, it did not make it at all clear to the Committee or the public, doubtless for what were deemed to be good economic reasons, just what the extent of the Treasury influence actually was on the pace of post-war broadcasting development, particularly the development of television. Beveridge himself had not been fully

<sup>1</sup> \*Ismay sent a draft of the Post Office paper to Haley on 22 Nov. 1949 asking him for comments: Farquharson to Haley, 25 Nov. 1949; Haley to Ismay, 28 Nov. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 12 Oct. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 266-73.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 274-5.

<sup>5</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), for pre-war examples. The most cramping were the Treasury's early attitude to overseas broadcasting (pp. 377 ff.) and to television development (pp. 617 ff.).

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Haley, 25 Oct. 1949.

aware of this point,<sup>1</sup> and the paragraph in the Treasury's main paper stating that 'financial arrangements' should be 'kept in harmony with the Government's investment policy' was far too bland.<sup>2</sup>

While it was noted that the Corporation's borrowing power was restricted to the small sum of £1 million, 'which will obviously not go very far towards a capital programme which they have estimated at £29 million in the period from 1st January 1947 to 31st March 1958', this acknowledgement was followed by the absurdly cautious conclusion that 'It appears to the Treasury to be a matter for consideration whether the borrowing limit should not be raised.' The sentence 'This does not mean that the Treasury necessarily accept the Corporation's estimate of the amount of the capital programme which should be undertaken' raises the basic question as to what person or persons in the Treasury might have been capable of making a better estimate.

Second, the Treasury references to the working of the licensing system did not point to what had always been an understandably arbitrary element in the determination of 'the proportion of the receipts from licence charges which should be paid over to the Corporation'. Instead it spoke of 'flexibility'. It would have been more sensible throughout the whole history of the licensing system to have paid over the whole sum to the BBC after deducting Post Office and other administrative costs. As it was, 'flexibility' played into the hands of the Treasury and gave it the kind of secret weapon it delighted in having at its disposal. The Treasury did note, however, that an alternative to the licensing system was financing the service out of general taxation, a system which 'would, however, involve making the BBC part of the normal machinery of Government under direct Ministerial control'.

Third, while not dwelling at length on 'the Corporation's relations with its staff', the Treasury did not wish to see the BBC given the same kind of freedom as 'socialised industries' in relation to salaries. 'More stringent control of salaries is applied to non-trading bodies, such as the British Council or the Regional Hospital Boards, than to the trading bodies, such as the National Coal Board and the British Transport Com-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> H.M. Treasury Memorandum, 20 Oct. 1949.

mission. It seems reasonable that the BBC should occupy an intermediate position between these two groups.' Again the words 'reasonable' and 'intermediate' beg many questions. The Post Office certainly tried on occasion to get the BBC to conform as closely as possible to Civil Service salary scales, and its interpretation of a clause on salaries included in its own evidence to the Beveridge Committee was frequently narrow. The BBC, it stated, 'while not rigidly bound to relate the salaries and conditions of the employment of its permanent staff to those ruling in the Civil Service . . . should in fixing such salaries and conditions, pay proper regard to those of the Civil Service.'<sup>1</sup>

While the Committee was sitting, Haley was told on one occasion that the BBC should not have 'the degree of latitude' in relation to salaries he suggested.<sup>2</sup> The Treasury was behind this policy, the Post Office interfering jealously even though it knew very little about competitive rates in journalism or 'show business'. One of the great advantages which commercial television was to bring to British broadcasting was a more open salary structure, less tied to hallowed Civil Service norms which have always been irrelevant in relation both to broadcasting and the arts.

Finally, on income tax, while the BBC claimed exemption on the grounds that it made no profits and that it was 'a charity', the Treasury naturally backed the counter-views of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.<sup>3</sup> It paid no attention to Haley's claim that it was anomalous that 'the funds given by one Government Department to the Corporation specifically to carry on a public service should be taken back by another Government Department'.<sup>4</sup> It saw no reason for drawing any distinction between the BBC and other bodies for exempting it 'from the general law of the land'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1939 Treasury pressure had been applied to the BBC—very much behind the scenes—to seek to introduce advertising

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 248, 268–9.      <sup>2</sup> \*H. Townshend to Haley, 18 Nov. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> See above and Cmd. 8117, pp. 102–5, for the BBC's case, 'Payment of Income Tax by the BBC'.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273. Haley's view was that there should be no compromise on the income tax issue. 'We should go out for a straightforward remission of tax or nothing' (\*Haley to Farquharson, 24 Nov. 1949).

into the development of television,<sup>1</sup> involving a major change in policy, the full implications of which it did not consider: in 1949, in the name of orthodoxy, it was still pointing in the same direction. Nor, at Beveridge's invitation, did it choose to restrict its attention to financial matters. The BBC had recommended to the Beveridge Committee that its Licence should be changed to read that if the Government imposed a veto on the BBC in relation to 'any broadcast matter (either particular or general)', the BBC should be free to announce that it had been imposed.<sup>2</sup> 'It might easily happen in an emergency,' the Treasury retorted, 'that the announcement of the fact that a veto had been imposed would be tantamount to removing the veto.'<sup>3</sup> The constitution should not be changed. The Post Office was silent, but the Treasury did not hesitate to lay down the rule.

Such official evidence contrasted sharply with the other main evidence. Apart from economic interests and political parties, the 'educational lobby' and the 'religious lobby' were each to publish six memoranda in Volume II of the Beveridge Report, with the constituent parts of each revealing considerable diversity.<sup>4</sup> In each of these contexts, also, the Committee had to deal with evidence from BBC Advisory Councils. That from the School Broadcasting Council placed more emphasis on better reception and handling of broadcasts at the receiving end than on the provision of better broadcasts by the BBC.<sup>5</sup> That from the Central Religious Advisory Committee expressed the gratitude of the Churches that the BBC's status as a public Corporation had done 'much to enable religious broadcasting to develop as it has'.<sup>6</sup> The Bishop of Gloucester, the Chairman of CRAC, had discussed with his diocesan neighbour the Bishop of Bristol, the Chairman of the Commission on Broadcasting of the British Council of Churches, the Commission's evidence which was also shown to the BBC in advance,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91; BBC Memorandum No. 2, 'Constitutional Position'. There was a possible contradiction in the BBC's seeking to be exempt from income tax on the grounds that it was not a commercial organization and wishing to have freedom to pay its own salaries on the same lines as socialized trading bodies (\*Farquharson to Bottomley, 25 May 1949).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-423.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299; see also below, pp. 835-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290-1; see also below, pp. 763 ff.

<sup>7</sup> \*Barnes to Haley, 12 Jan. 1950.

although such neighbourly discussion did not prevent the *Church Times* from complaining that while Baptists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics had given evidence, the Church of England had been officially silent—‘the one Church whose faith and practice every King is pledged to safeguard and maintain’.<sup>1</sup> On the educational front, the Association of Education Committees had been in close touch with the School Broadcasting Council, although its brief was wider and it pressed for parallel machinery in full education, including adult education.<sup>2</sup>

In the educational lobby, the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, representing the public schools, led the six witnesses into battle, and the Workers’ Educational Association, leading critic of the public schools, came sixth. In the religious lobby, the Baptist Union led and the Roman Catholic Church in the United Kingdom came sixth. Each representative body in the educational lobby naturally had most to say about education, and each representative body in the religious lobby obviously had most to say about religion. Yet the Association of Education Committees presented an eloquent oration on ‘the wider educational responsibilities of broadcasting’, which included a ‘salute’ to the Third Programme, and the Workers’ Educational Association in a long memorandum not only opposed commercially sponsored systems but was one of the few witnesses to question whether or not the Press provided a good model.<sup>3</sup>

The Presbyterian Church of England enjoyed *Much Binding in the Marsh*, *Take It From Here* and *Twenty Questions*, but found ‘the great mass of individual Variety comedians stale and dull in the extreme’,<sup>4</sup> while the British Council of Churches Commission on Broadcasting discussed at length both Marxism and

<sup>1</sup> *Church Times*, 26 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 395. A. L. Binns was interested in this subject and asked Barnes a question about it at the hearing on 18 May 1950 (\*Barnes to Mary Somerville, 18 May 1950).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 394–5, 400–2. Competition for circulation in the newspaper wars of the 1930s had lowered press standards, and ‘the report of the Royal Commission on the Press brought to light much substantial evidence to show that the newspaper press remains a very faulty instrument of public information often frail in its comment.’

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.

scientific humanism, relating its evidence throughout to what is called a 'deep crisis of culture'.<sup>1</sup> 'There is an inevitable strain', it suggested, in language which appealed to Haley, 'between merely reflecting the tastes and divergent convictions of contemporary society and seeking to raise the public taste and give a lead in this realm of values. The present all-round decline in serious listening which we are assured is undeniable, only emphasises the point.'<sup>2</sup>

The evidence of the Roman Catholic Church in the United Kingdom, signed by Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, worried the BBC. 'I find this paper somewhat surprising,' Haley wrote, 'in view of the general acquiescence in our proceedings hitherto of the Roman Catholic members on the C.R.A.C.'<sup>3</sup> The Roman Catholic memorandum expressed 'general agreement' with the CRAC's evidence, but warned that 'there is an inherent danger, of which the Corporation is itself aware, of creating a religious teaching and evangelising organisation separate from and independent of the Christian Bodies in the country'.<sup>4</sup> The Religious Broadcasting Department of the BBC, it argued, did not 'reflect the realities of the religious situation of the country' and should cease to be 'merely one department answerable to senior officials charged with much wider secular interests': it should be thought of as a separate and distinctive activity directly responsible to the Director-General and guided by the Advisory Committees.

In future, it went on, some of the Assistants to the Religious Broadcasting Organizers should themselves be Roman Catholic. When Archbishop Masterson and Father Agnellus Andrew gave evidence to the Beveridge Committee, they were somewhat taken away from the points made in their own memorandum—Beveridge asked, for example, what the Roman Catholic Church would do if it was the dominant religious body in Britain—but they reiterated their main point that whatever system of broadcasting might be adopted, religious broadcasting ought to be clearly 'independent of the State and dependent

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412. The Commission had been set up after the Council had listened to an address by Haley on 2 Nov. 1948; see below, pp. 768–9.

<sup>3</sup> \*Parsons to Farquharson, 1 July 1950; Note by Haley, 1 July 1950; *The Tablet*, 1 July 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 419–22.



on the Churches'.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, sniping from quite different premises, the Protestant Truth Society was making a number of colourful charges that the BBC was showing undue favour to Roman Catholicism.<sup>2</sup>

There were other examples of criticisms seeming to cancel each other out. Thus the Labour Party's fears that 'an anti-Labour bias' often characterized what were 'supposed to be impartial talks and news bulletins' and complaints that 'the selection of speakers, subjects and news items' was 'too narrowly restricted'<sup>3</sup> should be set alongside the remarks of the Listeners' Association and other bodies suggesting left-wing bias.<sup>4</sup> The BBC drew the obvious, too obvious, moral. 'The accusation of political and social bias, in this case that the Corporation is Right-Wing and not sufficiently working-class in its attitude, is normally countered by the opposite charge that both in its programmes and in the composition of its staff the Corporation is a deep shade of red.'<sup>5</sup>

In general, there was a demand from almost all sides for more controversy, more opening up of political argument, and more broadcasts dealing with the views of what the Committee called 'minorities with a message'. The Committee selected only a few specimens of the evidence presented by such minorities,<sup>6</sup> with the Unitarians arguing (correctly) that 'our influence has always been far greater than our numerical strength',<sup>7</sup> and with the Peace Pledge Union speaking on behalf of the whole 'minorities group' when it said that 'unpopular opinions should not be discriminated against nor minorities neglected'.<sup>8</sup> The BBC recognized, first, that it was 'inevitable' that 'every small minority feels that the Corporation exercises a discrimination against them' and second that 'the view of any *important* minority is included in any discussion if it is essential to make it a fair statement of the problem'. Yet it held that it was the obligation

<sup>1</sup> \*Rev. F. H. House to Barnes, 24 July 1950; see also below, p. 780.

<sup>2</sup> Beveridge Committee, Paper No. 168. This was not printed in Cmd. 8117.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> A well-known voice from outside England accusing the BBC of being 'Communist-infested' was that of Lord Craigavon in Northern Ireland (*News and Times*, 27 Oct. 1949).

<sup>5</sup> Colin Welch criticized 'the illusion that the middle way is the right way'. 'Moderation', he argued, 'can be in itself a form of bias' (*Daily Telegraph*, 20 Jan. 1951).

<sup>6</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 423-58.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 455.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

of the Corporation to decide which minorities were *important*.<sup>1</sup> It was unwilling to support 'freedom of access'.

The claim was resisted particularly firmly when it was propounded by those political parties which raised issues of class and nation. Their arguments often pointed to the future when far-ranging claims were to be staked. Thus, the evidence from Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party was strongly in favour of separate and independent broadcasting corporations under new charters.<sup>2</sup> 'Much of the broadcasting of the Welsh Region is no more related to Wales than to, say, the people of Lancashire and Durham' was a complaint of the Welsh Parliamentary Party,<sup>3</sup> and Plaid Cymru had a whole section called 'Region or Nation?' which rejected any ideas of decentralization. No special favours were asked of England to subsidize Welsh culture: the Welsh should be planning to diffuse and develop their own.<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish National Party said flatly also that 'no system can cater adequately for the needs of the people unless it originates in Scotland, is controlled in Scotland and financed from within Scotland.'<sup>5</sup> The evidence it offered was wide-ranging. 'The BBC employ only people with emasculated voices as announcers, or is it more correct to say that they emasculate the voices of announcers before letting them go on the air? . . . We find it difficult to write with restraint on television. This is the invention of a Scot, it has become a BBC monopoly, and the BBC have denied it to Scotland. . . . As there is little immediate prospect of the BBC giving a television service to Scotland, we suggest that they permit private enterprise to operate.'<sup>6</sup>

The Labour Party, strongly opposed to sponsored broadcasting, to which it devoted four paragraphs in its evidence out of seventeen,<sup>7</sup> was careful to say nothing in its statement that

<sup>1</sup> \*Spicer to Barnes, 23 March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> S. O. Davies, Labour MP for Merthyr, was a strong supporter of a Welsh Radio Corporation.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 428.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 431-3. For an interesting alternative viewpoint, see Y Tiwniwr, 'Radio split is full of problems' in *Western Mail*, 23 Jan. 1950; see also *Y Faner*, 5 April 1950.

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 437.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 439-40.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 345. 'The cost of radio advertising would in any case be borne ultimately by the public in the prices charged for advertised products.'

'should be taken to commit H.M. Government in any way',<sup>1</sup> but the Fabian Research Group and the Liberal Research Group (the latter a small group of three—Dingle Foot, Aubrey Herbert, and Bruce Belfrage, the ex-BBC announcer) each demanded a greater measure of freedom for broadcasters. 'The difficult question of parliamentary control', the Fabians submitted, 'has gained in importance not through the existence of broadcasting but through the existence of a broadcasting monopoly. In itself it is as obviously undesirable as parliamentary control of the Press or of book publishing and we look forward to the time when the multiplication of broadcasting stations makes it possible to let all points of view find their own expression without regulation or balance-keeping by a central authority.'

If the argument in the first of these sentences is questionable, the recommendation in the second pointed towards a more free future. So, too, did the remark that the 'price of impartiality can be dullness, and . . . so long as the ever-present shadow of parliamentary criticism hangs over the broadcasting authorities, broadcasters and broadcasting censors will tend to appear timorous and colourless', although this, too, was qualified by the more doubtful conclusion that 'the only solution is the ultimate establishment of so many separate broadcasting outlets. . . . There is more scope for differing points of view.'<sup>2</sup>

The Liberal Research Group, to which Beveridge was bound to pay careful attention, made much of the need to break up the monopoly in order to permit genuine 'freedom of expression' for 'all parties and organisations that *themselves* subscribe to the tenets of a free society', and it even confessed to some misgivings in relation to 'ministerial broadcasts for the government of the day as distinct from Party Political broadcasts'. 'It seems to us,' the members of the Group remarked, 'they almost inevitably verge on party propaganda.' The position of the Group was politically difficult, however, for Lady Violet Bonham Carter had gone so far as to say that she would resign from the Liberal Party if the Party as a whole attacked the BBC and supported commercial television.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327-8.

<sup>3</sup> The Liberal Group had been drafted originally to prepare the Party's evidence. Lady Violet Bonham Carter made it clear, however, that it would have reason to stand aloof from the main party.

Both reports complained, however, of the 'bigness' of the BBC and its pattern of staff relations, and called it 'the biggest single bureaucracy in the world concerned with the propagation of ideas'. The Fabians recommended the creation of four separate authorities to take its place—one concerned with national sound programmes; one with regional and local programmes; one with television; and one with broadcasting for overseas. The four would be 'separate and independent', but co-ordinated by a body with an independent chairman of a similar kind to the Federal Communications Commission in the United States. The Liberal Research Group also wished the BBC's main 'subordinate units' to be given their independence. There should be three separate organizations: the BBC—'its name would require modification'—dealing with national broadcasting; a new British Television Corporation; and an Overseas Broadcasting Corporation. There would also be separate chartered regional organizations. The Liberal Research Group had little to say about 'co-ordination'. It put its trust in 'competition', and in almost every sector attacked not only 'monopoly' but 'bureaucracy'.

The language of the Liberal Research Group, particularly in its references to the BBC, was highly tendentious. A 'giant monopoly' with a 'top official layer' of Governors and 'perhaps the top one hundred executives' worked inefficiently through 'ponderous planning machinery'. Its staff were 'frustrated' and the regions were in 'an impasse'. Everywhere there was 'wilful obstruction'. The Third Programme had 'an academic atmosphere, relieved at times with a carefully diluted touch of Bloomsbury', while the Home Service was 'the battleground of conflicting interests'. As for television, it had 'snob value' which would not last. Sound broadcasting and television were not complementary, and 'for years to come time and distance will be on the side of sound broadcasting'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 368 ff. *The Economist* praised the Fabian pamphlet (8 April 1950), yet criticized the view that sound and television should be separated. 'For the permanent separation of television from sound broadcasting there is nothing to be said whatever. If the two techniques had happened to be invented at the same time, nobody would ever have thought of providing separate services for them, and to have a separate television service inevitably leads to the programmes being chosen to show off the technique instead of the technique being the servant of the programmes.'

Few of the more highly coloured judgements of the Liberal Research Group seemed convincing when they were made—they certainly did not sound ‘disinterested’—and few have stood up to the test of time. Nor was the Group’s praise of the Press as against radio and television very well based. ‘We regard it as fortunate that the processes of our free Press are not so encumbered with administrative delays’ was one judgement.<sup>1</sup> Another was that in a future radio system a ‘London supply service would stand in rather the same relation to the Regions as the London office of a great provincial newspaper does to its head office’.<sup>2</sup>

On advertising and sponsoring the two reports came to somewhat different conclusions. Both wanted to retain ‘a public service motive’, but the Liberal Research Group would have liked a dual system, like that operating in Canada and Australia,<sup>3</sup> while the Fabians feared that ‘The domination of broadcasting by advertisers would tend to result in the favouring of mass-appeal programmes, chiefly of entertainment, to the detriment of others.’<sup>4</sup> The British public had been ‘unaccustomed to the intrusion of advertisements in broadcast programmes, and it would be a violent change in its listening habits to accept commercial announcements’. Moreover, ‘the main objections to advertising as a source of radio programmes would remain even if advertising shared the field with public-service radio, either by having its own stations or by having time available on existing stations.’ In retrospect, the most interesting Fabian recommendation was for the extension of local as distinct from both national and regional broadcasting. ‘Local broadcasting was abandoned in favour of Regional broadcasting owing to lack of wavelengths, and the increased supply of wavelengths promised by VHF or FM transmission makes it possible to revive it.’<sup>5</sup> This was a fair assessment. Inside the BBC, Barnes conceded that ‘a chain of FM stations was possible’, with cities and counties using radio as ‘a means of local publicity’. He was bitterly opposed, however, to the idea of local broadcasting being sponsored.<sup>6</sup>

Beveridge referred to the substance of the Liberal and Fabian

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 318–21.

<sup>6</sup> \*Barnes, Note on Regional Broadcasting, 28 April 1948.

pieces of evidence when he took oral evidence from Simon, Haley, Lady Reading, Dr. Whitfield, and other BBC representatives on 18 May 1950,<sup>1</sup> and although he rejected the Liberal Research Group's Plan, 'he invited its proposers to go back and think again and, having done so, return to the Committee with a revised scheme'.<sup>2</sup> He also pressed the BBC to reply specifically to points made by some of his 'disinterested outsiders', who included Geoffrey Crowther, Sir Robert Watson-Watt, Ritchie Calder, Sir Ian Fraser, an ex-Governor of the BBC, and Reith, *the ex-Director-General*.

Crowther and the pioneer of radar, Watson-Watt, worked as a pair. They did not attack the BBC for unwieldiness nor advocate an American system of 'commercial broadcasting', but rather objected to the monopoly *per se*. Their suggestions were those of genuinely 'disinterested outsiders'. Again, they made much of the parallel with the Press: 'if it would be dangerous to have a monopoly of the Press, it must be many times more dangerous to have a monopoly of broadcasting. . . . We do not mean to imply that every crank is a Bunyan. But we do assert that any system in which it is not safe to let cranks speak is a bad system and will in the long run be a weakness to the nation that adopts it.'<sup>3</sup> A new system should be devised. Crowther and Watson-Watt did not sketch out such a system in detail, but they suggested that there might be two more broadcasting corporations licensed by the State, each with programming powers as extensive as those of the BBC. One might be a co-operative venture with directors directly representing the listeners and/or the staff. Another should be encouraged to make a profit for its producers. Revenue would come not from advertisements but from licence fees and possibly an excise duty

<sup>1</sup> Beveridge Committee, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 34th Meeting, 18 May 1950. When asked whether or not 21 Governors could be found to serve three competitive Corporations, Haley replied, 'Yes . . . but I think that they would be rather like a small boy holding a gyroscope spinning it at very full speed. In the end it would simply pull the hands this way and that and the effect of competition would be such that however much they tried to restrict what we would call the lower end of the programme scale it would in a short time be the greater pressure . . . that would make the others follow.' When Beveridge characteristically asked why there had not been a 'deterioration of the standards' in universities, Simon replied that they were not seeking to maximize numbers.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Stocks, *Still More Commonplace* (1974), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 334-5.

on the purchase of receiving sets.<sup>1</sup> Little was said in this first memorandum about television.

The original memorandum by Crowther and Watson-Watt was sent to the BBC for their comments, and after these had been provided in the form of the paper 'Monopoly and Competition',<sup>2</sup> Crowther was given the right of reply in May 1950. There was thus a kind of debate within a debate, with Reith also being invited to submit a paper,<sup>3</sup> although the BBC refused a formal debate at one of the meetings of the Committee, the only suggestion of the Committee that it actually turned down.<sup>4</sup>

Crowther went on to submit a second written statement and also to give oral evidence a second time. He joined with the BBC in opposing schemes of regional competition—'these would not be for the same listeners'; of competition between a National Programme in one system and a Light Programme in another—these would not make possible competition on equal terms; and of competition between sound broadcasting and television—the last 'a particularly ill-founded suggestion' since no 'artificial barrier of technique' should be erected 'between what should be, and will gradually become, two parts of the same service'. Crowther also withdrew his original idea that there should be a profit-making element in the structure. He continued to argue, however, that three public corporations would be better than one, even if a group of only three could offer only imperfect competition, or, to use a different word, 'diversity'.

Throughout his argument Crowther rejected the BBC's view that standards would suffer. 'If one BBC can sustain them, why not three?' Standards, indeed, would be higher. A monopoly tried to displease as few people as possible, whereas the right approach would be to try to please as many as possible. Analogies drawn from Gresham's Law were a complete fallacy. Crowther was at the opposite end of the spectrum from Reith, who stated—with recourse not to economic theories but to

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 31–2. Crowther had the ingenious idea that one-fourth of total licence revenue might be distributed to the Corporation as 'bonuses' according to the votes of listeners.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 322–3.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 363–6. Reith began by quoting Robert Bridges' *The Testament of Beauty*.

<sup>4</sup> Broadcasting Committee, *Progress Report*, 5 April 1950.

moral principles—that 'if there is to be competition it will be of cheapness not of goodness' and that in broadcasting 'the brute force of monopoly' was 'a potent incentive'. 'It is in terms of moral effect', Reith concluded, 'that the influence of Broadcasting will eventually be judged—whether more harm than good.'<sup>1</sup>

There was only one Reith, drawing deep in his own experience, and he was fully aware of the fact that in 1949 and 1950 he was fighting a rearguard action. He even wanted to 'preserve' the Whitley Document. It was not Reith's powerful statement which influenced Beveridge, however, although it was particularly strong on the need to 'restrict' the powers of the Governors, to give the Director-General effective control, and for Parliament to allow the public corporation freedom to operate quite unlike a department of State.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Crowther's cogent second document of two pages was the final barrier which Beveridge felt he had to cross before he made his recommendations.

Crowther admitted, like the Fabian Society and the Liberal Research Group, that his proposals would cost more money than was being spent by the BBC on the existing system, and Beveridge understood, too, that Ritchie Calder's suggestion that throughout the country there should be local VHF stations, 'parish-pump radio', particularly in evolving areas like the New Towns—a complete alteration of the Regional system—would have involved more costs also.<sup>3</sup> It is not easy to assess how much attention the Beveridge Committee as a whole paid to costs, but certainly they were not prepared in the austere climate of 1950 to recommend an expensive national system.

The only 'disinterested outsider', apart from Reith, who when he gave evidence could draw on his own experience as

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 364-6.

<sup>2</sup> Reith did not want executive Governors, since there would then be 'no reviewing board between the executive and the public'. He did not believe the Director-General could be a dictator, since he could always be dismissed, but he was prepared to consider the Board of Management being given statutory recognition. He hoped for Parliament to show 'self-denying abnegation' in not treating the BBC like a Department of State. He also disapproved of Regional autonomy. 'The criterion should be interest and merit, not vague assessments of what, in quantity, should be justifiable.'

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 367.



distinct from theory, was Sir Ian Fraser, who had not only been a Governor of the BBC from 1937 to 1939 and from 1941 to 1946, but had sat on the Crawford Committee of Enquiry into the BBC in 1925 and 1926. Fraser, like Haley, recognized the key significance of finance, yet drew a different conclusion. If television was to be developed—and it would never take the place completely of sound broadcasting—licence revenue would never be adequate to cover the necessary costs. ‘Serious and unprejudiced consideration’ should be given, therefore, to sponsoring. There was no reason why it should not be carried out ‘with dignity and propriety’. Fraser stressed rightly that there was nothing new about this idea. ‘Indeed it has been the common belief of all who have been concerned with broadcasting for very many years.’<sup>1</sup> Fraser also believed that advertising might play a part in the operation of the Overseas Service.

There was a bigger strictly ‘interested’ advertising lobby in 1949 and 1950, which was concerned to secure something more than ‘serious and unprejudiced consideration’, and it was active both in giving evidence and in carefully scrutinizing the evidence of others. Reith believed that Haley was not watching its activities closely enough,<sup>2</sup> although Haley certainly challenged the claims of the lobby when directly addressing the Beveridge Committee.<sup>3</sup>

The Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising had been founded in 1917, and in 1946 had published a pamphlet called *Broadcasting* which set out the argument for commercial radio. This it sent to the Beveridge Committee with the comment that there had been no ‘fundamental’ change since then in the argument, only in the context. In 1949, as in 1946, the Institute recommended that a commercial element in radio and television should be introduced by the BBC *under BBC control*. It did not argue in its memorandum for the creation of new organizations. ‘What is required’, it urged, ‘is an additional programme under the control of the BBC on which time may be purchased for commercial programmes. . . . Strict rules could be laid down, as was done by Radio Luxembourg, limiting the amount of advertising to be included in each item.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.   <sup>2</sup> See A. Boyle, *Only the Wind will Listen* (1972), pp. 342-3.

<sup>3</sup> Beveridge Committee, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 34th Meeting, 18 May 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 542-6.

It was inevitable that Radio Luxembourg should be mentioned in any discussion of advertising in 1949 and 1950. It had restarted its commercial English programmes in December 1946,<sup>1</sup> with Wireless Publicity Ltd. as its British agents. Its first programmes were sponsored by William Hill, the book-makers, and although there were restrictions on its scope and it did not recapture its pre-war audience, it continued to represent an alternative approach to broadcasting from that of the BBC. This was not only because it depended on advertising, but because the content of the programmes was lighter than light, certainly 'lighter' than that of the BBC's new Light Programme. The BBC had modified its Sunday programmes since 1939, the Post Office had restricted the freedom of the Relay Services under a new form of licence,<sup>2</sup> and the Labour Government had expressed its disapproval of broadcast advertisements addressed to Britain from overseas in its White Paper of 1946.<sup>3</sup> Yet even while the Beveridge Committee was sitting, Radio Luxembourg was continuing to increase the number of its listeners.

It was for these reasons that the BBC selectively monitored Radio Luxembourg programmes in 1948 and 1949, and with the assistance of Research Services Ltd. examined the composition of the Radio Luxembourg audience. At five o'clock on a Sunday afternoon in December 1949, a peak time, 3 per cent of the adult British population, roughly a million people, were listening to Radio Luxembourg as against 21 per cent to the Light Programme.<sup>4</sup> Radio Luxembourg attracted a bigger audience in the south of England than in other parts of Britain, particularly Scotland, where its signal was weakest. It had a

<sup>1</sup> For the late war-time history of Radio Luxembourg as a station managed by the Psychological War Division of SHAEF and its subsequent brief history as an American Army station, see A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 678-9. For its pre-war history, when its programmes were widely diffused by the relay exchanges, see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), esp. pp. 349 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For the evidence of the Relay Services Association of Great Britain, see Cmd. 8117, pp. 570-2.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 46. See also a statement by Herbert Morrison in the House of Commons, *Hansard*, vol. 425, cols. 1091-2, 16 July 1946: 'We will do our best not to have commercial broadcasting directed at this country. . . . We do not like this effort of a concern to set up a business in Luxembourg for the purpose of directing broadcasting at this country.'

<sup>4</sup> Beveridge Committee, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 25th Meeting, 10 March 1950.

strong working-class base and a high proportion of women listeners, and the main listening age bracket was 16-34.<sup>1</sup> Its most ambitious programme was *Top Twenty* (consisting of current song hits) on Sunday at eleven o'clock in the evening, a programme arranged with the Music Publishers' Association, but other popular programmes were always prerecorded in England with invited audiences.

The BBC challenged Radio Luxembourg's own statistics, and stood by a figure of one million 'regular' listeners (the five o'clock 3 per cent) rather than Radio Luxembourg's four million.<sup>2</sup> It also collected information about the main British advertisers. This for once put the advertisers on the defensive. In his memorandum of evidence to the Beveridge Committee, W. H. Grey, the Chairman of Radio Luxembourg Advertising Ltd., stated that his Directors were 'uneasy lest in the future either the Exchange Control or similar regulations be used as a means to gratify the prejudice which it is known the BBC Directorate entertain against Radio Luxembourg's sponsored programmes'.<sup>3</sup>

The Incorporated Society of British Advertisers, ISBA, founded in 1900, gave evidence to the Beveridge Committee, but it did not mention Radio Luxembourg. It was an organization of firms, not of individuals, and its membership included 424 of 'the leading advertisers in the country'. Its evidence consisted largely of the results of a questionnaire.<sup>4</sup> One large advertiser, however, Thomas Hedley and Company Ltd., did mention Radio Luxembourg in its evidence and recommended the setting up of 'a sponsored station or wavelength . . . for an experimental period of three years'. Advertising, it claimed, would not be an unpopular element in programming, since the size of the listening audience to Radio Luxembourg indicated that 'the British public willingly listen to commercial radio in order to get the standard of radio entertainment they desire'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*R. D'A. Marriott to Farquharson, 31 Jan. 1949; Farquharson to Bottomley, 13 April 1949; *Listener Research Bulletin*, No. 447, 'Sunday Listening to Luxembourg', 23 Dec. 1949. The shift from men to women listeners in 1949 was attributed by the BBC to the fact that advertisers deliberately set out to court the women.

<sup>2</sup> \*Silvey to Farquharson, 7 June 1950. Everything depended on what was meant by 'regular' listeners: Silvey claimed that the four million figure included people who listened as infrequently as once a month.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 568-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 549-52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 556-7.

Another group of large advertisers—Horlicks, Unilever and Rowntrees<sup>1</sup>—favoured a ‘dual system’, as in Australia and New Zealand, ‘whose standards of broadcasting are high’, and took up the same point made by Hedley & Co., that ‘suggestions that a large number of listeners dislike advertising with their broadcasting have . . . proved to be exaggerated’. All these big firms used Radio Luxembourg regularly (which they did not mention),<sup>2</sup> but they took care to qualify their case by suggesting that advertising differed from country to country and that ‘the British outlook would find reflection in commercial broadcasting as in other forms of advertising’.

There was very little in the evidence of any of these bodies about television. Hedley & Co. did not mention it, and the other group remarked cautiously that their experience of television was ‘so limited that we cannot as yet judge whether its undoubted potentialities for advertising may not be offset by the possibility of its high cost’.<sup>3</sup>

In historical perspective, the arguments advanced by the advertising lobby in 1949 should be seen as the last stage in an old dialogue rather than the first stage in the making of commercial television. They were not markedly different from the arguments advanced at the time of the Ullswater Report in 1936, although the Horlicks, Unilever and Rowntrees’ evidence was carefully prepared with the help of Cyrus Ducker, a director of the London Press Exchange, and of J. Walter Thompson executives who were to be directly involved in the next stages of the story. The evidence is said also to have carried great weight with Selwyn Lloyd.<sup>4</sup>

The Incorporated Society of British Advertisers might not mention Radio Luxembourg, but it did raise a number of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 558–9; this evidence was supported in a letter of 29 Dec. 1949 from Messrs. Reckitt and Colman Ltd., printed *ibid.*, p. 565.

<sup>2</sup> Their names were given in the Memorandum of Evidence by Radio Luxembourg Ltd., *ibid.*, p. 567. \*John MacMillan to R. D’A. Marriott noted their Sunday afternoon programmes on 13 May 1949. Horlicks were sponsoring *The Ted Kavanagh Show*, Rowntrees *The Sam Costa Show*, and Lever Brothers were ‘concentrating on quiz programmes of the “give away” type’.

<sup>3</sup> *Cmd. 8117*, pp. 558–9.

<sup>4</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group* (1961), p. 52. The Memorandum of Evidence by Messrs. Pye concentrated on VHF and the provision of local broadcasting stations and did not deal with television, although the company was to play a big part in the campaign for commercial television; see below, p. 888.

extremely interesting social points in its evidence. There might be an advantage, the Society claimed, 'in having a programme that is not linked consciously or unconsciously in the public mind with the authority of a semi-official service'.<sup>1</sup> This was to prove an increasingly potent argument in the Britain of the 1950s, where there was a revulsion against the war-time system of guided information. Yet the argument was seldom very explicit, even if Barnes, in an interesting BBC note not directly related to the Society's evidence, claimed that the system of war-time control had disappeared in 1949. 'Scripts are no longer submitted to Government departments except to check the accuracy of the facts, and this procedure is not, of course, peculiar to Government departments. There is always pressure on us from Departments and from all other professional bodies to give more space to a particular subject. Such pressure, although onerous to the Corporation official, is natural and not unhealthy and no doubt is applied to other media of communication. Since the War it has never amounted to an instruction.'<sup>2</sup>

The Society argued, however, without having met Barnes, that there was still 'a considerable amount of scarcely disguised propaganda . . . with the aim of helping recruiting for the services, road safety, economy drives, etc.' Should not this be treated as advertising?

There was also more than a hint in the Society's evidence that the days of austerity should come to an end. The word 'affluence' was not used, but 'creative advertising' was seen as a means of 'orientating and stimulating modern man in his everyday living. It reassures him that higher living standards are worth while and that the maintaining of existing standards is worth the effort entailed.' Within a very few years such language, which was not calculated to appeal to Beveridge personally any more than it might have done to Reith, would have seemed unduly muted, for advertising expenditure grew at the rate of 13 per cent a year until it reached a figure of over a million pounds a day.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, a pejorative contrast was drawn in the Society's evidence, again somewhat tentatively, between Government

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 543.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Farquharson, 4 Aug. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Hopkins, *The New Look* (1967), pp. 231-2, 316-17.

initiative and private enterprise.<sup>1</sup> 'While the Government is spending £1,000,000 on the building of a national theatre, Pye Radio Ltd. announces that its television expansion plans cannot mature in this country.'<sup>2</sup> (It is perhaps surprising that there was no passing reference to one of the immediate issues of the hour, the costs of the Festival of Britain.) The Horlicks, Unilever and Rowntrees' evidence stated squarely that 'the economic claim for commercial broadcasting should be considered equally with the "social" and "cultural" claim for maintaining a non-advertising service',<sup>3</sup> while the Radio and Television Retailers' Association urged that until financial resources were greater, the Third Programme, which had only 'a limited appeal', should be discontinued, 'the resultant saving being devoted to the provision of a nation-wide television service'.<sup>4</sup>

Bold statements of this kind were often unsupported in the evidence presented to the Beveridge Committee. There was, nonetheless, an attempt by some of the witnesses to buttress their case with statistics. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church produced figures of 'the present state of the Churches in Britain' from *The Christian Year Book* and *The Catholic Directory* and from the BBC's list of the proportion of Roman Catholic services. These were very carefully scrutinized by the Committee.<sup>5</sup> The Liberal Research Group collected answers to a questionnaire to show how 'Liberal opinion' was moving. Only 56 per cent of its respondents (the numbers were not given) were said to have approved of a public service monopoly of sound broadcasting and television, but among the remaining 44 per cent fewer than 10 per cent favoured 'commercial broadcasting as in the U.S.A.'.

The answers to this first question did not fit in easily with

<sup>1</sup> A letter was written to Beveridge on this subject by Dr. A. T. M. Wilson from the Tavistock Institute on 2 March 1950. 'When commercial and voluntary bodies are concerned with meeting some public need, it appears that they usually place great emphasis on information. . . . Governmental bodies, on the other hand, act to some extent as if their role—and implicitly their methods—were clearly defined by law, regulation or ministerial policy.'

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117, p. 544.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 559.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 573. Cf. the views of the Radio Industry Council in favour of competitive 'national' and 'commercial' television. A number of firms in the Council dissented from the evidence, the most important being Electrical and Musical Industries Ltd. (R. P. Browne to Baker, 7 Nov. 1949).

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 420-2; \*House to Barnes, 24 July 1950.

those given to the second. Only 35 per cent were in favour of radio and television remaining under unified control, with 65 per cent against. When asked how television expansion should be financed, only 9 per cent said purely by commercial interests.

There is no evidence that the Beveridge Committee subjected these particular figures to scrutiny. The most convincing set of answers given by the respondents related to political broadcasting. Only 38 per cent were satisfied that Liberalism received 'its reasonable share of attention' in news bulletins, 36 per cent in 'discussions', and 24 per cent in 'talks'.<sup>1</sup>

The most interesting statistics came from advertising interests associated with the campaign for commercial radio and television. The British Institute of Public Opinion had conducted two polls in October 1942 and January 1946 on the subject of monopoly. In 1942 42 per cent of those polled had disapproved of allowing commercial broadcasting, including advertising programmes, and in 1946 47 per cent. Coase quoted these figures in the Appendix to his book,<sup>2</sup> although they were to be presented differently in an Appendix to the Beveridge Report.<sup>3</sup> Haley, who was unimpressed by Coase's use of philosophy in his sweeping statement that a unified programme policy involved a totalitarian philosophy or 'something verging on it',<sup>4</sup> was equally unimpressed by his use of statistics. He rightly pointed out that if any deductions were to be made on the basis of statistics, a British Public Opinion Poll of June 1949 should be taken into account also. The proportion of people favouring the continuation of a BBC monopoly had risen by then to 51 per cent and those supporting commercial radio as part of a dual system had shrunk from 43 per cent to 33 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

These were figures which in themselves made Haley and the BBC feel happier about the movements of public opinion. They were confident, too, that they could make the best of the opportunity given them by the Beveridge Committee of replying to the critics of the Corporation. The Committee produced in May 1950 a list of questions raised by critics to which it required answers, and passed them on to the BBC for written replies.

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, pp. 379-80.

<sup>2</sup> R. H. Coase, *British Broadcasting* (1950), pp. 201-2.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117, Appendix IV, pp. 561-2. Beveridge gave 44 per cent instead of Coase's 47 per cent.

<sup>4</sup> Coase, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Beveridge, 11 Oct. 1949.

Some of the questions were very specific. 'Why are the Civil Service Commissioners not consulted in all cases when appointments are made to posts with 'a salary of more than £7,000?' 'Does the Corporation confirm or deny the statement of the Scottish National Party that Scottish contributors to BBC programmes receive less money than English contributors?' Others were like examination questions. 'What is the attitude of the BBC towards (a) the Salvation Army; (b) the Society of Friends; (c) the Unitarians; (d) the Christian Scientists; (e) the Spiritualists?'

Some of the questions, including the most searching, were very general indeed. 'How far is the statement of principles regarding minorities enunciated by Sir William Haley in *The Responsibilities of Broadcasting* carried into daily practice and how can the Broadcasting Authority or Authorities of the future be constituted so as to give effect to these principles most completely?' 'Is there a substantial service to consumers . . . which can be rendered by relay service and is not likely to be rendered by radio? If so, what is the prospect of getting this service (a) through public ownership and (b) from private ownership?' At least one question was tendentious: 'In the last resort, is the objection of the BBC not so much to television in the cinema as to the cinema itself as one of the most powerful modern agencies for miseducation, whose power the BBC does not wish to increase in any way?'

At its meetings on 2 and 14 June the Committee heard the BBC's oral replies, which supplemented its written answers. The kind of written answer returned can be illustrated and judged from the reply to the last question about public viewing of television.

Television to the BBC means visual broadcasting. As such, it can be brought into every home, and it was on this fact that the BBC first based its belief that its real future would lie in the home. This belief is now being borne out by the evidence of the way in which television receivers are being bought and installed in homes of almost every class within the present service areas. The Corporation's view is that the rediffusion of BBC television programmes in cinemas will only be of benefit in the pioneer stages of television to consumers who are not able to see television in their homes. The possible benefit is limited by the likelihood that the cinemas would only rediffuse a very



small proportion of the BBC's programmes. Beyond this, there is the possible use of television, either as a means of distributing films from a master-copy at a central point to cinemas all over the country, or as a means of providing a separate television service to the cinemas consisting of material which does not now figure in the cinema programme. The use of television by *landline* for such purposes would not affect the BBC's broadcast service. Any form of *broadcast* television would, on the other hand, interfere with the BBC's service.<sup>1</sup>

The oral answers were in sharp contrast. They ranged very widely indeed, from comments on instances of outside 'pressure'—like pressure from the Suez Canal Company through the Foreign Office in March 1939 to try to stop a talk on the Suez Canal—or treatment of particular individuals, like Miss E. Arnot Robertson, the film writer, who had been attacked by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, to expression of opinions about the technical implications of VHF, or Treasury control of the finance of Overseas Broadcasting or liaison with the British Council. In all cases, however, they were interlaced with very specific detail. Haley's last word was that 'we do feel that we have not said as much as we might have said'.<sup>2</sup>

Beveridge was satisfied, however, that the comments of the leading non-BBC witnesses had all been taken into account and that it was time 'to move to a different stage of work, trying to formulate—I will not say our conclusions—but our problems'. As we have seen, he left the door open for further communication—and there was no shortage of it—but it seems clear that he had already made up his mind that the BBC's replies to the views expressed by other witnesses were more convincing than the recommendations of the advocates of a new system. 'We feel justified in saying that the achievement of broadcasting in Britain is something of which any country might be proud,' the final report was to state. 'We say this after having read all the criticisms that were laid before us, after having interviewed many of the critics in person, and after studying to the best of our ability the very different systems of broadcasting which are to be found in other countries.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Replies to Questions', 28 April 1950; the Beveridge Committee, *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, 37th Meeting, 2 June 1950.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 38th Meeting, 14 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 183, p. 47.

## 4. The Report

THE Beveridge Committee—or its Chairman, at least—seemed to take great pride in the length of the Report as it was eventually published. The fifth paragraph pointed out impressively that ‘the number of words written to us or spoken to us in evidence amounts to nearly 640,000 from the BBC and associated bodies and about 1,000,000 from outside sources’. There was also a reference in the same paragraph to a document of 500,000 words consisting of ‘thoughts prepared by the Chairman . . . and running with the evidence’.

The Chairman’s thoughts and those of his colleagues were enshrined in a big Blue Book of 327 pages, a ‘monumental’ book as many people immediately described it:

Is it not a planned production . . .  
Leaving for our shrewd construction  
Every avenue explored?<sup>1</sup>

The second volume of 583 pages set out some of the most interesting or important evidence submitted to the Beveridge Committee, and *Melody Maker* was not alone in discovering ‘the dynamite’ in the Report in Volume II and not in Volume I.<sup>2</sup>

As far as length is concerned, there is a striking contrast between the Report and the brief Labour Government White Paper of 1946.<sup>3</sup> As for the ‘dynamite’, the explosion was to come later than the publication date of Volume II. Tucked away in the even briefer Conservative Government White Paper of May 1952 was a cautiously worded clause which was to introduce commercial television.<sup>4</sup> Many things were tucked away in the Beveridge Report, but few of the asides were either to explode or to generate new lines of action. After its publication the *Daily Express* could announce ‘the end of the hush-hush

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 20 Jan. 1951.      <sup>2</sup> *Melody Maker*, 27 Jan., 10 Feb. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 6852. See above, p. 45. Vol. I cost 6s. 6d. and Vol. II 10s. 6d.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8550, para. 7: ‘The present Government have come to the conclusion that in the expanding field of television provision should be made to permit some element of competition when the calls on capital resources at present needed for purposes of greater national importance make this feasible.’ See below, p. 425.



11. The patient's dilemma. *North Western Evening Mail*, 18 January 1951

BBC',<sup>1</sup> but even the most dramatic 'disclosures' in the Report were less sensational than those to be noted almost every day in sections of the popular press.

When they received the Report, the newspapers made as much of its 'bulk' as did the Chairman himself. The *Evening News*, for example, called it 'a mountainous affair'.<sup>2</sup> Politely or impolitely, suggestions were made as to how it might have been shortened and its 'arid wastes' left unexplored.<sup>3</sup> 'The blue bulk of the Beveridge Committee's Report', wrote a correspondent to *Time and Tide*, 'gives little hope for the liberation of the creative spirits of the air'.<sup>4</sup>

Malcolm Muggeridge complained not only of the length of the Report but of the 'ponderous and elevated' style of the Chairman:<sup>5</sup> others, by contrast, found the argument as 'masterly' as the investigation had been 'exhaustive'.<sup>6</sup> *The Tablet* promised that 'the few who read through to the end will surely agree that it holds more wisdom and rationalisation, more

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening News*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Time and Tide*, 3 Feb. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 18 Jan. 1951. Muggeridge was equally critical of the 'strange limbo' of Broadcasting House from which 'reality tends to be excluded'.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951.

humour and obscurity and more plain common sense than most current fiction'. It added, tempting providence, as perhaps only *The Tablet* could dare, that 'the work will undoubtedly be the standard exposition of problems connected with the BBC for years to come'.<sup>1</sup>

The briefest, if nonetheless inaccurate, summary of the Report was the *Daily Mirror*'s 'To-morrow's BBC: more curbs on monopoly: more controversy: less power for the Director-General';<sup>2</sup> and the most outrageous pun was the *Kinematograph Weekly*'s 'This is BBC's Beveridge but not our cup of TV'.<sup>3</sup> The cleverest summary—in the weekly periodical *Truth*—ran to sixteen lines of condensed verse, explaining most of the main points 'In a Nutshell':

For those who like 'to make a long story short'  
 Here is, in brief, the Beveridge Report:  
 One—leave sponsored radio on the shelf;  
 Two—let television pay for its own self;  
 Three—TV in cinemas let us see;  
 Four—More regional broadcasts let there be;  
 Five—let regions feature their own stuff;  
 Six—Of local stations there aren't enough;  
 Seven—Listeners' Research reorganise  
 Eight—minorities, religious and otherwise,  
 Should be allowed to air their views: and nine—  
 Producers should receive more money—fine!  
 Ten—let the chairman's pay be raised a thou.;  
 Eleven—Check up on governors more than now;  
 Twelve—Let the Charter alone. P.S.—Advise  
 Giving W. Haley a Good Conduct prize.<sup>4</sup>

This feat of compression, strained though it was, gave a clearer indication of the contents of the Beveridge Report than some of the first newspaper summaries or leading headlines like 'Higher Pay Scales urged for BBC Governors', which hardly did justice to its main conclusions.

In selecting items of apparent local relevance from the Report, some of the local newspapers not only produced odd

<sup>1</sup> *The Tablet*, 20 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 Jan. 1951; cf. *The Sphere*, 27 Jan. 1951, 'The Beverage as Before': 'This British Restaurant pays. It does not need to advertise.'

<sup>4</sup> *Truth*, 'In a Nutshell', 26 Jan. 1951.

perspectives but found themselves extending the Beveridge debate into areas which would have surprised Beveridge himself. 'Study of the long-awaited Beveridge Report on radio and television', wrote the *Lincoln Echo*, 'shows that Lincoln and district viewers have little to lose and much to gain from the proposals. The only "bad" feature is that the cost of our television licences may be increased.'<sup>1</sup> More critically, the *Huddersfield Examiner* thought that the question of the control of the broadcasting system raised less important issues than the sheer volume of broadcasting output: 'the spate of music, talks, plays and variety' which was 'apparently endless'.<sup>2</sup> The country had passed saturation point even before the spread of popular television.

Local comment, partial or disinterested, is of considerable interest to the social historian. Thus, the *Oxford Mail*, after drawing attention to a suggestion in the Report that universities should play a bigger part in broadcasting,<sup>3</sup> elicited from the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University the immediate but unforgettable comment that the University was too busy to broadcast.<sup>4</sup>

The main body of the Report was in four parts—'procedure, description, evidence'; an outline of the 'fundamental questions' and of the main answers given to them; 'secondary questions'; and 'proposals'—with thirty-two pages devoted to the last critical part, 'the hundred recommendations', a characteristic Beveridge way of setting out a future agenda for government. During the Second World War Beveridge had talked of five giants which had to be overcome if Britain were to achieve social security for all. Now he talked of a hundred recommendations if the BBC were to be made viable as well as responsible.

Throughout the whole of the inquiry, he and his colleagues had taken it for granted that broadcasting in Britain should remain primarily a public or 'social' service,<sup>5</sup> even though this presupposition did not figure as one of the 'fundamental questions'

<sup>1</sup> *Lincoln Echo*, 25 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Huddersfield Examiner*, 20 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 295, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford Mail*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> See Cmd. 8116, para. 167, p. 43: 'If broadcasting is to have a social purpose . . .' and para. 546, p. 164: 'to make broadcast programmes directly and automatically dependent on the preferences expressed by listeners would be contrary to the pursuit of the highest social purpose of broadcasting, which in the last resort is one of education.'

to which answers were given in Chapter 5 of Part II.<sup>1</sup> 'The problem' was not whether to replace a public service with a different kind of system but 'that of devising internal as well as public and external safeguards against misuse of broadcasting power'.<sup>2</sup>

Doubtless the most important part of the Report for Beveridge and most of his colleagues was the second section which dealt with 'fundamentals', some of which had not been considered by the Ullswater Committee. The first of the 'fundamental questions', long and heavily rhetorical, was, 'Is the BBC today so near human possibilities of perfection that all we have to do is to recommend renewal of the present Charter and Licence for another ten, fifteen or fifty years, with a few amendments of detail and a few suggestions for consideration by the Governors and the Director-General?' And the second, sharper and more glaringly fundamental, was, 'Should all broadcasting . . . including the Overseas Services and Television, continue as the monopoly of a single Corporation?'<sup>3</sup>

The answer of the Committee to the first was 'no', to the second 'yes'. Beveridge and his colleagues were prepared to make use of the arguments of R. H. Coase and others against monopoly; indeed, they gave Coase access to the evidence they had collected.<sup>4</sup> They were impressed also, they said, by the evidence of the Fabian and Liberal Research Groups attacking the unwieldiness of a big corporation,<sup>5</sup> and sufficiently startled by Geoffrey Crowther and Sir Robert Watson-Watt to invite them to comment on the BBC's first memorandum and, after eliciting their comments, to draw the attention of the BBC to what Crowther and Watson-Watt had said.<sup>6</sup> Yet their final recommendation was based on a practical argument rather than on an assertion of principle. If there were to be more than one independent broadcasting corporation, the various corporations would be 'bound to co-operate—in regard to the exchange of programmes, joint services, joint research, and possibly other matters—and they would all alike have to be subject to control from a co-ordinating authority'. 'The practical issue,' the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-55.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 180, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 182, 187, pp. 47-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 153, p. 39; see also above, p. 299.

<sup>5</sup> See above, pp. 357-60.

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 361. *Cmd. 8116*, paras. 157-61, pp. 40-1.

Committee went on, reduced itself, therefore, to 'the choice between chartering three or four Broadcasting Corporations on terms requiring them to co-operate and accept Government vetoes and direction on certain points, and chartering a single Broadcasting Corporation subject to the same vetoes and requiring it to make steady progress towards greater decentralisation, devolution and diversity. We have no hesitation in choosing the second of those alternatives.'<sup>1</sup>

The 'no hesitation' must have given the BBC great satisfaction, since Beveridge himself had drawn so much attention during the early stages of the inquiry to 'bureaucracy, complacency, favouritism and inefficiency'.<sup>2</sup> The 'conversion' or 'vote of confidence', after 'exhaustive investigation',<sup>3</sup> was of more value to the BBC than an unquestioning acceptance of the case it had put forward initially. 'We have felt it incumbent upon us', the Report itself stated, 'to probe more deeply than our predecessors into this main issue, not only because of its importance but because, in contrast to the evidence given to our predecessors, we found a substantial body of serious opinion challenging monopoly itself.'<sup>4</sup>

In reaching the conclusion that the BBC's monopoly should be maintained,<sup>5</sup> the members of the Committee were compelled to search for 'safeguards'—internal and external—and one whole chapter was devoted to these.<sup>6</sup> Monopoly had 'undeniable dangers' through 'concentration of power'.<sup>7</sup> How could the BBC, which the Committee praised, not only be prevented from developing faults but have ineradicably implanted in it 'the springs of diversity, continuing initiative and experiment'?<sup>8</sup> Far less was said in the Report about 'initiative'

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., para. 171, pp. 44-5.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within*, pp. 60-74. In the Report itself the four became three—'complacency, injustice and favouritism'. Cmd. 8116, para. 550, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951; cf. *Manchester Guardian*, 18 Jan. 1951: 'We can be fairly certain that no other big public corporation—and not many private ones—could have emerged from such a searching enquiry with so few scars.'

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 155, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., para. 588, p. 177: 'After this examination we have come to approve the main principles accepted by our predecessors. We believe that a public service monopoly established by Charter and financed by licence fees is the right system for Britain.'

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., paras. 544-621, pp. 163-84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., para. 550, p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

than about 'safeguards', and those critics of it were right who argued that, for all its length, it did not deal adequately with the issues that concerned the listener in his daily listening. The Committee was actually asking for the Governors to consider having less 'Variety' and less 'dance music', cutting down the number of 'morbid plays', and devoting more attention to 'political bias'. 'Our investigations suggested cases in which, had we been Governors, we should have felt that we ought to have been formally consulted before certain decisions as to programmes were taken.'<sup>1</sup>

In certain respects Haley and Beveridge had much in common. They were both concerned with the 'serious' side of broadcasting, interested in its political content, and yet anxious to examine broad questions of culture, particularly the culture of the book, afraid of the national implications of 'passive listening' and of the even greater dangers of passive viewing. At their early meeting in August 1949<sup>2</sup> they had been able to exchange ideas easily about listener research, the Third Programme, and the content of Haley's Fry lectures in which he had argued that 'broadcasting has a positive duty to do all it can to prevent listening becoming passive'. Beveridge was well aware, Haley had noted, of the limitations of the influence of listener research 'if the BBC is to lead public taste', and he was 'very interested in the Third Programme, listens to it, thinks it too esoteric and will probably want to talk to Harman Grise-wood'. The word 'entertainment' was not mentioned once. Within the next few weeks the two men had been discussing 'the decline in listening to talks, serious features, etc.'<sup>3</sup>

Such discussions in 1949 were far distant from the arguments of many of the BBC's most vocal critics. Yet as the inquiries proceeded, Beveridge had revealed that he did not always agree with Haley on detail; and some of the detail which he had so often mentioned during and outside the Committee's hearing made its way into the final Report. There was an element of truth in a comment in the *Daily Express* that while Sir William Haley 'will be pleased by the Committee's acceptance of most of his major proposals, he will be peevish at nearly

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 568, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 15 Aug. 1949. See above, p. 320.

<sup>3</sup> \*Record of a meeting in Haley's office, 2 Nov. 1949.



every "yes" being accompanied by qualification or criticism'.<sup>1</sup>

The most esoteric paragraph in the whole Report was paragraph 569—'There is, finally, the possibility which emerged in our own inquiries into the treatment of the Wordsworth Centenary, that sometimes important events are dealt with without adequate consultation of outside authorities and by decisions somewhat hastily taken when no haste was needed.'<sup>2</sup> This was Beveridge at his most petty. Leaving on one side the fact that the Wordsworth Centenary, 'important event' though it was, hardly loomed large in the minds of millions of listeners, the paragraph shows how Beveridge's own self-interest could become a factor in his general analysis. He was annoyed that he himself had not been invited as a Wordsworth expert—which he was not, although he had been invited to give a memorial address at Grasmere—to participate in the centenary broadcasts. In revenge, perhaps, two lines of Wordsworth were quoted in the Report thirteen paragraphs before the reference to the centenary,<sup>3</sup> and they were quoted despite the fact that the BBC, at Beveridge's behest, had afterwards produced a completely convincing detailed memorandum explaining why they had behaved as they had.<sup>4</sup>

The 'freedom of the producer' was always hedged around in the Report, so that, as the correspondent to *Time and Tide* suggested, little hope was offered for the liberation of the creative spirits of the air.<sup>5</sup> Everybody was to watch everybody else, and there were to be 'still more officials' and still more committees.<sup>6</sup> 'The responsibility of broadcasters', the Report stated firmly, 'is responsibility to the community, not to their own consciences.'<sup>7</sup> 'It is not sufficient to trust to the mutual

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 569, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 556, p. 167; cf. para. 221, p. 55, which presses for 'recognition of the fact that the expert in literature or economics or music or whatever it may be within the BBC is only one expert among many and that there are many experts outside the BBC'.

<sup>4</sup> \*EBC Memorandum, 'Wordsworth Centenary', May 1950. D. G. Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel* (1971), pp. 159-60, gives a brilliant account of a producer's role in this story.

<sup>5</sup> See above, pp. 357-8. Characteristically, Cmd. 8116, para. 565, p. 169, which begins 'the essential product of broadcasting is programmes', is concerned not with how programmes are made but with how best they can be criticized and controlled.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 18 Jan. 1951: 'This will strangle the BBC.'

<sup>7</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 590, p. 177.

criticism of those within the Corporation. . . . To an officer engaged on the next programme, criticism of a past programme, however carefully reasoned, almost necessarily presents itself in the light of a fly to be brushed away.'<sup>1</sup> There was a particularly lively retort on the role of the producer in *Vogue*, although it drew a very sharp contrast—too sharp—between producers and 'administrators'.<sup>2</sup> D. G. Bridson, the intelligent and imaginative scriptwriter and producer, had been deeply shocked when Beveridge told a group of underpaid feature and drama producers appearing before his Committee that administrators should 'be better paid than creative people because their work was so much less interesting'<sup>3</sup>

Far more fundamental points than those of Beveridge were made from opposite angles. In a characteristically stimulating article in the *Cambridge Journal*, Michael Oakeshott, unlike Beveridge, raised the question of what he called the 'amplified significance' of all broadcasting: it not only travelled far and wide to its various destinations, but moved with 'increased authority': Was this not dangerous? And long before the BBC broadcast much news, he feared that the public was already being bombarded by too much news and that the bombardment was continuing whether or not the news items were worthy of report. Oakeshott also touched upon 'the dangers' of broadcasting encouraging 'extensive minds, curious, interested, pseudo-sympathetic, preferring many contacts to few intimacies'.<sup>4</sup>

This was a sceptical conservative Cambridge point of view. Equally critical of the Report, however, from a different angle, were the *Birmingham Mail* and *The Observer*. The *Birmingham Mail* complained rightly that Beveridge had devoted disproportionate attention to 'aspects of broadcasting that concern only a minority of listeners'. 'Radio', it went on, 'is essentially a medium for mass entertainment. . . . We long ago found a way of keeping radio out of the clutches of crooks, cranks, politicians and sectaries.'<sup>5</sup> *The Observer* complained that the Committee had worked on the false analogy that the Governors

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 561, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Vogue*, April 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Bridson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Cambridge Journal*, June 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *Birmingham Mail*, 18 Jan. 1951. *The People* said that the inquiry would have been very different if Val Parnell, C. B. Cochran, and J. B. Priestley had been members. 'They've kidded us again' was its headline (21 Jan. 1951).

were like politicians and the BBC staff like civil servants, whereas the staff stood 'somewhere between the professions and the arts'. At the same time, unlike the Ministry of Information, it believed that there were good reasons for 'controlling an immediate public demand in favour of the public interest as a whole'.<sup>1</sup>

For Beveridge it was 'safeguards' which mattered, including operational and constitutional safeguards; safeguard, indeed, was piled on safeguard, and a key section of the Report was called 'Watch the Watchdogs'. The most important internal safeguard was an increase in the power of the Governors as against that of Director-General and Executive. That was why the nine Governors were to be paid more and why signing of the Whitley Document, rooted in BBC history, would have to discontinue.<sup>2</sup> The Governors, while remaining part-timers, were to be 'agents of democratic control'. Three of them were to have 'special knowledge' of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and all of them were to be placed in a strong enough position to be 'masters in their own house'. There should be a full 'exploration' of the issue of whether or not Governors who were in the House of Lords should be free to take part in debates on broadcasting policy: 'it may appear anomalous also for the Government to safeguard the independence of Governors of the BBC by prohibiting them from making speeches which they want to make.'<sup>3</sup>

It was scarcely likely that most Governors would be deeply concerned about this particular issue, important though it was both to Beveridge and Simon. The Report went on to emphasize more broadly, however, that all Governors should be of 'first-rate quality', that they should include specialists as well as generalists, and that 'any suggestion that they should be confined to matters of policy or principle and warned off the ground of practice and execution' was dangerous and should be resisted. 'Policy and principle have no life except in individual instances.'<sup>4</sup> The tradition that one Governor should be appointed

<sup>1</sup> *The Observer*, 21 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8116, paras. 54, 553, 576, 587-93, 625. *The Times* (18 Jan. 1951) objected to his preoccupation with 'administrative gadgets'. See above, p. 341.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 587, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 554, p. 166. This conception was challenged in *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951: 'Ultimate power rests, and should rest, with the Governors. How healthily

with special interest in financial questions should be regarded as obsolete: 'all specialisation of Governors should be by their own decision.'<sup>1</sup> Finally, in what was described misleadingly as a return to Reithian practice, the Chairman of the Board of Governors was to be expected 'normally' to attend the BBC's Board of Management.<sup>2</sup>

If the Report was very specific on the powers of Governors, it was very vague indeed on the 'choice of Ministers in relation to broadcasting', a question which had greatly interested Reith before and after the Ullswater Committee and which has remained important in subsequent broadcasting history.<sup>3</sup> 'Clearly,' the Report stated—without argument—'there should not be any Minister for broadcasting as such' parallel to the Ministers of Fuel or Transport. Equally 'clearly', responsibility for allocation of wavelengths or collection of revenue should rest with the Postmaster-General.<sup>4</sup> That was all that was deemed clear. It should be for the Government, not for the Committee, to decide who the 'appropriate Minister' should be to deal with high policy in broadcasting, including such matters as licensing, 'veto and instruction', and, first priority in the view of the Committee, the appointment of the Governors.<sup>5</sup>

The main 'operational' safeguard against the 'dangers of monopoly', it was suggested, should be a 'Public Representation Service'. *The Times* did not like the idea of such 'a licensed gadfly' within the organization,<sup>6</sup> but Beveridge, as he had made clear many times during the Committee's hearings, wanted to encourage 'self-criticism' within the BBC and to supervise both audience research and programme review.<sup>7</sup> The head of this service should be a Director and member of the Board of Man-

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 575, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 582, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 36; A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 476-516.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, paras. 609-12, pp. 181-2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 611-12, pp. 181-2.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951. The term 'licensed gadfly' was used in the Report itself in relation to the officer who reported centrally on BBC overseas programmes (Cmd. 8116, paras. 242-3, pp. 61-2).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 562, p. 168.

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effective their influence is on the working of the BBC must depend not on any nice definition of duties but on the force of personality and of wisdom. A weak Board would be a fifth wheel on the coach whatever authority was given to it on paper: a too strong Director-General could, in such circumstances, exercise too much influence.'

agement of the Corporation, but he would have to be prepared 'at times to appear a disturbing bedfellow'—a different metaphor from that of the gadfly—to other departments.<sup>1</sup> The Committee added that it had considered going so far as to propose that this key official should be irremovable without the consent of the Lord President, but had eventually decided against this restriction. His department, or 'service', the size of which was not specified, should include among its functions the receipt of and reporting on all criticisms of the BBC from outside; the conducting, either by its own staff or by the commissioning of outside experts, of a 'critical review of home programmes of all kinds'; 'a systematic review of overseas programmes'; 'suggestions for establishment of Advisory Committees and provision of secretariat for them'; and a 'study of broadcasting methods and programmes in other countries'.<sup>2</sup> Clearly the Beveridge Committee did not consider that the Director of the Service should be merely a Director of Public Relations. He was to be involved in a kind of continuous quality audit of the whole of BBC output.

One whole chapter in the Committee's proposals was devoted to a further safeguard against monopoly which was both constitutional and operational.<sup>3</sup> Chapter 20, called 'Devolution', proposed the setting up not of separate Broadcasting Corporations for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland but of 'National Commissions'.<sup>4</sup> Detailed definition of their powers, it was recommended, should be left to the BBC, but each Commission should be provided with wavelengths, block grants, and a Home Service to administer. Thereby, it was argued, 'federal harmony' would replace 'centralising unity in London'. At the same time, the Committee emphasized that it did not wish 'to break British broadcasting into fragments'.<sup>5</sup>

In England, there should be no corresponding change of constitutional structure, but 'effective steps should be taken both to make the existing programme autonomy of the Regional Controller more substantial and to associate with him Regional Advisory Councils of greater independence, with fuller knowledge, and more active in many ways.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 563, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 522-43, pp. 157-63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 562, p. 168.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 535, pp. 160-1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 536, p. 161.

Naturally, this section of the Report received careful attention in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the provinces, where distaste was often expressed for 'Londonisation'.<sup>1</sup> It was the London *Times*, however, which described proposals for National Commissions as a 'compromise' which might provide 'an interesting and perhaps fruitful experiment',<sup>2</sup> and *The Scotsman* which pointed out, 'it is not so easy to refute the assertion that autonomy might lead to a lowering of standards'.<sup>3</sup> In general, the proposals were welcomed in the provinces and criticized for their inadequacies in nationalist circles. 'BBC Report is a plea for "Regional Rule"' was a characteristic headline from Sunderland, as was ' "Home Rule" proposal for BBC Regions welcomed' from Norwich. 'The fact that Scotland is to have its own Broadcasting Commission,' one critic remarked, 'ought to help us to overthrow some of the more objectionable features of the London music halls.'<sup>4</sup>

In Northern Ireland, Lord Craigavon was more concerned about the loopholes the proposals left for Communist propaganda than about specific Northern Irish interests,<sup>5</sup> and across the Border the *Irish Times* argued that if the Beveridge Committee had studied broadcasting in Eire it might have reached different conclusions about advertising.<sup>6</sup>

The Report, in fact, had far more to say about regional devolution than about advertising, which did not figure as a major theme even in Selwyn Lloyd's separate minority statement. Only one of the Hundred Recommendations mentioned advertising at all, and although it hid considerable differences of opinion, which were described a little more fully in three paragraphs of text, it sounded innocuous enough. 'Clause 3 of the current Licence prohibiting any commercial advertisement or sponsored programme without the written consent of the Postmaster-General, should be repeated, except that the

<sup>1</sup> The *News Chronicle* had as its headline on the Report, 'Don't Londonise the BBC' (18 Jan. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *The Scotsman*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunderland Echo*, 18 Jan. 1951; *Eastern Evening News*, 18 Jan. 1951; cf. *Stockport Express*, 25 Jan. 1951, 'Here's to the BBC'.

<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 19 Jan. 1951.

<sup>6</sup> *Irish Times*, 24 Jan. 1951. The *Irish Press* (24 Jan. 1951) said that the Report had been received in Britain 'with characteristic complacency'.

“appropriate Minister” should be substituted for the “Post-master-General”.<sup>1</sup>

During the discussions, seven out of the eleven members of the Committee had urged that there was no case for ‘departing from the established practice of barring broadcasting advertisement completely’,<sup>2</sup> while three had shared an ‘intermediate view’ that a controlled and limited advertisement hour, ‘just as a paper which has its advertisement columns’, would not lower standards: they neither feared nor hoped so much as their colleagues from a change in the present absolute bar on advertisement through the microphone in Britain.<sup>3</sup> The seven were Binns, Crawford, Lord Elgin, Oakeshott, Reeves, Stedford, and Dr. Taylor. This was not only a majority, but a fair cross section, political and occupational, of the Committee as a whole. The three were Beveridge himself, Lady Megan Lloyd George, and Mrs. Stocks, who produced a short note of their own on the subject in the Appendices to the Report.<sup>4</sup> ‘Advertising to bring sellers and buyers together’ they regarded as ‘a necessary business activity’, not as a social and cultural threat. They did not contemplate anything in the nature of the ‘American practice of interrupting programmes by advertisements which may be offensive and are often rather boring’.<sup>5</sup> Television development was mentioned chiefly in this context. ‘We feel that the public ought at some stage to have the opportunity of saying whether they would rather pay larger fees to keep advertisement off the television screen or whether they would prefer to get additional advertisement revenue, which would both make it possible to improve the service and to avoid raising the licence fee.’<sup>6</sup>

The three draftsmen of the note contemplated nothing more drastic in the way of procedures than they did in the way of social and cultural consequences. The Governors of the BBC should themselves study the position carefully when they had

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116, Recommendation 23, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 376, pp. 106–7.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951, took up the point that ‘the weight of authority in Britain against allowing broadcasting to be used as a medium of advertisement is . . . impressive’. A number of provincial newspapers made comments on the Report which seemed to justify this verdict, e.g. the *Birmingham Weekly Post*, which stated that ‘no country with any regard for its good name can afford sponsored radio’ (26 Jan. 1951). Some professional papers like the *Musical Express* (26 Jan. 1951) and *Band Wagon* (March 1951) took a diametrically opposite point of view.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, pp. 226–8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226–7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

time, with open not closed minds. 'We hope', they concluded, 'that if the Governors came to propose a change they would find a Government ready to consider it.'<sup>1</sup>

There was disagreement in the Beveridge Committee about what was called 'functional'. Thus, there should be a standing committee of the Corporation for Overseas Services with a Chairman who would be a 'full member of the Corporation'.<sup>2</sup> The existing division of responsibilities for those services as between Government and BBC should continue.<sup>3</sup> As far as television was concerned, devolution should be 'administrative rather than in the policy making governing body'. There was a case for 'administrative devolution', since television employed 'a technique which in some respects is like that of sound broadcasting and in other respects is different'.<sup>4</sup> Separate programme heads would be needed and separate negotiations with performers. 'We are glad', the Report stated, 'that the BBC has now raised television from being a Department under a Controller to being a Service under a Director, so making its head directly responsible to the Director-General and a member of the Board of Management.'<sup>5</sup> Such 'greater autonomy' was a necessary precondition of future development.

The Beveridge Committee proposals on television as a whole were unexciting: administrative devolution plus a possible—and only a possible—Programme Advisory Committee for Television.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the retrospective judgement that 'the BBC in its dealings with the authorities controlling capital development has fared better than might have been feared' flattered the authorities.<sup>7</sup> No suggestions of any concrete kind were made about 'the interesting problem of the relation of television in the home to television in the cinema',<sup>8</sup> although what was an 'interesting' problem to the Committee was obvi-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228: 'The art of living in a free society includes the considered spending of consumer's income so as to get the most out of it, according to the spender's personal judgment. The art of broadcasting in a free society should include readiness to assist in this exercise of consumer's choice and freedom.'

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 539, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 190, pp. 48-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 540-1, pp. 162-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 325, p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 540-1, pp. 162-3. A Television Advisory Committee with wider powers (not clearly defined) than those of the existing committee was also suggested (see *ibid.*, para. 350, p. 97).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 309, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 347-8, pp. 96-7; paras. 326-35, pp. 88-93; para. 624, p. 186.



ously an urgent one to the BBC.<sup>1</sup> Part I, Chapter 13, of the Beveridge Report was a carefully balanced presentation of opposing arguments, with vague phrases like 'whether the film industry would accept it we are not sure' and 'we believe that safeguards could be found'.<sup>2</sup> Nor was it very helpful to have it stated as a principle that, 'in considering how far and by what means television should be available for public showing, the interest of the public is the dominant consideration'.<sup>3</sup>

The other Beveridge proposals can be summed up briefly. The newspapers made much of the tentative suggestion that the Governors might consider starting a 'Hyde Park of the Air', 'an opportunity for all minorities which have messages, religious or other, on some occasion to put their messages over, not regularly or at length, but at some time';<sup>4</sup> and there were frequent references also to the recommendations that 'free use of the microphone for discussion of questions of the day, however controversial the . . . speakers', is important and that 'during the period of General Elections there should be greater opportunity for party political broadcasting'.<sup>5</sup> The Report said surprisingly little, however, about the more urgent issues in the immediate political situation except that 'the present ban on discussion of any question within a fortnight before it is debated in the House of Commons should be reconsidered'.<sup>6</sup> Even then it did not discuss the origins of the 'ban' or its implications.

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 175-9, below, pp. 968-9, and *The Economist*, 3 Feb. 1951, for the failure to agree, which, it argued, might force the BBC and the film industry closer together.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8116, paras. 333-4, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 347, p. 96; cf. para. 346: 'It would be wrong to develop television as an offshoot of sound broadcasting, by people who had learned to think of programmes of all kinds first in terms of sound. It would be equally wrong, if as television grew in importance, it came to dominate sound, so that all programmes came to be considered primarily from the point of view of suitability for viewing.'

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 257, p. 66. See, for example, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 Jan. 1951; the *Daily Mirror's* article of 25 Jan. 1951, 'New BBC Rule is Let's start an Argument'; *John Bull*, 10 Feb. 1951, where the previous 'suffocating policy of trying to avoid giving offence to any one' was condemned and the policy advocated of 'thrashing out' on the air 'political rows, social problems, religion and non-religion, and cultural arguments . . . with no punches pulled'.

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 261, p. 67. The comment of minorities was not favourable. 'Beveridge Report no help to Spiritualism' was a headline in the *Psychic News*, 27 Jan. 1951; while the secretary of the Baptist Union continued to complain of 'watered down Beveridge Christianity' (*Manchester Guardian*, 24 April 1951).

<sup>6</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 264, p. 68.

Few newspapers saw that the volume and presentation of news in the future would raise problems far more difficult than those outlined by Michael Oakeshott,<sup>1</sup> or that the day would come when critics would complain, justly or unjustly, that the minorities had taken over. Malcolm Muggeridge was almost alone in asking what would happen 'if the minorities in question are concerned, overtly or covertly . . . to undermine the very foundations of our free institutions, and ways of life',<sup>2</sup> although *Nature* suggested that there would be serious problems if the BBC ceased to act as a 'unifying force which is needed to make a democracy a real community'.<sup>3</sup>

The Beveridge proposals on adult education were straightforward enough—that the Corporation should invite organizations and persons interested in the subject to confer with them as to how 'a fresh attempt should be made to use broadcasting as a means of adult education'.<sup>4</sup> Yet there was vagueness again in a comment like 'we do not know whether the time is yet ripe to re-establish an Advisory Council for Adult Education', just as there was caution in the recommendation that 'television in schools should be the subject of experiment'.<sup>5</sup> The experimental approach was canvassed again in relation to setting up VHF local stations in selected areas,<sup>6</sup> and the willingness to pass over recommendations to other bodies was reflected in the recommendation that the liability of the BBC for income tax, to which Haley had paid so much attention,<sup>7</sup> should be referred to the Royal Commission on Income Tax 'shortly to be appointed'.<sup>8</sup> After stating the pros and cons, the Committee's considered conclusion was that 'whether or not the BBC . . . has a valid reason of policy for obtaining exemption from pay-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 380; see also below, pp. 582 ff. The *Newspaper World*, 25 Jan. 1951, stated that the existing BBC news service, with salaries modest by Fleet Street standards, had accomplished much in face of great odds. 'They get a minimum of by-lines, have high standards of objectivity to maintain, and are denied the stimulus of partisanship and eccentricity of style.'

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 18 Jan. 1951; cf. the *Daily Worker*, 18 Jan. 1951: 'When a society is living a lie, as ours is, it has no future.'

<sup>3</sup> *Nature*, 7 April 1951.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, paras. 285–6, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendation 81, p. 198; para. 286, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendation 73, p. 197; para. 295, pp. 78–9.

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 318.

<sup>8</sup> Cmd. 8116, Recommendation 20, p. 192; paras. 421–3, pp. 123–4.

ment of income tax, is a matter on which we are hardly qualified to express a definite opinion.'<sup>1</sup>

Taking the Beveridge Report as a whole, for all its bulk and range, it left as many questions unsolved as solved. Nor for all its probing did it read—or does it now read—as a radical document. *The Times* referred to 'significant changes' in Beveridge's 'Design for Broadcasting',<sup>2</sup> but most commentators talked of 'the mixture as before'.<sup>3</sup> The 'Business as Usual' sign was still up for all to see at Broadcasting House.<sup>4</sup> In different words, those of Maurice Gorham, the message seemed to be 'There'll always be a BBC', 'an institution like the weather or the MCC which everyone can grumble about but nobody can change'.<sup>5</sup>

In tracing the antecedents of the Beveridge proposals, it is not enough to talk in terms of pragmatic responses to changing needs or of fundamental liberal or other principles. Beveridge fell back inevitably and perpetually on his own personal experience. The models which appealed to him were civil service models and university models. 'The daily administration of broadcasting must be done by full-time officials, largely permanent, as the daily work of Government Departments is done by Civil Servants. In ability, expertness, devotion to duty and professional tradition the British Civil Service is unsurpassed; no higher praise could be given to chief officials of the BBC than to rank them with the higher officials of our Civil Service. But no one suggests that the higher Civil Servants, once they have been appointed, should be left to do their jobs according to their judgment, and should be responsible only to their consciences.'<sup>6</sup> It was an incomplete and in most respects a one-sided judgement.

As for the university model, Beveridge seems to have been over-impressed by it. As an ex-head of an Oxford college and an ex-Director of the London School of Economics, he turned to the university model as naturally as he turned as an ex-civil servant to a Lloyd George precedent during the First World

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 423, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Standard*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *The Star*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>6</sup> *Cmnd.* 8116, para. 551, p. 165.

War when he appointed an Officer for Complaints and Suggestions for the Ministry of Munitions.<sup>1</sup> The different British universities, all self-governing, competed with each other 'in spite of their increasing dependence on funds voted by Parliament',<sup>2</sup> and a 'practical moral' could be drawn from this. Likewise, the University Grants Committee, a buffer between Treasury and universities, provided a practical model in relation both to quinquennial planning and to the case for 'broadcasting independence'. 'It is a means of combining Treasury Grants with freedom from Treasury control.' It made 'Quinquennial Reports which have been admirable surveys of the academic field and a means of helping the different institutions to learn from one another.'<sup>3</sup>

Beveridge recommended quinquennial reviews for the BBC covering major financial questions or any questions of broadcasting policy on which advice was desired by the Government, and believed that given such a review system the BBC, like the universities, should be chartered for an indefinite duration. Even after fifteen years, 'there should be no compulsion to make a review as exhaustive as ours'.<sup>4</sup>

Not every member of his Committee shared Beveridge's approach. Selwyn Lloyd produced a minority report of his own calling for both commercial radio and commercial television—the two were soon to be kept completely separate—alongside a public BBC. He thus disagreed with his colleagues on 'the most important matter submitted to us'.<sup>5</sup> He had been strongly influenced by his American visit,<sup>6</sup> and he referred to it in his third paragraph. He also substituted for the high-sounding passage in the Report on broadcasting as 'the most pervasive and therefore one of the most powerful of agents' his own deliberately 'less striking' sentence—'broadcasting is a very fine medium for the oral and visual transmission of information, education and entertainment.'<sup>7</sup>

Selwyn Lloyd quite deliberately set himself against Reith. After quoting him on 'the brute force of monopoly', he said

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 564, p. 169. This experience was used to clinch the argument for a Public Representation Service.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 168, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 602, p. 179.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 599–608, pp. 179–81; para. 627, p. 188; para. 620, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> *Minority Report*, para. 1, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> See above, pp. 303–6.

<sup>7</sup> *Minority Report*, para. 4, p. 201.

that he did not like this brute force and feared that 'its dangers' were 'both insidious and insufficiently appreciated by the public'.<sup>1</sup> Rejecting at the same time the United States model on the grounds that it might not cater adequately for minorities,<sup>2</sup> he suggested that while the BBC should remain in existence 'to set the standards'<sup>3</sup> and to operate both Home and Overseas radio services, it should be in competition with one or two national commercial companies and local stations taking advertisements and transmitting local programmes.<sup>4</sup> For television, which should develop 'unimpeded' by sound broadcasting, there should be a British Television Corporation licensed for an interim period to broadcast sponsored programmes. 'In due course, one or more other Companies or Corporations could be licensed to provide the alternative television programmes which sooner or later the public will certainly demand, and which are now technically possible. When that has taken place, it might be desirable to follow the same pattern as with sound broadcasting, a public service non-commercial programme financed by a licence fee and alongside it one or more other agencies financed commercially.'<sup>5</sup>

Selwyn Lloyd was at pains in his minority report not to separate himself too sharply from his colleagues. He was 'substantially in agreement' with them, he said at the outset, 'on a considerable number of matters'.<sup>6</sup> Beveridge, too, he praised for 'the magnitude of his exertions and the thoroughness of his inquiries'.<sup>7</sup> Nor did he wish to take up a position of complete confrontation in relation to the BBC. 'That the time has come for a change is not a vote of censure on the BBC, but rather a recognition of the expansion accomplished and of the great possibilities ahead.'<sup>8</sup> Having attacked Reith's views, he was eulogistic about Haley whom he described as 'a public servant of outstanding distinction'.<sup>9</sup> Selwyn Lloyd's minority report ended as eloquently as Beveridge. 'Nothing that I have written in this Minority Report is meant to reflect adversely upon any individual. The evil lies in the system, the control by a monopoly of this great medium of expression. It involves the concentration

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 7, p. 203. He reiterated the point in para. 12, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 12, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 20-1, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 1, p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 2, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 16, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 22-3, p. 208.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 27, p. 210.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 26, p. 210.

of great power in the hands of a few men and women, and the tendency to create a uniform pattern of thought and culture. At a time when every other tendency is towards the concentration of power at the centre and a uniform society, this issue in broadcasting is of outstanding importance for the country.'<sup>1</sup>

This political statement was not an accurate diagnosis of Britain's society or culture in 1951. Very soon afterwards, indeed, many of the defenders of the BBC were, like J. B. Priestley, to see dangers both of concentration of power and of cultural uniformity in the rise of the commercial system itself—'Admass', as J. B. Priestley was to call it.<sup>2</sup> Yet Selwyn Lloyd's prognostications were suited to the time. The year 1951, the year of the Festival of Britain, marked the climax of the age of austerity and the shift to a new era of affluence. It was a crucial year also in British political history, with the Conservatives returning to power in October 1951 after six years in the wilderness.

In a Spring issue of the *National and English Review* Selwyn Lloyd took up the themes of his minority report in somewhat different language from that he had used in the Blue Book. The Beveridge Report was an admirable quarry, but it was too 'lengthy'. 'We are now at the parting of the ways and there are important decisions to be taken.' Broadcasting was too powerful an influence on life. 'A mistake can damn a politician or an artist.' Effective control of its power could only be achieved through competition, although the BBC could still act as a 'pacemaker'. VHF would permit diversification in relation to radio—a new system of local radio, indeed, unfettered by wavelength limitations—and television should 'develop in its own way and without restriction'. There should be 'commercial sponsorship under strict control'.

'The practical question', the article went on, 'is what is going to happen next.' Time was running out. A decision would have to be made by July. And 'I know', Selwyn Lloyd pointed out unequivocally, that 'there is a substantial body of opinion in the Conservative Party that supports my views and that they are not without support among the Socialists.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Priestley, *The English* (1974), pp. 239, 241-5, 247-8.

<sup>3</sup> *National and English Review*, May 1951.

## 5. The Aftermath

THE Beveridge Report was published on 13 January 1951 and submitted to Parliament on the same day. There was no great rush to buy it, although over 5,000 copies of the first print were sold in the first year, a larger number than the Ullswater Report had sold during the same period.<sup>1</sup> 'The Beveridge Report has not made the reverberating bang I knew it wouldn't' was Collie Knox's irreverent comment.<sup>2</sup> The main lines of public response were not clear. 'And now . . . Over to the Cabinet' seems to have been the most general attitude.<sup>3</sup>

First, however, the Report went 'over to Parliament'.<sup>4</sup> Six days after its publication, Sir Ian Fraser asked Morrison in the House of Commons whether he had any statement to make as to the Government's policy for the future of broadcasting. Morrison, who had written to Simon on 23 January asking for BBC views—'in instalments'—on the Report,<sup>5</sup> replied that any statement at that time would be 'premature'. He expressed appreciation of the work of Beveridge and his colleagues, but emphasized that adequate time should be left for 'arguing and debating the matter' both in Parliament and in public before any decisions were taken. 'We must remember that the existing Charter runs to the end of the year, and, therefore, there is time.'<sup>6</sup>

The sense of adequate, even plentiful, time was to remain strong throughout the year even when time was obviously beginning to run out. Already in January, however, a small informal working party of civil servants was at work behind the scenes: indeed, one day before Morrison's reply to Fraser, it had planned initially at its first meeting on 23 January to prepare the draft of a 'reasonably concise' Government White

<sup>1</sup> There had been a second print (1,500 copies) of the Ullswater Report of 1936 after the first print of 2,000 had been exhausted. The first print of Beveridge was 7,000. For a local comment on early sales, see *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 18 Jan. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 19 Jan. 1951: 'MPs to Debate Beveridge Report'.

<sup>5</sup> \*Morrison to Simon, 23 Jan. 1951. The first instalment of comments was sent on 5 Feb. 1951 (Farquharson to Pimlott).

<sup>6</sup> *Hinsard*, vol. 483, cols. 119-20, 24 Jan. 1951.

Paper by the end of February.<sup>1</sup> Morrison told Simon in his letter of 23 January that there was a 'target date', and Sir George Ismay of the Post Office said that he hoped that everything would be settled by the summer recess.<sup>2</sup>

The working party had met twice and was within four days of its planned final meeting when Morrison told a further parliamentary questioner on 22 February that 'folks outside the House' would want to think and talk about the Report, 'which they are doing'. 'I would ask', he went on, 'that we should not be pushed too hard about it just now, because we are not ready.'<sup>3</sup> Around this time Ismay was informing Haley that 'we are not making as rapid progress as we hoped' in finishing memoranda for ministers.<sup>4</sup>

One reason why there was less time than Morrison appeared to believe was that in January and February 1951 the party political situation was tense inside and outside Westminster. Following the general election of February 1950, which had disturbed the timetable of meetings of the Beveridge Committee, the Labour Government had a majority of only five over all the other parties in the House of Commons. In consequence, therefore, it was forced to avoid new controversial measures, with the exception of the most controversial of all, the nationalization of iron and steel. Since future organization of broadcasting seemed to be controversial, if only to a relatively few people, there was doubt both at Westminster and outside as to whether the Labour Government had adequate authority to deal with the issue. Although there were 'hear hears' when Morrison told the House in January 1951 that the Government would have to come to 'some provisional conclusion', Sir Ian Fraser asked at once whether it would not be desirable, in view of the uncertainty as to whether the Govern-

<sup>1</sup> \*Ismay to Haley, 30 Jan. 1951, asking for an early expression of BBC views on particular issues, e.g. trade unionization and the public representation service.

<sup>2</sup> \*Morrison to Simon, 23 Jan. 1951: 'While we must not be unduly hurried, there is a good deal of ground to be covered and it is important that we should proceed with the minimum of delay.' Simon replied (24 Jan. 1951), 'This is indeed quick work.' The BBC later produced a 'Diary of Everts' which included the Ismay statement.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 484, col. 1466, 22 Feb. 1951. See also *ibid.*, col. 2082, 28 Feb. 1951. Smithers stated on this last occasion that 'the BBC is already riddled with Communism' (see also above, p. 306).

<sup>4</sup> \*Ismay to Haley, 17 Feb. 1951.



ment represented public opinion, to take 'the view of Parliament and to that extent the nation'. The language of Morrison's reply was hardly reassuring. 'No government can possibly live without taking into account the view of Parliament and the view of the nation. Governments live with Parliament; we cannot live a day longer than Parliament lets us.'<sup>1</sup>

It soon became apparent, although the Beveridge Report itself did not capture much public interest for long, that any Labour legislation about broadcasting would be contentious. Very dangerously for the BBC, the Beveridge Report—in these circumstances—began to be thought of increasingly as only one piece of relevant background material on broadcasting policy and not as a set of positive recommendations to be accepted or rejected. Indeed, while the Governors were laboriously going through the recommendations one by one, some of them seemed even to the BBC—and were—'academic' from the start, while others were completely outpaced by events. A number of matters which Beveridge had discussed briefly or not at all assumed new importance—including possible cuts in BBC expenditure on its overseas services and a moratorium on capital expenditure in television—while matters on which he and his colleagues had concentrated, and on which the BBC was forced in consequence to concentrate, were not treated as the main issues by interested politicians on either side. Thus, the Government and the BBC were forced to wrestle with complex questions concerning the Regions,<sup>2</sup> one of Beveridge's main issues, at a time when a few left-wing Labour backbenchers, discontented with official leadership, were preoccupied with foreign policy and how the BBC projected it, and an active group of Conservative backbenchers, some of them distant from the leadership, were preoccupied with commercial television.

Beveridge himself was naturally increasingly unhappy about the way things went in 1951, feeling that he had devoted a vast amount of time and labour to a comprehensive study which no one was treating as definitive.<sup>3</sup> The Government, however,

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 483, cols. 119–20, 24 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 401–3.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (1953), p. 356. 'No word was said to me and no question was asked of me about the Report by either of the two Governments that considered it in turn.'

made no effort to consult him further either about the contents of his Report or about the timetable for its implementation. It should be added that his personality and political stance stood in the way. There seems little doubt that the Labour Government and its Conservative successor would have been obliged to pay far more attention to the conclusions of a Committee presided over by Lord Radcliffe, whose opinions were always sought formally and informally by all governments, than to those of a Beveridge Committee.<sup>1</sup>

The Conservative moves were particularly significant given the uneasy political situation. In February 1951 an official ten-member Conservative Broadcasting Policy Committee was set up at the invitation of Sir Winston Churchill through Patrick Buchan-Hepburn (later Lord Hailes), the Chief Whip, and his office. The Committee had Ralph Assheton (later Lord Clitheroe) as chairman with ten members serving alongside him, some of them senior ex-ministers. A few were already active supporters of commercial television and had been engaged in informal discussions about it. None had been involved in the protests against enforced cuts in the BBC's overseas broadcasting budget or in the local fights for better television coverage.

Selwyn Lloyd had signed the Beveridge Minority Report, which he regarded as a clear exposition of the case for reform, and privately found the main Report somewhat dull. John Rodgers, two years younger, was a Director of J. Walter Thompson, the international advertising company which had helped to prepare evidence against the BBC monopoly during the Beveridge inquiry. Ian Orr-Ewing, ex-BBC and very knowledgeable about it, was then employed by A. C. Cossor Ltd., the radio and electronics firm which manufactured and sold sets. Brendan Bracken as an ex-Minister of Information had BBC experience of a different sort, as to a lesser extent had Duncan Sandys: like Rodgers, he had served on the BBC's General Advisory Council. Another ex-Minister of Information was Geoffrey Lloyd; although he had filled this post for only a short time in the war-time caretaker government, he had actually been a Governor of the BBC from 1946 to 1949. He and Bracken were alone in wanting to support the existing

<sup>1</sup> See Mary Stocks, *My Commonplace Book* (1970), pp. 173-4; *Still More Commonplace* (1973), pp. 56, 61.

system more or less as it stood, for most of the rest wished for changes of some kind, major or minor, to be made. Lord Dunglass (now Lord Home of the Hirsell) had expressed no views on the subject and did not do so for some time, but J. D. Profumo, a lively and ambitious young Conservative, had formed definite views in favour of competition while working as head of the Radio and Television Section of the Conservative Party's Central Office. He had already discussed political tactics with Orr-Ewing. The tenth member, Kenneth Pickthorn, an MP since 1945, was one of the many academics who did not admire Beveridge; indeed, as a fellow academic, he had sneered at him when the early parliamentary questions were put after the publication of the Report.<sup>1</sup> He was also 'against the monopoly'. The Secretary of the Committee was Peter Goldman from the Conservative Central Office.

It is not clear to what extent the Labour Government was aware of the activities of this important Committee, which summoned witnesses, including Haley, and looked at several alternative models of future broadcasting. Haley, who was informed that the Committee would like to see him as early as 28 February 1951, was told by Assheton that the Committee had to clear up a number of points 'before we can form a view'. The Committee had, in fact, held its first meeting that day—Lord Dunglass, Selwyn Lloyd, and Orr-Ewing were not present—and had set out to prepare a report by the middle of May at the latest. A wide variety of views had been expressed, with Lloyd praising the BBC and Rodgers openly supporting 'sponsored programmes', at the opposite ends of the spectrum. Assheton himself did not believe that 'monopoly of any kind' should be 'tolerated', but he was not himself thinking at this stage of more than limited changes. There was general agreement that, contrary to the recommendation of the Beveridge Committee, any new BBC Charter should be granted, as in the past, for a strictly limited period.

Before Haley was seen on 13 March the Committee had met a second time eight days earlier, when everyone was present except Lord Dunglass and Duncan Sandys. By then each member had expressed his own individual views, with Orr-Ewing and Selwyn Lloyd arguing strongly in favour of the separation

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 483, col. 119, 24 Jan. 1951.

of sound and television. Goldman noted that there 'appeared to be at least some measure of agreement' on the need for some 'competition and diversity' and the launching of 'one alternative commercial concern'. Yet no one wished to destroy the BBC as 'a non-profit-making public service' and there was no strong support for taking away television from it.

When Haley met the Committee, he dwelt on 'the need to maintain standards of culture and responsibility', but he also touched on practical points, like a two- to three-year delay in the supply of camera equipment for television studios and the eventual switch to FM. His assessment of the delay period was challenged, but the case he presented for continuing to link sound and television within the BBC was strong enough to enlist support. He added that television should enjoy greater autonomy than it had done hitherto and that the appointment of a Director would ensure this.<sup>1</sup> The real reason for curbs on development, he insisted, had been finance: 'Restriction on capital expenditure is the villain of the piece.'

The Conservative Committee had a draft report available for it at the end of May, but meanwhile there had been critical changes on the Government's side. The main problem confronting ministers was neither 'competition' nor the finance of television development, but 'regionalism', an old issue which had always played an important part in the history of British broadcasting. Beveridge had spent much time considering it, and his suggestion that devolution should be carried further and that separate Broadcasting Commissions should be set up for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, which was quickly dismissed at the very first meeting of the Conservative Broadcasting Committee, had to be carefully considered in Whitehall.<sup>2</sup> There were difficult and protracted negotiations after the Report was published about the best way of choosing the members of such Commissions, who would have power to 'initiate and decide' on a Home Service programme for their Regions. The Report had stated simply that the Government should appoint the members, 'say five', and, not surprisingly, the Civil Service Working Party found future procedures extremely difficult to sort out.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 268, and below, p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> See Cmd. 8116 (1951), paras. 533-7, Recommendation 2.

A meeting had to be arranged to discuss the topic with the Lord President and the Postmaster-General on 7 March, by which time the Conservative Broadcasting Committee had begun to range over far wider issues; and in terms of Ismay's own timetable, this was already one week after the date when the publication of a White Paper had been originally planned. Such discussions on 'regionalism' continued for many weeks and dominated the future official timetable for considering the whole Report.

According to Simon, the failure of the Government to act swiftly on the Report as a whole could be explained 'exclusively' on this ground—the question of 'national Regions'. Had speedy agreement been reached on this single issue, he argued, the Labour Government would 'undoubtedly' have granted the BBC a new Charter broadly on the same lines as the old Charter. It was one single Beveridge recommendation, therefore, which 'prevented the BBC having the old, admirable and outstandingly successful Charter renewed for another ten years'.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation is far too simple. There was certainly another factor—health—holding back decision-making in 1951. Attlee himself was incapacitated for five weeks during the late winter and could not resume his duties as Prime Minister until 30 April, and on 9 March Ernest Bevin, chronically ill, was forced to resign from the Foreign Office. Nonetheless, when Morrison had been moved over to take his place, it was a sick Bevin who was given charge of BBC matters as Lord Privy Seal. His first task was to reconsider decisions already made, and it was he who told the House on 22 March, a week after the fourth meeting of the Civil Service Working Party—which was still hard at work—that the Government had not yet come to a 'final decision'. It hoped, he went on, to arrange a 'free debate' in Parliament so that 'everybody's opinion' could be heard.

'Everybody's opinion' would certainly not include those of Assheton's Committee, yet the one voice raised in question of what Bevin said on behalf of the Government on 21 March was scarcely a radical one. 'Can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that it is the Government's policy not to sacrifice

<sup>1</sup> Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within* (1953), p. 41.

sound broadcasting to the development of television?' a persistent West Country member demanded. And Bevin's reply was disarming. 'I am not an expert on either, but one thing I have learned among a lot of others is that the fellow who is not an expert usually makes the best settlement.'<sup>1</sup> He repeated that he wished to have a 'free debate' on broadcasting policy and to 'hear everybody's opinion'. And, although on the very day that he took part in this exchange the first draft of a Government White Paper on broadcasting policy was being forwarded to ministers and interested government departments, Bevin told the House that he was still not sure whether the best way to ensure such a free debate was to issue an official White Paper which would necessarily set all the terms of parliamentary discussion.

Already Bevin had been seeking to ascertain the considered views of the BBC which had begun to be formulated, as Simon and Haley had promised, in January 1951 immediately following the publication of the Report.<sup>2</sup> The process had started with Farquharson collecting examples of 'inaccurate statements' in the Report and had continued with the assembling of 'expressions of opinion' by the Governors. The Governors began by congratulating Haley and his staff on the fact that the general tenor of the Report was so favourable to the BBC, but they felt it desirable to take the various recommendations in the Report one by one for detailed examination. Some recommendations they did not comment upon, like the proposals that there should be 'distinctive news bulletins in Regions', more news items about Scotland and Wales in the national bulletins, and a wider distribution and better advertisement of the *BBC Quarterly*.<sup>3</sup> Other recommendations they endorsed, like the proposal that separate accounts should be kept for sound and television,<sup>4</sup> or cautiously shelved, like the recommendation

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 485, col. 2577, 22 March 1951. The substance of Bevin's reply was reiterated by the Postmaster-General, Ness Edwards, on 18 April (*Hansard*, vol. 486, col. 169) and by the Leader of the House on 26 April (*ibid.*, vol. 487, col. 575).

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 19, 22 Jan. 1951; Note by the Governors, Jan. 1951; Cmd. 8116, Recommendation 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendation 100, p. 200. No comment was made either on Recommendation 64, that there should be 'a Hyde Park' of the air.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendation 78, p. 198.

that the BBC should develop local (as distinct from Regional) broadcasting.<sup>1</sup>

The Governors' main complaints concerned the proposed new Regional set-up. Naturally Lindsay Wellington as Controller of the Home Service objected strongly to the proposed National Commissions on the ground that they would inevitably weaken the range and appeal of the existing Home Service: 'increased autonomy for Regions can only be obtained at the price of lessening the range and availability of the London Programmes.'<sup>2</sup> Yet there were complaints from the Regions also. The North Regional Controller 'detested the idea of having to work to or with any Body [in Manchester rather than in Broadcasting House] calculated to undermine the established autonomy of the BBC', while the Northern Ireland Advisory Council courageously stressed the danger in their situation of 'parochialism'.<sup>3</sup> Given such backing, Haley and the Governors told Ismay informally on 5 February that National Commissions would inevitably lead to 'an eventual disintegration of the most distinctive strand in our pattern of Broadcasting, the BBC Home Service'.<sup>4</sup>

Various BBC memoranda on the subject were subsequently produced for the Government, including one by Simon himself, who objected both to any increase in the number of hours devoted to 'local' broadcasting and to 'lowering of national

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendation 33, p. 194, with Governors' comment: 'It seems doubtful whether in suggesting that the BBC might be required by Charter to develop local broadcasting, the Committee had in mind the possibility of the BBC itself directly controlling the programmes of local stations. This possibility would in any case call for the most careful consideration . . . the Board will no doubt be strongly in favour of first priority being given to bringing the established national and Regional services within range of listeners in all parts of the country.'

<sup>2</sup> \*L. Wellington, 'Beveridge Report Recommendations', 31 Jan. 1951; Wellington to Nicolls, 31 Jan. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*D. Stephenson to Nicolls, 1 Feb. 1951; North Regional Advisory Council, *Minutes*, 8 Feb. 1951. A letter on similar lines was written by Sir H. G. H. Mulholland, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Council, to Stewart, the Controller, on 17 Feb. 1951. The Scottish Advisory Council on 13 Feb. 1951 (*Minutes*) said that the existing degree of autonomy was adequate and urged that 'no programme alterations should take place which would prevent listeners in Scotland hearing the Basic Home Service as at present included in the Scottish programmes'. The West Regional Advisory Council took up the same position at its meeting of 17 April 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Ismay, 5 Feb. 1951.

standards',<sup>1</sup> and another by Haley who argued that National Commissions would by their nature be continually forced to pull against the Corporation.<sup>2</sup> Finally a printed memorandum on Regional organization was produced even before Bevin had taken over.<sup>3</sup> 'The strength, efficiency, and purpose which the Beveridge Committee acknowledge to exist in British broadcasting,' the Board insisted, 'are due to the essential unity of the service.' It followed that 'in any Region where the existing Home Service is developed along the lines of having more local programmes, the listeners in the Region must to that extent be deprived of the opportunity of having the basic Home Service.' National Commissions would 'create very serious problems in the form of divided loyalties on the part of Regional staff; a confused chain of authority; the regulation of political broadcasting . . . and the likelihood of increasing demands on finance and manpower. And should differences of view arise between the Corporation and the Commissions on some of these matters the position of the Regional Controller would become most difficult.' The Governors concluded that instead of National Commissions, 'Executive Advisory Committees' (a curious hybrid constitutional expression) should be formed and that there should be Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Ireland Governors on the main Board.

The members of the General Advisory Council had all been sent a copy of the Beveridge Report—and a summary of it<sup>4</sup>—and at a special meeting on 23 February 1951 a rather wider range of questions arising out of the Report was discussed. Six main items were on the agenda—the proposed Broadcasting Commissions; television for public showing; local stations; staff and trade unions; the 'Director of Public Representation'; and the idea of a quinquennial review. The Council supported the line taken by the Governors on Regional organization and, with experience of the continuing argument about the future of the BBC, challenged the desirability of a quinquennial review. 'It is of the utmost moment', the summary paper started, 'to ask whether the recurrence of such an opportunity every five years

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Simon, 20 Feb. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*'The Regional Commissions', 15 Feb. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Comments on the Recommendations of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, Feb. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*'The Beveridge Committee Report', 1 Feb. 1951.



will in fact allay the demands there are always bound to be from the many interests who wish to upset the BBC's constitution or whether it will be a five-yearly stimulus to them.'

Having collected the BBC's comments—and those of government departments<sup>1</sup>—the Government began to draft a White Paper which was circulated to ministers on 22 March and sent to the BBC for further comment on 31 March. The draft emphasized that all alternatives to a BBC monopoly were 'open to substantial objections', but made it clear, however, that the government did not agree with Beveridge that the BBC's Charter should be renewed indefinitely: instead, it suggested that renewal should be for fifteen years, with governments being free to initiate either one or two reviews in between. 'The Charter', it went on, 'should provide in a suitable form for the bringing of the work of the Corporation under constant and effective review from outside the Corporation.' There should be no Minister for Broadcasting 'as such', it added, but the Postmaster-General would retain his powers and the Prime Minister would from time to time designate a senior minister to deal with policy.

The Governors, all part-time, should no longer have to sign the Whitley Document, and they were to be as 'representative' as possible. Three of them—following Beveridge—were to be government-appointed 'National Governors', who in addition to serving on the main Board would be Chairmen of the three National Broadcasting Councils for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These Councils would be expected to meet at frequent intervals and would be consulted not only on programme policy but also on 'all major questions of policy and administration affecting their areas, including finance and capital development'.

The licensing system of financing broadcasting should be retained, the draft went on, and, without any promises, it was recognized that because of the need to implement 'large programmes of broadcasting development' there was 'a case' for

<sup>1</sup> There was additional argument for 'no-change'. Thus, the Foreign Office (22 Feb. 1951) strongly opposed, as did the BBC, the Beveridge proposal that there should be an Overseas Services Standing Committee. It talked of 'the excellent working relationship . . . with the BBC' and opposed any change. This comment was prepared, of course, while Bevin was still Foreign Secretary (\*Note by Farquharson, 16 March 1951).

the BBC keeping 100 per cent of licence revenue during the following five years as it had done since 1 April 1950. The borrowing powers of the Corporation, however, should continue to be limited. (Haley himself favoured such limitation.) The grant-in-aid system should be retained to cover the costs of overseas broadcasting, but care should be taken to ensure that no indirect financial benefit should accrue to home broadcasting from such grants. As far as television was concerned, the Television Advisory Committee was to be retained (to deal also with VHF sound broadcasting), but the Government had not yet reached any 'definite conclusion' on 'the problem of television for public showing'.

It would be for the BBC itself to decide whether bringing the work of the Corporation under 'constant and effective review' meant introducing a Public Representation Service, as Beveridge had suggested; while as far as political broadcasting was concerned, the Government said that it did not accept any of Beveridge's proposals as they stood but proposed to discuss them with both the Opposition and the BBC. The BBC's Governors had been unhappy about the Beveridge proposal that the Corporation should take 'ultimate responsibility' if the political parties failed to agree on the allotment of political broadcasts: one of the 'great spurs' to agreement, they claimed, had always been that there was 'no final arbiter laid down'.<sup>1</sup> The Government obviously took careful account of this. On other matters the Government's comments were as highly selective as some of the comments in the Report itself. Adult education was given a whole paragraph, and the BBC's contribution to adult education 'in the wider sense' was praised as warmly as the Beveridge Committee had praised it. Nothing was said, however, about entertainment or sport.

The draft of this White Paper showed that a great deal of progress had been made in reaching decisions about the future, and a second draft was ready by 9 April. Ernest Bevin's death on 14 April, however, inevitably held back further action. It was, indeed, something of a death-blow to the Government as a whole, robbing it of the last vestiges of its vitality. When three days later a group of ministers, which included Aneurin Bevan

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 632 ff..

who was to resign on 22 April, met to consider the draft, only the Postmaster-General, Ness Edwards, was even half-familiar with the detailed prehistory of the subject. On the same day as this meeting, 17 April, it was Ness Edwards who told Simon and Haley what was happening to the White Paper. He emphasized that while it would be desirable for the House to debate the proposed White Paper at an early date, it could not possibly do so before Whitsuntide.

Within the House itself the wheel seemed to have moved full circle when on 1 May the Labour backbencher Geoffrey Cooper raised the case of BBC controls over its staff and the 'passing of money'—the issues had never been quite dead—and asked again for an independent inquiry to be held into the affairs of the Corporation.<sup>1</sup> Later in the month, on 29 May, he at the same time broadened his charges (bringing in the BBC's attitudes to trade unions which the Governors were still considering) and narrowed them to the case of a single individual, G. E. Baker, who dramatized 'a long battle against victimisation', 'an epic fight by . . . individual[s] against the oppressive system and autocratic control of the BBC Management'.<sup>2</sup> The Assistant Postmaster-General, Charles Hobson, complained of Cooper's 'overstatement and generalisation' and urged that if there were to be any further discussions of the points he had raised, 'the full House' should deal with 'the relationship between the BBC and the Government'.<sup>3</sup>

On the same day, Attlee announced that he had asked Patrick Gordon Walker, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, to become the Minister responsible for the co-ordination of information policy both at home and overseas, including all major questions of policy connected with broadcasting. This was a very important, if belated, step. Unlike Bevin, Gordon Walker knew the BBC well and had served in its war-time

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 487, cols. 998–9, 1 May 1951. By then two meetings had taken place between the BBC and the TUC and a further meeting was planned for 24 July (\*Note of 12 July 1951, 'The BBC and the Trade Unions').

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 488, cols. 174–84, 29 May 1951. He attacked the nationalized industries as a whole as 'soulless monsters' in their dealings with their employees.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 179–84, 29 May 1951. Hobson quoted Cmd. 6852, 'which was debated at full length in the House and approved by all parties'. 'The Government's control over the Corporation is in the last resort absolute; they have, in peacetime, allowed the Corporation complete independence in the day-to-day management of its business.'

German Service.<sup>1</sup> He was known, too, to be well disposed towards the Corporation. Yet once again factors which had nothing to do with broadcasting influenced the timetable. During the hectic spring of 1951, when the Labour Government was advertising its differences to the world, Gordon Walker was preoccupied with many other difficult matters, including the controversial case of Seretse Khama in Southern Africa. His attention was always divided when he turned to broadcasting policy.

In preparing a further draft of the White Paper, this time to be the final one, Gordon Walker inevitably had one eye on Scotland and Wales and the other on Africa. So also had some of his colleagues. Thus, when Gordon Walker saw the Secretary of State for the Colonies, James Griffiths, on 7 June they discussed not Africa, but the Broadcasting Council for Wales. A day later Gordon Walker also saw the Secretary of State for Scotland, who had no African commitments, and on 18 June he held a meeting attended by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Gaitskell, and the Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, as well as the Postmaster-General, to discuss the final draft of the new White Paper. The draft was sent to the Stationery Office on 22 June and was discussed by the Cabinet on 5 July. The White Paper as amended was duly published at last—Cmd. 8291—on 10 July, nearly seven months after the Beveridge Report.

In the final draft of the White Paper the Government retained the clause in the Charter prohibiting advertising without the written consent of the Postmaster-General, while the Beveridge recommendation that the Government should reserve power to license other agencies than the BBC to operate local broadcasting stations after consultation with the BBC was shelved. The Postmaster-General already had the power, the White Paper pointed out, to license other authorities, and whether or not he chose to do so would depend on the success of VHF broadcasting. In general, the Paper accepted unconditionally the case for public service monopoly.

The most contentious suggestions in it were, first, that the majority of the members of the three new National Broadcast-

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), p. 431. After the war, he had also served as the Chairman of the Labour Party's Public Information Committee.

ing Commissions should be 'drawn from the county councils and the major urban authorities' and, second, that the Treasury should withhold for three years 15 per cent of net licence revenue for general purposes.

The first suggestion alarmed those people, including back-bench Labour MPs, who feared the rise of Scottish and (particularly on this occasion) Welsh nationalism—there were strong objections at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party on 16 July<sup>1</sup>—and at the same time angered the BBC. The Governors had protested firmly, long before the White Paper appeared and there was any parliamentary debate on the subject, that any such system would 'introduce for the first time into the constitution of British broadcasting a system of control based upon a membership qualified by political election in the first instance'.<sup>2</sup> The 'pressure', they said, would 'inevitably be in favour of separatism, e.g. in favour of local party political broadcasts, local criteria of the balance of the parties, and so on'.<sup>3</sup> The second proposal in White Paper Cmd. 8291 was calculated to maximize BBC opposition: it involved BBC borrowing on a large and unprecedented scale, which Haley did not like, in order to carry forward its programme for full national television coverage. There seemed to be no sense either of financial realism or of social urgency in this obtuse recommendation which clearly emanated straight from the Treasury with no modification.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that during the summer of 1951 there were even some Conservatives who did not share the views of those of their highly vocal colleagues who were pressing so urgently for the expansion of a television service. The balance of payments position was particularly difficult during the third quarter of the year, and large rounds of wage increases had stimulated home demand beyond what

<sup>1</sup> For Labour opposition, see *The Times*, 20 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Simon to Morrison, 2 March 1951. \*The point was reiterated in a printed memorandum of July 1951, 'Observations by the Governors of the BBC on the Government's Memorandum'. Objections by the Governors to the idea of National Commissions had been submitted on 2 Feb. 1951, when an alternative idea—that of bodies 'something akin to the existing BBC Schools Broadcasting Councils'—had been proposed. The printed recommendation was sent to Ismay on 16 July 1951 by Haley.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Aide-Mémoire for Mr. Gordon Walker on the Regional Commissions', 13 June 1951.

orthodox economists thought was a dangerous point. The Festival of Britain seemed an expensive irrelevance. The most vociferous parliamentary critic of heavy investment in television was Peter Thorneycroft, who had argued powerfully in February 1951 that the BBC's 'vast' capital investment programme of £4,500,000 in television was designed to pander to 'a very narrow, specialised market' and would cut the country's capacity to produce 'radar equipment and the like' necessary for defence purposes.<sup>1</sup> He had taken up the point again in March, pressing for a 'drastic reduction' in BBC investment,<sup>2</sup> and Churchill himself was to explain during the election campaign of the autumn that it would take 'all our national strength to stop the downhill slide and get us back on the level'.

By then, however, an odd pattern of trend and counter-trend was apparent. The Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising, in its comments on the Beveridge Report, suggested that commercial broadcasting should start as soon as possible.<sup>3</sup> Yet before the House debated the White Paper on 19 July there had actually been further cuts in the capital investment programme.<sup>4</sup> Other factors influenced the debate. There had been discussions, initiated by Sir Ian Fraser, for example, on the Football League's ban on the broadcasting of commentaries on their matches, during which the Assistant Postmaster-General had somewhat surprisingly stressed how limited 'the powers of the Postmaster-General' really were 'vis-à-vis the BBC'.<sup>5</sup> They were largely technical, he said, and did not affect 'content and fees'. MPs who did not like the BBC—for whatever reason—were all on the alert. In this second debate, indeed, there was an element of rehearsal for the battles to come, with the Labour MP, Colonel Wigg, blaming the BBC as well as the Football League for the *impasse*. What was wrong with 'football broadcasts', he said, was that the

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 484, cols. 510 ff., 14 Feb. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 485, col. 1525, 14 March 1951. Other members, including G. Lambert, who had questioned Bevin on reception in the West (see above, p. 102), argued vociferously that 'it would be better to spend more money on improving sound broadcasting rather than television'.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Note on the Report of the Broadcasting Committee', March 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 489, cols. 2289-92, 4 July 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 490, cols. 1013-20, 16 July 1951; see also below, pp. 856 n.4, 875.

commentators were 'far too superior, too BBC'. 'The BBC need to show greater interest in broadcasting on Saturday afternoon.'<sup>1</sup> Such an ignorant comment, coming from the Labour Party side, was hardly a good portent for the BBC on the eve of a debate on the future of broadcasting.

While the Government had been battling to produce its White Paper, the Conservative Party's Policy Committee, set up in February, had been holding regular meetings and producing a report of its own for Winston Churchill and the 1922 Committee. It, too, had run into difficulties, however, and produced its report in June—later than had been intended. Not all of its conclusions were unanimous—'we are not in agreement on all points', the Report began—but there was a majority view that in a free society people should be able to decide for themselves what they want to hear and see. A future Conservative Government should not regard the question of monopoly as in any sense closed, and any new BBC Charter should be limited to ten years. There should be a trial period, at least, for a new competitive service, although, because of 'current financial difficulties', members disagreed as to when that trial period should start.

Several members, led by Orr-Ewing, expressed the view that television had been held back by the BBC, but a majority felt that 'broadcasting and television are part of the same medium' and that the BBC should continue to operate 'in the more modern method'. An element of competition might well be introduced into both television and sound broadcasting, however, the former through advertising, the latter through the separate development of VHF. 'The Director-General [of the BBC] should be more beholden to the Board of Governors'—this was an addition to the first draft—and an independent Commission should take over from the Post Office the task of allotting frequencies and should exercise supervision over programmes and advertising. The Committee laid stress on the need for speedy action to change the financial and regulatory framework of broadcasting before the BBC acquired new wavelengths or extended its television coverage.

There was division in the Conservative Shadow Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1019–20, 16 July 1951. For sports broadcasts, see below, pp. 838 ff.

about these proposals, which were put to the 1922 Committee on the eve of the parliamentary debate on the White Paper.<sup>1</sup> With fifty Conservative MPs present at the 1922 Committee meeting, there was strong support for 'sponsoring' from Orr-Ewing and John Rodgers, and only one of the speakers, Brendan Bracken, is said to have declared himself in favour of the continuation of the BBC's monopoly as it then existed.<sup>2</sup> Bracken knew, however, that he had considerable support in the Cabinet itself, and this became evident when W. S. Morrison (later Speaker of the House and never a partisan of commercial broadcasting) was given the task by the Opposition leadership of replying to the Government in the debate on the White Paper in the House of Commons. Meanwhile, five 'outsiders'—Lord Brabazon of Tara, Lord Horder, Edward Hulton, Sir Gerald Kelly, and Compton Mackenzie—had told Orr-Ewing that they believed that it was urgently necessary to break the BBC's monopoly. 'We urge you to use your influence in assisting to thrash this matter out in an impartial manner when the time comes.'<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to compare the two parliamentary debates on broadcasting in the summer of 1951—the first, which opened in the Commons on 19 July (after Patrick Gordon Walker had taken part in an unrelated prelude at Question Time on Seretse and Tshekedi Khama), and the second, which opened six days later in the Lords. The first debate lasted six hours and the second five. If there was a greater weight of experience in the Lords, there was greater pressure for a change of system in the Commons, although in the course of the Lords debate a disgruntled Beveridge lent his support to critics of the BBC as well as to critics of the Government.

There were many signs already in the summer of 1951 of behind-the-scenes 'Establishment' diplomacy and of 'anti-Establishment' manoeuvres in both Houses. Thus, while W. S. Morrison preferred the existing BBC system as far as Regional broadcasting was concerned to that suggested by the Government and Beveridge, Wigg raised the question of the 'constitutional propriety' of the Governors of the BBC issuing a

<sup>1</sup> Lord Woolton, *Memoirs* (1959), p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Orr-Ewing, 4 July 1951.



statement on Regionalization—this was published on 16 July—before the debate. The Welsh members argued with each other about representation, and there were questions from non-Ulstermen about how policy issues really were settled in Northern Ireland. Selwyn Lloyd found himself in agreement with almost every word said about Regionalization by the Labour MP for Bridgeton, J. Carmichael.

The terms of the Government's motion in the Commons left ample scope for very wide-ranging debate. They stated simply, even barely, 'that this House takes note of the *Memorandum on the Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949* (Cmd. 8291)'.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, MPs took up every conceivable issue, with Wedgwood Benn questioning both Selwyn Lloyd and Lady Megan Lloyd George as to what 'the power of money' might do to a broadcasting system and with Selwyn Lloyd objecting to compulsory 'moral uplift'. Just as wide a range of preoccupations was displayed in the Lords, with the Earl of Listowel referring to the Lords' discussions not as a debate but as 'a symposium'. 'Our minds are not only open,' he said, 'but anxious for the considered opinion of all who are qualified to judge.'<sup>2</sup>

Gordon Walker, who introduced the Commons debate, sent notes of his speech to Haley 'for information' before he delivered it.<sup>3</sup> He paid tribute to the BBC and to Beveridge and drew attention to 'the very high degree of unanimity' in the Committee. Even Selwyn Lloyd, he remarked, had felt able to say 'that over a great part of the field he was in agreement with his colleagues on the Committee'. The Report had shown also, he suggested, that there was 'a substantial weight of public opinion' in favour of continuing the present system. Public service remained a strong motive, and Selwyn Lloyd's minority views sprang 'rather from an objection to monopoly than from a positive desire for commercial or sponsored

<sup>1</sup> The House had been told the terms of the motion in July 1951 in reply to a question by Eden.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, col. 1233, 25 July 1951.

<sup>3</sup> These were sent on 17 July 1951 and acknowledged on 18 July. The Board of Governors had a special meeting on 11 July 1951 to discuss the White Paper. It was after this meeting that they issued their public statement attacking the proposed arrangements for the National Broadcasting Councils. A copy of this was sent to and acknowledged by Woolton and others on 20 July 1951.

programmes'. Only commercial interests looking for new opportunities of making money were strong advocates of change.

Gordon Walker was interrupted frequently when he insisted that it would be possible for television development to be pursued vigorously by the BBC. Although the BBC plans of 1949 had had to be modified in March 1951 'because of the need for national economy', by mid-1952 thirty-six million people (as compared with the current figure of eighteen million) would be within reach of television. Such speedy development depended on centralization. 'It would greatly hold up the extension if we attempted to regionalise television.' Indeed, in relation to broadcasting as a whole, 'it would be fatally wrong that our broadcasting should be put in the hands of people to whom it would be a by-product of their other major interests'. Television should continue to be included within 'the single Charter and the single Corporation'.<sup>1</sup>

In a much shorter speech in reply, W. S. Morrison warned the House of Commons that many of his friends could not 'regard the issue of monopoly as finally closed one way or another'. There were signs of a change in 'the climate of opinion'. The public were daily becoming 'a little more irritable and suspicious' about all monopolies, including coal, transport, and electricity. Yet Morrison went on to praise the BBC, extolling both the 'great body of service' it had rendered to the national cause during the war and the change of policies it had carried through since the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> Given the speed of technical advance—'we cannot foresee the developments in this strange wireless world which may be made in the next decade'—the BBC's Charter should not be renewed for as long a period as fifteen years. Yet broadcasting in Britain should 'always remain an instrument, as it was intended to be, of service and benefit to the public'.

There were no clarion calls in Morrison's speech, although he strongly criticized the Government's proposals concerning the control of Regional broadcasting and the Government's plan to deduct 15 per cent of the BBC's revenue from licences.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 490, cols. 1423-61, 19 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1451-63. 'Before the war, there was a tendency to regard the BBC as rather Olympian and avuncular, though I doubt whether avuncular is the right adjective in gender.'

The middle passages of his speech were far more favourable to the claims of the BBC than those in any other speech in the Commons debate. Nonetheless, he pointed out—and it was more than a gesture to Conservative backbenchers who wished fundamentally to change the system—that if the BBC were to be denied adequate public funds, ‘either the quality of the service must seriously decline or money must be found from some other source’. This, he concluded, would involve the introduction of ‘sponsored programmes of advertising, either on sound or television or both’.

Three ex-members of the Beveridge Committee spoke during the course of the debate—Lady Megan Lloyd George, Joseph Reeves, and Selwyn Lloyd. The first and third said that they were prepared to accept radio advertising (as in the *Radio Times*) though they disliked ‘the American system’. The air, said Lady Megan, was ‘a great medium of advertisement’, going further, perhaps, than Selwyn Lloyd who said that ‘certainly I should not have individual items interrupted by advertisements’. ‘I think the advertising system could probably make a very good code of rules for itself,’ Selwyn Lloyd maintained, ‘although I quite agree that it would have to be supervised.’<sup>1</sup> He added, unlike Lady Megan, that he disliked the Government’s suggestions about Regional broadcasting, but he had nothing to say about the proposal to deduct 15 per cent—which Reeves roundly criticized—except to call it a ‘side issue’.

Lady Megan said that she was convinced, ‘after hearing the evidence’, that ‘the continuation of the monopoly was the only possible verdict’, but Selwyn Lloyd again demurred, once more protesting sharply against Reith’s statements about ‘the brute force of monopoly’. ‘It is quite intolerable’, he went on, ‘that any people, whatever their motives, should sit down and say, “That is what is good for the British people to listen to over the air”.’ The only criticism he had of the post-Reithian

<sup>1</sup> For Lady Megan, see *ibid.*, col. 1469; for Selwyn Lloyd, see *ibid.*, col. 1498. Selwyn Lloyd stated (*ibid.*, col. 1495) that he did not wish ‘to divert the debate into an attack or a defence of American broadcasting’. He wished to retain ‘a public service system’ of a kind which did not exist on the other side of the Atlantic. John Rodgers, who supported Selwyn Lloyd, suggested ‘some form of Broadcasting Commission . . . to regulate the use of studios, codes of conduct and, if we have sponsoring, the conditions under which advertising is accepted or not’ (*ibid.*, col. 1532).

BBC was that 'in the higher quarters, the tendency is slightly one of self-righteousness . . . to regard any criticism as being a sort of sin against the Ark of the Covenant'.<sup>1</sup> Selwyn Lloyd also put in a good word for local broadcasting.

Some Conservative backbench MPs went much further in their criticisms of the BBC, but they concentrated on different themes. Thus Captain Waterhouse, a former Assistant Postmaster-General, who described competition as 'the life blood of initiative and progress', spoke almost exclusively of sound broadcasting and defended the 15 per cent cuts, while Orr-Ewing, after accusing the BBC of holding back VHF sound broadcasting, spent considerable time on failures to provide 'an alternative television programme from existing resources'. Local and regional television stations needed to be created with revenue derived from sponsored programmes if the licence fee was not to be raised to £5 or more. Wedgwood Benn described Orr-Ewing's speech as 'brilliant',<sup>2</sup> although, according to *Hansard*, Gordon Walker frequently 'indicated dissent' as it was being delivered.

Wedgwood Benn, an ex-BBC employee, who said that he strongly disliked centralization, did not believe that there would be a greater variety of programmes under a commercial system. The best solution for the broadcasting problems of the country would be four separate Boards of Management dealing with sound, VHF, overseas broadcasting, and television. 'We should not try to go on doing what we are doing at the moment, and that is to run a highly complicated four-way broadcasting set-up through the same technique of a single directive in the way that it was devised twenty-seven years ago.'<sup>3</sup> Orr-Ewing had referred to Sir Frederick Ogilvie's critique of monopoly in broadcasting as 'the negation of freedom, no matter how efficiently it is run or how wise and kindly the board or the committees in charge of it'.<sup>4</sup> Wedgwood Benn by contrast left history on one side and mentioned Haley. 'Although I take this opportunity of paying tribute to the brilliance of Sir William

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1490, 1493.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1622. Ness Edwards, the Postmaster-General, winding up for the Government, described Wedgwood Benn's speech as 'thoughtful' (*ibid.*, col. 1532).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1530.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1515. Orr-Ewing was quoting the letter by Ogilvie to *The Times*, 26 June 1946. See above, p. 43.

Haley in that post [Director-General], it does not alter the fact that the position of Director-General has a paralysing effect on the flexibility of the organisation.<sup>1</sup>

Ness Edwards, the Postmaster-General, did not contribute to the nuances of the debate, but he referred to the operations of Gresham's Law in broadcasting with as much fervour as Reith or Haley. He would hate to have to listen at the end of an opera, he said, to 'Drink Jones's Beer' or 'Beer is good for you' or 'Don't drink Jones's Beer'. 'Once we opened the door to commercial broadcasting, we should have to hedge it round, we should have to tie it up, we should have to make all sorts of discriminatory rules until, in the long run, we should either have a public outcry about the nature of broadcasting or, what would be worse, a public outcry about the nature of the advertising.'<sup>2</sup> For all his eloquence on this subject, Ness Edwards fell foul of the BBC by saying that they had been 'plugging their case' on the air. 'The publicity given by the BBC to the Governors' statement', Simon told him, 'was slightly less than that given to the *Report* itself and the White Paper.'<sup>3</sup>

During the Lords debate on 25 July, Lord Samuel picked up the Postmaster-General's point and attacked 'the commercialisation of twentieth-century civilisation'. Because 'our cathedrals and abbeys are in need of large sums of money to preserve them . . . no one would suggest . . . [surrounding them with] hoardings for commercial advertisements.'<sup>4</sup>

On this high moral plane Samuel chose Beethoven symphonies instead of opera for his musical example. He did not want too many official reviews of the constitution and work of the BBC because they caused too much 'upheaval', and he declared that he would be quite prepared to accept an interval of fifteen years before the next review. Lord Woolton, however, who opened the debate for the Opposition, dwelt on the point that 'the technology of electro-physics is in a state of constant change, and it may be that well within the period of fifteen years most revolutionary scientific changes will take place'.<sup>5</sup>

Woolton's philosophy was diametrically opposed to that of

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 490, col. 1524, 19 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1538.

<sup>3</sup> Simon to Ness Edwards, 26 July 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, col. 1229, 25 July 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1218.

Samuel. As a self-made businessman, who had turned to politics late in life, Woolton could not share Samuel's fear of 'commercialisation'. In fact, through his busy years of managerial responsibility in the retail trade, he had made a point of offering people what they wanted: this, indeed, was the secret of his success, along with great advertising flair. As *the* war-time Minister of Food and later as Minister in charge of 'reconstruction' he was aware, as he said in his speech, of the BBC's contribution to the war effort—more indeed than W. S. Morrison, who made the same point, had been. Yet he disliked all public or private monopolies and the philosophy of 'The Only Way' for which the BBC seemed to stand.<sup>1</sup> Woolton had not consulted the Conservative Leader in the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury, before making his speech and he chose deliberately to say little about commercial themes. He dwelt mainly, instead, on the political danger of the BBC becoming either a tool of the Government or an organization infiltrated by Communists, thus appealing to MPs who had no interests in television 'lobbying'. His few remarks on commercial television were tucked away in the middle of his speech, as the critical clause on commercial television eventually was to be in the new Conservative Government's White Paper. 'Within a reasonable distance of time from now,' he urged, 'some station should be either leased or created that would permit of sponsored programmes.'<sup>2</sup>

Simon refrained from speaking in the debate, as did other BBC Governors, possibly on the advice of the Leader of the House, who, after consulting other party leaders, had suggested in carefully chosen words that while they could and should

<sup>1</sup> For his war-time role in relation to broadcasting, see above, p. 34. For his philosophy as a businessman, see his introduction to A. Briggs, *Friends of the People* (1956), pp. 7-12, where he writes of 'democratising luxury'.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, cols. 1213-24, 25 July 1951. Turning to Lord Simon, but insisting that he was dealing with hypothetical chairmen of the BBC only, Woolton warned that 'the Chairman might, either from an excess of political impartiality or, because of his personal sympathies, allow Communist influence to get a hold of the place. . . . We are in some danger of hiding our heads in the sand regarding the danger of Communist infiltration into our public and our educational services.' (Ibid., col. 1216.) He suggested that the Chairman should be chosen by a small committee headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He had urged, however, that the BBC should get the full 100 per cent of the licence revenue, on the grounds that he did not like 'taxation round the corner'.

decide for themselves whether to speak or not, there was a certain 'undesirability' in peers taking part in debates which concerned public boards of which they were members. A few months earlier Morrison had advised Simon that 'participation of Board members in Parliamentary debates about the work of their Boards is inconsistent with the present conception of the relationship between Parliament and the Boards'.<sup>1</sup> Beveridge, however, had his full say, first interrupting the Earl of Listowel, who had stated that the Beveridge Report suggested that 'the BBC should carry on substantially unchanged', and second making a speech, which itself was often interrupted, denying that the proposals in the Government's White Paper were his baby at all, 'though they are dressed up in some ways to look like it'.<sup>2</sup>

Beveridge rounded on his own Liberal Leader, Lord Samuel, almost as much as on the BBC, making light of Samuel's 'grisly pictures of what would happen if we plastered the walls with advertisements of gin'. He disagreed sharply with those people—mentioning by name Lord Halifax, who had spoken just before him in the debate—who claimed that 'one must be very careful not to disturb the BBC about their work' and he immediately qualified a compliment to Reith with a T. H. Huxley quotation: 'The devoted leaders of revolution in one generation can and do become tyrants in the next generation.' Above all, he distinguished his own position from that of the Government on many minor issues and on one major one. 'My Committee were profoundly impressed by the dangers and disadvantages of monopoly. . . . The Government, to judge by their White Paper, are not conscious of any dangers at all.'<sup>3</sup>

Halifax, who was Chairman of the BBC's General Advisory Council, 'saw vistas of lurid and probably salacious programmes being forced on commercial television in order to provide a desirable medium for the advertising interests';<sup>4</sup> and it was he

<sup>1</sup> \*Morrison to Simon, 12 Oct. 1950. Lord Addison had given similar advice to Simon on 30 June 1950. Nonetheless, seven Governors of the BBC had spoken in Parliament during the tenure of their office—Clarendon, Gainford, Bridgerman, Fraser, Nicolson, Simon, and Clydesmuir (Note of 15 Aug. 1950 in reply to Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 20 July 1950).

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, cols. 1235-6, 1251, 25 July 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1251-61.

<sup>4</sup> The Earl of Birkenhead, *Hatifax* (1965), pp. 555-6.

who used the Gresham's Law argument, which for all its economic origin, had far more to do with culture than with economics. He had nothing in common with Beveridge and little in common with most young Conservatives. The speaker who immediately followed Beveridge in the debate, however, was a greater force to be reckoned with. Radcliffe would have been chairman of the Broadcasting Committee had he not been appointed to another post, and his praise of the Beveridge Report was as carefully qualified as any of Beveridge's statements about the BBC. While Radcliffe considered that it contained 'many admirable and wise things about the problem of broadcasting', he nonetheless believed that the actual system of broadcasting as established had worked so well that it should be 'allowed to advance on the same lines, without any material alterations . . . which theory might recommend but which . . . would produce substantial divergencies in practice'.<sup>1</sup> Radcliffe did not once mention either commercial television or advertising. He took it for granted that the Governors were the best guarantors of 'true democratic control' of the Corporation and that the Charter should be renewed for a reasonable period. 'Quinquennial assassination by review' was one of his best phrases, and his final sentence was, 'Let nothing hang over them [the BBC], such as taking their pulse and their temperature, which will upset the whole organisation for years at a time.'<sup>2</sup>

Radcliffe's was, in fact, the most conservative speech of the debate, and it was warmly acclaimed by Lord Brand who followed. Nonetheless, it, too, was out of tune with the views of a large section of the Conservative Party.<sup>3</sup> So, also, was Lord Brand's own contribution. He had been corresponding with Haley,<sup>4</sup> and when he attacked commercial advertising at greater length than Samuel and with some warmth, he clashed at once with Woolton on the subject.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, col. 1262, 25 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1267-8.

<sup>3</sup> \*It was praised as a 'brilliant speech' by Lord Piercy, the Labour peer, who told Haley that the reason he did not speak was that his point of view had been put so well (Piercy to Haley, 26 July 1951).

<sup>4</sup> \*Lord Brand to Haley, 19 July 1951, dealing, however, not with commercial television but with the Governors, Regional Broadcasting Councils, and Beveridge's idea of 'a Public Representation Service' which he thought 'quite wrong'. 'As to finance I should imagine you have a strong case for 100%.'



Elgin, the only member of the Beveridge Committee besides Beveridge in the Lords, was far more friendly to the Corporation than his Chairman. So, too, was the Lord Chancellor, Jowitt, who summed up for the Government. 'The White Paper', he explained, 'was a very small document of a page or two compared with the massive Report which Lord Beveridge has put before us, and he really must not mind if, in the White Paper, we do not thoroughly canvass all the subjects.'<sup>1</sup> Jowitt was unconvincing—even muddled—both on the Government's decision to withhold 15 per cent and on the pattern of Regional organization proposed in the White Paper, but he promised that the Government would take into account the debates in both Houses before deciding on 'the wise and proper course to take'. On sponsoring, he said that the Government was 'definitely against it in any form', and he warmly supported Brand's attack on commercial broadcasting and his use of the word 'poisonous' to describe it. 'It is not often that I hear the noble Lord using language of that kind, but I should like humbly to identify myself with his outlook on the matter.'<sup>2</sup>

This was the issue which was to dominate the next great debate, and by then a Conservative Government was in power. Once the Lords debate was over—one peer prematurely called it 'a good day for the BBC'<sup>3</sup>—Haley went to see Gordon Walker to try to ensure that uncertainties would be resolved and the BBC's Charter renewed as quickly as possible. Gordon Walker was very sympathetic, but the Cabinet had no time to act before the adjournment of Parliament and the decision to hold a general election was announced by Attlee on 19 September. Meanwhile, the 15 per cent cut had stood despite the criticism of it—Gaitskell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had mixed feelings about the BBC, was 'a little sad that the only support for it in the Lords' had come from the two Labour leaders, Listowel and Jowitt<sup>4</sup>—and the controversial suggestions about the choice of the Regional Broadcasting Commissions had not been modified despite the exposure of their

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, col. 1286, 25 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1284.

<sup>3</sup> \*Piercy to Haley, 26 July 1951: 'One was only sorry that Reith did not speak—I suppose because of the lateness of the hour.'

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*: 'He seemed to think that he was genuinely entitled to the 15 per cent.' For Gaitskell's views on external broadcasting, see below, pp. 521-3.

'defects' in both Houses. The Governors repeated to the new Conservative Postmaster-General, Earl De La Warr, who took over in October 1951, that to give the Councils 'any executive authority would lead to confused responsibilities, divided allegiances on the part of the staff, and the weakening of broadcasting'.<sup>1</sup>

Already, however, the Beveridge Report had finally ceased to count in anyone's calculations. The great Enquiry had settled precisely nothing, and the advent of the Conservative Government changed all the political equations. The new kind of political pressures had been hinted at by Woolton when in winding up the Lords debate he proclaimed himself 'rather a progressive sort of person' who belonged to 'a progressive Party',<sup>2</sup> and it was he more than any other single person who felt he could take credit for the victory through his 'overhaul' of the political machine. Television was already beginning to matter in many people's minds, and a cartoon by Giles in the *Daily Express* showed an old lady explaining the interference on her television set: 'It's that beastly Socialist next door—left his car engine running to spoil Mr. Eden's TV election speech.'<sup>3</sup>

The best of the contemporary words to quote last in this chapter relate not to television but to Beveridge. Lord Chorley, a Labour peer, complained in the Lords debate about Beveridge's 'carping', and said: 'He rather tends with his Reports to adopt the attitude of a father to his favourite child. He fails to see that there can possibly be any blemishes on them.'<sup>4</sup> By November 1951 not even the beauty spots on the Report remained.

<sup>1</sup> \*Simon to Lord De La Warr, 5 Nov. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, col. 1295, 25 July 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in J. Montgomery, *The Fifties* (1965), pp. 41-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 172, col. 1278, 25 July 1951.

## V

### ALL CHANGE?

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We in television are as lucky as the man in the automobile industry in its adolescence or the pioneers of the films or the radio. It's all new and there's so much yet to be discovered.

NORMAN COLLINS, speaking at the National Radio Exhibition,  
September 1950

We need experience in TV to-day.

VICTOR SMYTHE, in the *Evening Chronicle* (Manchester),  
19 October 1950

The BBC has asserted its belief that both forms of broadcasting will endure. . . . In its view both Sound and Television will prove to be complementary within one all-embracing system of broadcasting. This is embodied in the idea of the merged or married service. It is now necessary to give earnest consideration to the way the two partners will approach the marriage, to their relative statures at the time when it comes about, and to how they will settle down thereafter.

SIR WILLIAM HALEY, to the Board of Governors,  
27 June 1951

It is inevitable that television will become the primary service and sound radio the secondary one.

J. W. RIDGEWAY, Chairman of the Radio Industry Council,  
October 1950



## 1. Exits and Entrances

THE new Parliament which met in the autumn of 1951 was a different Parliament in composition and mood from that which had preceded it. A slight but uniform political swing throughout the country ensured a Conservative gain of twenty-three seats and a Labour loss of twenty. The total Labour poll, the largest in its history, was still higher than the Conservative poll, but the swing was sufficient to restore Churchill to power. 'Restoration' was the wrong term, however, for even Churchill himself, now seventy-seven years old, felt that he had come 'to know the nation better' and 'what must be done to retain power'.<sup>1</sup> The favourite adjective of 1951—associated, of course, not with Churchill but with the Festival of Britain—was 'contemporary', and there was much talk of 'transformation', not least in Conservative circles.

Some of the most interesting members of the new Parliament were young men still to make their mark. The new intake of 1950 had been particularly impressive—with names like Iain Macleod, Edward Heath, Enoch Powell, and Reginald Maudling. Indeed, out of 93 new Conservative MPs in 1950, 24 were to go on to become Privy Councillors and 41 Ministers.<sup>2</sup> Edward Boyle has referred to the 'instinctive libertarianism' of many of them and has singled out Macleod, in particular, as 'a strong supporter of the introduction of commercial television'<sup>3</sup> even though he was never in the vanguard of the campaign.

In these circumstances, very different from those of 1945, politics for once had a direct effect on the structures of broadcasting, a far bigger effect than the deliberations of any official committee. The new Government found it difficult, if not impossible, to carry out the sweeping changes some of its

<sup>1</sup> Lord Moran, *Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival* (1968 edn.), p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> See N. Fisher, *Iain Macleod* (1953), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. 12, 18. *Design for Freedom* had been the title of a 1947 Conservative Manifesto, which can be seen in retrospect as a key document linking the attitudes of 1945 with those of later generations.

younger supporters wanted, if only because of difficult economic circumstances, and it soon became apparent that there could be no 'quick dash' for economic freedom. Nor could the nationalized structures of 1945 to 1951 be dismantled easily. The prospects of securing change seemed easiest in relation to broadcasting, and to television in particular, although even here there were economic restraints. There was also widespread enthusiasm for breaking up 'monopoly', which tended to be associated both with nationalization and 'somebody else knowing best'.

There were at least a hundred Conservative 'libertarians' on the back benches who were sufficiently enthusiastic to make it difficult for Conservatives like Halifax, who stood by 'tradition' and for 'responsibility for others', to continue to exercise authority or to command support for institutions which did. The fact that the weight of age and experience was on 'the side of the BBC' inside the Conservative Party itself in 1951 was in many ways a disadvantage, not least in relation to winning over the large numbers of Conservative MPs who were undecided or indifferent. Harman Grisewood, then in charge of the Third Programme before becoming Director of the Spoken Word in May 1952, was quickly convinced after talking to Conservative MPs not associated with commercial television in any way that there was 'a strong feeling against hierarchy in any form, whether social or academic' and 'a weariness' with what was felt to be 'the BBC's self-righteousness and arrogance'. It was Christopher Hollis and Angus Maude who persuaded him that the desire to break the monopoly of the BBC was not just 'a *putsch* by commercially minded members who wanted to use broadcasting to make money'.<sup>1</sup>

Within the Cabinet, however, there was little pressure for change. Few Ministers were deeply interested in television in any way, and Eden, Churchill's heir apparent, who was, did not favour commercial development. Nor did Butler at the Treasury or Harry Crookshank, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House, a man of great integrity. It was important at this particular juncture, however, that Churchill, even if he was never impressed by claims for commercial television ('Why do we need this peep-show?'), had never been greatly impressed

<sup>1</sup> H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (1968), p. 175.

either by the BBC as a great institution. Moreover, he was old enough to leave things which interested him least to others, notably Lord Woolton whom he appointed as his Lord President of the Council. Woolton's chief publicity officer in the Conservative Party Central Office since 1949, Mark Chapman-Walker, was a close ally and a main protagonist of change in the broadcasting system. So, too, was Captain L. D. Gammans, Churchill's new Assistant Postmaster-General. Woolton was a man to whom they would always turn for advice.

The timing of change, nonetheless, was cautious. A step-by-step transition began with an announcement in the House of Lords on 28 November 1951 by the new Postmaster-General, Earl De La Warr—Ralph Assheton, Woolton's predecessor as Chairman of the Conservative Party, might have been chosen for this post had he wished—that there would be a six-month extension of the BBC's Charter until 30 June 1952. Meanwhile, a Committee of Ministers, chaired by Lord Salisbury, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords, was appointed to look into the longer-term future. The Committee included Woolton, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, the Home Secretary, and James Stuart, Secretary of State for Scotland.

The existence of this Committee offered a strictly limited breathing space to the BBC, whose Director-General and Governors were aware that strong, if not so far massive, forces were beginning to deploy themselves against the monopoly. Yet the eventual outcome of the Committee's work—a new White Paper (Cmd. 8550), which appeared on 15 May 1952—was to mark the first break in 'traditional' broadcasting policy. One small clause in the White Paper—the *Annual Register* called it a 'Trojan Horse' clause, even though the horse was a little one<sup>1</sup>—stated quietly, giving no dates, that 'in the expanding field of television provision should be made to permit some element of competition when the calls on capital resources at present needed for purposes of greater national importance make this feasible'. The language was guarded. Yet in retrospect it is this clause which stands out in the White Paper rather than the initial tribute in it to the BBC which, it said, had 'become such an important part of the structure of our national life'.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1952, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8550 (1952), para. 7.

renewal in June 1952 of the BBC's Charter and Licence for a further ten years was accompanied, therefore, with a direct if indeterminate threat to the monopoly.

The clause did not satisfy those people who were most active in condemning 'the monopoly'. A few of them had been working together since November 1951 in a small but lively and influential Conservative parliamentary committee, the 'Broadcasting Study Group', which produced a report of its own, 'The Future of British Broadcasting', in February 1952, three months before the official White Paper. This group was soon to establish the reputation of having carried through from the back benches of the Conservative Party 'perhaps the most remarkable exhibition of political lobbying that this country has ever seen'.<sup>1</sup> Yet in February 1952 there was much still to accomplish. Its Report urged that 'British broadcasting should no longer be developed solely by a single Corporation' and that there should be competitive broadcasting both in sound and vision. A new British Radio Communications Commission, consisting of five full-time members of high standing, should manage the new system.<sup>2</sup>

Before turning to the relationship between this committee, and the Committee of Ministers who had drafted the White Paper, which did not go anywhere near so far, it is necessary to relate the politics of the subject to its underlying economics. The 'Broadcasting Study Group' was involved in matters which inevitably had business implications, and the same newspaper which referred in 1953 to its 'remarkable exhibition of political lobbying' went on to add that there had never been any 'disguise of the commercial interests involved'. It has always been possible since (as it was at the time) to explain the end of the BBC's monopoly—the greatest of all the 'exits' described in this volume—simply as the consequence of the actions of a self-interested 'pressure group'.<sup>3</sup> It is an explanation which will not do. There was little direct self-interest in the Broadcasting Study Group, nor was it the only group at work at that time which favoured change. Very few of its members were to establish a stake in commercial television or its related interests. Nor

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 10 Oct. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Future of British Broadcasting', Feb. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See above and H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group* (1961), ch. IV.



were most of those who eventually acquired the biggest stake in commercial television founder members of any 'pressure group' in 1952: some of them, including the future money-makers, were bitterly opposed to commercial television until it eventually became a *fait accompli* in 1954. Even in the short run the 'pressure groups' grew in size and influence only *after* the Government had made its first vague and limited but historically critical concession to competition in its White Paper of 1952.

Nonetheless, it would be absurd to leave money out. The Broadcasting Study Group believed in commercial freedom, including freedom to invest in television, and went further in stating the case for it than the Government was to do either then or later. There was an enormous amount of money to be made both out of more rapid television development through the sale of sets and out of commercially managed television through the sale of 'time', even if only the most shrewd and active among the forecasters realized it. Moreover, economic change was to prove just as significant as political change in the reshaping of public attitudes. In 1951 real national income fell, and in 1952 Butler, a Chancellor of the Exchequer who believed in 'expansion', was still wrestling with 'austerity', reducing travel allowances and cutting imports and subsidies. The Government as a whole was obliged to refer to economics in its White Paper in the key phrase, 'when the calls on capital resources at present needed for purposes of greater national importance make this feasible'.<sup>1</sup>

The approach to economics of the Broadcasting Study Group was less inhibited. Its members were thinking in terms less of defined national needs set out in ordered priorities (although they could not completely ignore these) than of expanding market opportunities for the sale of consumer goods. And they had time—or at least politicians' time—on their side. The full employment of the post-war years, 'fuller' than Beveridge had assumed possible and owing as little to him as the future pattern of broadcasting was to do, continued after 1951 when total production continued to rise. By 1953 Butler himself

<sup>1</sup> See Lord Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (1971), esp. ch. VIII. He does not mention commercial television once. See also J. C. R. Dow, *The Management of the British Economy, 1945-60* (1965), pp. 70 ff.

could feel that the economy was strong enough for him to be able to offer the public what Churchill, his most famous predecessor, would have called 'rare and refreshing fruit'.<sup>1</sup>

New economic growth engendered social change—particularly through a raising of the level of people's aspirations to acquire durable consumer goods and to make a fuller use of their leisure. And social change became associated, in consequence, between 1951 and 1955, the year of the next general election, with the Conservative Party's policy of 'setting the people free'. All the indicators were to confirm the correlations. Thus, while in 1951 there were two-and-a-quarter million cars, one million television sets, and five million telephones in use in the country, by 1955 there were three-and-a-quarter million cars, over five million television sets, and nearly six million telephones. It was still too soon even in 1955 to talk of 'an age of affluence',<sup>2</sup> but there was no more talk of 'austerity'—or even of what Ernest Bevin had called 'poverty of desire'—after meat rationing, the last item of food rationing, was finally abolished in July 1954.

Advertising expenditure was rising at an average rate of 13 per cent each year during the early 1950s, with 1951 itself the year not only of the Beveridge Report and of the Festival of Britain but of the first post-war branding of detergents and their commercial marketing. The *Annual Register* chose the wrong language when it described television in that year as being like 'a careerist making his mark, but not yet grown to office or honour',<sup>3</sup> for, as the story unfolded, 'office' and 'honour' were to prove less significant than 'pleasure' and 'profit'.

There was an initial risk, of course, as there usually is in new commercial development, but very quickly businessmen who had originally held back from supporting commercial television could contemplate as a matter of routine (in a way that Collins never would have done) an appeal not to a 'mass audience' but to a 'mass market'. There was one crucial factor

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 164. See also p. 173 for a speech of 10 July 1954 in which he referred to 'the march to freedom'.

<sup>2</sup> See V. Bogdanor and R. Skidelsky (eds.), *Age of Affluence, 1951-1964* (1970). J. K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* was published in 1958 and Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* appeared in 1956.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register*, 1952, p. 398.

in Britain, however, which complicated any calculations. Because politicians as well as businessmen were involved from the start in determining the shape of broadcasting, there were bound to be 'controls' and 'compromises'. The language of 'service' and 'responsibility' was always as relevant in the debate—and the legislation—as the language of 'liberty' and 'enterprise'. Neither the friends nor the critics of the BBC could have talked of modern mass communication, as the German, Gunther Anders did, as 'a sum of solo preferences'.<sup>1</sup>

Economic and sociological analysis can be carried further, however, within the specifically British context. Much of the social change during this period was 'home-centred'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, at the general election of 1951, which changed the political equations, the Conservatives had put their trust in a large-scale programme of housing, treating it under Harold Macmillan—symbol-maker and symbol of the later phases of 'the age of affluence'—as the top national priority: 195,000 new houses were completed in 1951, 240,000 in 1952, and over 300,000, Macmillan's target, in 1953 and 1954. Every new house came to want its aerial and its new television set; and want, not need, was what counted. People in 'old houses', even the most dilapidated, wanted sets also; and there, just because of bad housing conditions, it could be argued that there was real need. In both cases 'the Day the Television Came' stood out as a watershed in family history, and buying the first set and paying for the first licence might stand out also as the first large-scale, long-term family expenditure after the house itself.

Early in 1951, when the Government was debating future broadcasting structures, combined sound and television licences were selling at the rate of 40,000 a month, nearly twice as fast as in 1950, and by October, the month of the opening of the Holme Moss transmitter, they were selling at the rate of more than a million a year. The increase had in no way been checked by the doubling of the purchase tax in the April budget. Such 'trends' received much attention. So, too, increasingly, did the likely impact of the media on each other—that, for

<sup>1</sup> A modified version of 'The Phantom World of TV' by Gunther Anders, which introduced this phrase, was published in *Dissent*, vol. 3, 1956, pp. 14, 24.

<sup>2</sup> See H. Hopkins, *The New Look* (1963), ch. 26, 'Housewives' Choice'. Cf. Raymond Williams, *Communications* (1962), pp. 63 ff.

example, of television on the Press and the cinema.<sup>1</sup> Why was it necessary, it was now being asked, for 'the Common Man' to leave home to see entertainment when 'with the aid of his car, the HP, his wife's magazines,<sup>2</sup> and his do-it-yourself kit' he could build 'an only slightly less colourful—and much more satisfying—world for himself at home'?<sup>3</sup>

In so far as 'the consumer society' was still associated during the early 1950s with the United States—like 'admass' or 'popular culture'—there was to be an anti-American element in the British struggle against the advent of commercial television.<sup>4</sup> It was expressed crudely on occasion—sometimes with political undertones—but usually with the proviso that not everything in the United States was as 'bad' as American television was. The supporters of commercial competition in the Conservative party did not mind this. Neither did the advertising agencies or the film and theatre agencies which dealt in American and transatlantic stars and programmes. Simon might find it 'specially sad' to compare American acceptance of low standards in television with 'American enthusiasm for higher education'—the latter reflected, he went on, in 'immense . . . indeed, unparalleled sums of money . . . spent on its high schools and universities'<sup>5</sup>—but J. D. Profumo was more interested in the relationship between television and American politics, and was reported as saying in September 1952 that he was about to visit the United States both to study Eisenhower's campaign techniques and 'to explore ways in which sponsored television might be brought to Britain'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 14 ff. H. E. Browning and A. A. Sorrell, 'Cinemas and Cinema-going in Great Britain' in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A (1954) and J. Spraos, *The Decline of the Cinema* (1962). By 1956 weekly attendance, still high, was down to twenty-one million. The sharpest decline was to come after 1956.

<sup>2</sup> For a Hoggartian judgement on the heyday of the women's magazine, see R. Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957): they smoothed the way 'not merely from class to class but from one form of society to another' (pp. 179, 201).

<sup>3</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> For the American argument on 'mass communication' of the 1940s and early 1950s, see *inter alia* the useful collection of readings edited by B. Rosenberg and D. M. White, *Mass Culture* (1957), and for a (minority) point of view then current, D. Macdonald, *Against the American Grain* (1963). Cf. G. Seldes, *The Great Audience* (1951).

<sup>5</sup> Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within* (1953), p. 250.

<sup>6</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, 12 Sept. 1952.

One surviving member of the Ullswater Committee of 1934, Lord Elton, an opponent of commercial television, tried to keep the balance. There was a good deal to learn from American methods in television, he argued, although 'the worst features of American programmes are worse than the worst of our own, and that is saying a good deal'. The Conservative Home Secretary believed that the British could and would avoid the worst in the United States because, reflecting a common sentiment, 'we are a much more mature and sophisticated people'.<sup>1</sup>

Profumo, who was to become a Minister in November 1952, was the first chairman of the Conservative Broadcasting Study Group which had eleven members, four of whom (Profumo himself, Orr-Ewing, Pickthorn, and Rodgers) had served previously on Assheton's Committee, and a new secretary, Anthony Fell, who was a colleague of C. O. Stanley in Pye Radio. The other members included Captain L. P. S. Orr, who had gone out of his way to praise the BBC during the July 1951 debates—and had been singled out by the BBC's Northern Ireland Controller for doing so<sup>2</sup>—Sir Wavell Wakefield, Major Niall Macpherson, Brigadier Frank Medlicott, and Brigadier T. H. Clarke. Pickthorn was prominent from the start in urging pithily that the Committee should not 'over-state its faith in the BBC' and should begin and end its case on the basis that 'monopoly in the emission of ideas and sentiments is not defensible'.

This was a very different kind of committee in composition, outlook, and tactics from that chaired by Assheton earlier in 1951, and when five days before Christmas it entertained De La Warr to dinner, it urged him to press the Government to make clear an intention to break up the system of monopoly broadcasting and to set up a 'permanent Broadcasting Commission, composed of independent people'. It influenced Cabinet discussions not only through the Party's 1922 Committee but through discussions with the Postmaster-General and his more vigorous and committed Assistant, Gammans. Its unanimity

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 176, cols. 1345-6, 22 May 1952. See *ibid.*, cols. 1415-16, 26 May 1952, for a reference by Lord Piercy to Barbara Ward. For Maxwell Fyfe, see *Hansard*, vol. 502, col. 221, 11 June 1952. Morrison took up this statement as 'anti-American', but himself quoted *Time*, 3 March 1952, as ammunition in his speech (*Hansard*, vol. 502, col. 248, 11 June 1952).

<sup>2</sup> \*Andrew Stewart to Haley, 24 July 1951. Orr had stressed the BBC's 'impartiality' and 'its value in this community'—i.e. Northern Ireland.

was an asset when so many Conservatives were in doubt; so, too, was its vitality. It was determined to succeed.

Contact was made with Gammans very early. Indeed, even before Halifax had assured Simon, after talking to Salisbury and De La Warr, that 'there was no need to be anxious',<sup>1</sup> Gammans was agreeing with Orr-Ewing that they should take 'two bites at the cherry' at once and suggest 'an autonomous TV service and later a TV Corporation'.<sup>2</sup> At Halifax's suggestion, the BBC prepared a note on 13 December 1951 dealing with the relationship between sound and vision and more specifically with sponsored television. 'To divorce the responsibility for television from that of sound broadcasting would be to create an unnatural schism. It would be to the detriment of both services.' And to introduce sponsoring of television either through the BBC itself or through a new competitor would 'vitiate' responsibility to Parliament. 'At present we have in this country a straightforward service of broadcasting that has gradually evolved and has grown in prestige and widened in purpose.' As for the argument that sponsored television would speed up television development, 'quicker television development has not so far been considered by the Government to be in the national interest. Both the construction of stations and the sale of sets are being deliberately slowed up in view of our economic difficulties. If the BBC cannot be allowed to develop television more quickly, how can it be proper for someone else to do so?'<sup>3</sup> This statement—by Haley—was a powerful one, and it is not surprising that at the meeting of the Conservative Broadcasting Study Group on 10 January 1952 Pickthorn suggested that the Group should collect press cuttings and other materials 'concerning Sir William Haley's recent activities in defence of the BBC monopoly'.

On 23 January 1952 the General Advisory Council of the BBC, presided over by Halifax, agreed unanimously that 'the BBC's responsibilities for the continued development of sound broadcasting and of television should remain unchanged and that there should be no sponsoring'. The view was also expressed

<sup>1</sup> \*Halifax to Simon, 7 Dec. 1951. He said that the Cabinet Committee would be reporting in about two months.

<sup>2</sup> Orr-Ewing, 'Note on a Conversation', 29 Nov. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley, Memorandum of 13 Dec. 1951, sent to Halifax on 13 Dec.; Halifax to Haley, 15 Dec. 1951; Halifax to Salisbury, 18 Dec. 1951.

—and Halifax communicated it at once to De La Warr—that ‘the matter should now be decided in principle for an appreciable time to come’. ‘It was thought,’ Halifax told De La Warr, ‘that the worse thing would be for a decision to be postponed by means of another short-term Charter merely because almost all grounds of expediency at present favoured the *status quo*.’<sup>1</sup>

The die was now cast, and in mid-February 1952 Salisbury invited Haley to meet his Committee of Ministers.<sup>2</sup> He and Lord Tedder, Vice-Chairman of the Governors, saw the Committee on 20 February, a very different encounter from that which he would have had with the Broadcasting Study Group. Before commercial television was mentioned there was a throwback to Beveridge and they were asked about regional broadcasting. It is interesting to note, indeed, that at the time the Conservative Government was preparing White Paper 8550 the Post Office, at least, was still preoccupied with sorting out the BBC’s attitudes to the Labour Government’s Cmd. 8291.<sup>3</sup> When the topic of ‘commercial broadcasting’ was reached Haley reiterated the points made in his memorandum to Halifax in December 1951, while Tedder concentrated on the likely lowering of standards. Meanwhile, the Conservative Broadcasting Study Group had prepared its paper on ‘The Future of Broadcasting’—the first draft was presented on 21 January—and future tactics were being discussed with Woolton. It was generally recognized that time would be needed to stir opinion in the Party and to carry the House, just as time would be needed to secure changes in national capital investment policy to facilitate the private development of television.

This was the first of a series of behind-the-scenes meetings, and when Salisbury met the 1922 Committee on 28 February

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Halifax, 25 Jan. 1952; Halifax to Haley, 26 Jan. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Salisbury to Haley, 13 Feb. 1952. Simon had told De La Warr on 11 Feb. that he had ‘the greatest confidence in the presentation of the BBC case by the Director-General’, and that he did not wish to meet the Committee himself. He suggested, however, that Lord Tedder, ‘who has a good deal of experience of American as well as of British Broadcasting’, might also attend. Simon invited De La Warr to dine with him on 25 Feb. and De La Warr accepted.

<sup>3</sup> \*There was a protracted BBC correspondence with the Post Office, in particular, about staff representation, with a long BBC Memorandum being submitted on 25 February. The issue was raised by the Lord Privy Seal at the meeting on 20 February.

1952, eight days after seeing Haley and Tedder—Woolton was also present—he concentrated on economic arguments. The progress of television had not been slowed by the monopoly, he said, but by lack of capital, and it would not be possible to provide competition whilst scarce resources were needed for rearmament and exports.

The meeting was not an easy one, for neither Salisbury nor Woolton stopped at that point. Salisbury said that it did not appear to him that there was any desire in the country to break the monopoly, that the Conservative Party had no mandate, and that given that the issue was not a central one in politics it would not be wise to stir up the country on it. Woolton, by contrast, talked of the dangers of the Communist Party buying time on commercial television—he had talked, during the previous July, rather of the dangers of the Communist Party infiltrating the BBC monopoly—and of the Co-operative movement securing a stake in a new system at the expense of the small shopkeepers. None of these arguments convinced the Broadcasting Study Group. Indeed, while setting out to rebut them all it stayed on the attack. The Third Programme was criticized. So, too, was the BBC's 'use' of its General Advisory Council and its resolution to defend itself in Parliament and outside. At a meeting of the Radio Industries Club on 25 March 1952 Orr-Ewing argued that 'a single TV programme, imposed on the entire country from London, is too powerful a weapon of propaganda to leave lying about. It is a challenge to us to find some other method of providing decentralisation and the freedom of choice which is essential to democracy.' The same morning a letter from Lord Bessborough appeared in *The Times* insisting that the existing licence system could not finance the future of television.<sup>1</sup>

During the months before the Government's White Paper appeared on 15 May, Halifax wrote a letter to *The Times* describing 'disturbing rumours' that the Government was contemplating sponsored television programmes,<sup>2</sup> and Gammans told the House of Commons that an application had been made by an advertising agency on behalf of five large industrial companies for permission to provide sponsored programmes.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 25 March 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 March 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 498, col. 2721, 9 April 1952.



Much more important, however, was a change of ministers. When Salisbury moved to the Commonwealth Relations Office early in March 1952, Woolton replaced him as Minister in charge of broadcasting policy. Salisbury had not changed his views. When a backbencher who wished to see the BBC's monopoly broken wrote to him soon after the change, he was told firmly that 'the maintenance, so far as is possible, of national unity at a time of grave national danger' was not 'a matter of mere political expediency' and that it was not true that those Conservatives who wished to break the monopoly were alone in 'standing on broad grounds of principle'.<sup>1</sup>

Woolton's attitude, however, was quite different, as was that of other Conservatives prepared to make a change, and Mark Chapman-Walker admitted later that they would not have been able to get their 'programme' through without him.<sup>2</sup> Nor would he have been so effective had he not had powerful backing 'from below'. Enoch Powell, a member of the Conservative 'One Nation' group, was to refer later to 'Members who forced reluctant governments to denationalise steel and road transport, to break the BBC monopoly and to end the Supplies and Services Acts';<sup>3</sup> while Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, the Home Secretary, told Barnes that the Government had 'deliberately compromised' because of a threatened party split, with the trouble being caused 'not by the interested parties but by the high-principled anti-monopolists.'<sup>4</sup>

The BBC's immediate reaction to the White Paper was to concentrate not on the threat to monopoly contained within it but on its positive aspects. It recognized, after all, that hitherto it had been governmental limitations on capital investment which had held back both its own television and its own VHF sound broadcasting, and that it might now benefit from a change of policy. As Haley had told the General Advisory Council in January, 'television was necessarily fighting a battle with other national priorities. Television development was in fact an act of national policy. It stood precisely where successive governments had decided it should stand.'<sup>5</sup> Now it

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 17 March 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, p. 102. Other members of the 'One Nation' group were Heath, Macleod, Maude, and Rodgers.

<sup>4</sup> Barnes Papers, Note of an Interview, 18 May 1952.

<sup>5</sup> \*General Advisory Council, *Minutes*, 23 Jan. 1952.



12. 'You mark my words—once allow them to have sponsored television and before you know where you are we'll be having advertisements of some sort on the screen.' *Punch*, 4 June 1952

appeared that with the new White Paper there would be a speeding up of development. Halcy did not like the extension of borrowing powers granted to the BBC—up to £10 million for capital purposes—but he could not object to the 'go-ahead'. Nor could he complain about the statement that the BBC 'must clearly have first claim when labour and materials became available'.<sup>1</sup> Yet this was only one part of the financial picture. Conservatives had followed the Labour Government, doubtless on Treasury advice, in withholding 15 per cent of net licence revenue for another three years, and this remained an obvious grievance.

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8550 (1952), para. 11. For the economic background of investment control, which had also applied to cinema buildings, see Dow, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-3, 168-78, and 216-22.

There were two other new ideas in the White Paper which the BBC had to consider carefully. First, it was suggested that the BBC's Governors should in future be selected by a committee consisting of the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Lord Chief Justice, and the Lord President of the Court of Session. This, it was argued, would ensure their complete responsibility. Second, 'to meet the possibility that the Governors might wish at some time to have more than one Director-General (for example during the war there were Joint Directors-General)', the Charter was to be 'in terms which would permit this and, if the Governors so decide, one or more Assistant Directors-General . . .'.<sup>1</sup> This paragraph was unusual, though it appealed to history. The views in it did not long survive.

If the Conservative Broadcasting Study Group found many 'loopholes' in the new White Paper, Lord Reith from the sidelines had far more to thunder about. He believed—with very little reason—that if Haley and the Governors had planned 'a military campaign' to protect BBC interests they would have been able to outwit a vacillating Government. Where they had hesitated to tread he wished to move boldly: 'toadying to the Mother of Abominations', the House of Commons, would, he argued, produce no results.<sup>2</sup> For this reason he took the initiative in pressing for a debate on broadcasting policy in the House of Lords, where he felt that there were still peers who were prepared to resist business pressures and 'politicians' jiggery-pokery.<sup>3</sup> The debate was planned before the White Paper appeared, and when it appeared Reith described it as 'a clever but really contemptible sort of compromise. . . . *De jure* sponsored television, *de facto* none.'<sup>4</sup>

The two-day Lords' debate on 22 and 26 May 1952, in which twenty-nine peers took part, preceded by more than two weeks the debate in the House of Commons; and in retrospect it stands out as just as important a debate as it appeared at the time. During the course of it opinions hardened and personal

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8550 (1952), para. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Reith, *Diary*, 29 March, 25 April 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 April 1952. He was given a foretaste of what the White Paper would say in a talk with Max Nicholson in the Lord President's Office on 15 April 1952. On 28 January he had had an hour's talk with Salisbury at the other's request. When Woolton took over from Salisbury he was sure that the BBC's monopoly was in danger (*ibid.*, 20 April 1952).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1952.

differences were sharpened. Reith himself, who opened it, must have alienated many politicians with his grim account of the White Paper as the product of 'pullings and pushings behind the scenes, arguments and counter-arguments, drafts and redrafts'. His Carlylean contempt for politicians—he was suspicious even of Halifax—was never more apparent than in his twenty-eight-minute speech.<sup>1</sup> The Lord Chancellor, Lord Simonds, was equally counter-productive in alienating the non-politicians.<sup>2</sup> Quoting Milton, he made it plain that he disliked do-gooders—"Trust the People" was his motto—and he openly confessed that he had come to the conclusion that 'the time has now come for the [BBC] monopoly, like all other monopolies, to come to an end'.<sup>3</sup> Reith pressed for more information about likely timing—and got none—and Lord Hailsham undoubtedly disturbed many of his fellow-Conservatives by his passionate denunciation both of the White Paper and of the ignorance and inconsistency of the Government: he saw its intention as 'an attempt, possibly deliberate and possibly misguided, to kill the BBC in the end, to impose upon it sentence of death but to allow a stay of execution'. Nothing he was saying, he maintained, was out of line with what for twenty-five years had been thought of as Conservative policy: the Government was running the risk of antagonizing 'those very sections of opinion they ought to be wooing at the present time'.<sup>4</sup>

Lord Radcliffe once again was in tune with traditional Conservative feeling when he warned that the proposal for commercial television carried with it 'too dangerous a hazard for the Government to wish to go forward with it': he feared a 'cheapening of tone', with culture being 'put up for sale over any shop counter'.<sup>5</sup> But several younger peers—among them Lord Foley, the Earl of Buckinghamshire, and Lord Montagu of Beaulieu—made it clear that in their view Radcliffe was speaking for the past not for the future. 'We are the new

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 176, cols. 1293-1302, 22 May 1952. Reith attacked the proposals for National Commissions and also referred to Gresham's Law. He even quoted Kant. Samuel, who followed him, expressed himself in general agreement. So did Halifax.

<sup>2</sup> \*Piercy to Haley, 12 June 1952: 'I am afraid yesterday was a lamentable day.' Lord Hailey to Haley, 27 May 1952; the Bishop of Bristol to the Rev. F. H. House, 28 May 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 176, cols. 1443-52, 26 May 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1351-60, 22 May 1952. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1405-10, 26 May 1952.

generation of radio listeners,' Lord Montagu explained, 'and we are the people for whom this legislation is ultimately intended.'<sup>1</sup> For Lord Mancroft there was a great need both for the BBC to press on with television and for 'sponsored television' to press on, too, side by side.<sup>2</sup>

The word 'commercial' had been carefully left out of the White Paper, as De La Warr admitted, because the Government was still contemplating 'other ways of providing competition'; indeed, De La Warr went out of his way to flatter not only the BBC but Reith.<sup>3</sup> Likewise Lord Jowitt, the former Labour Lord Chancellor, expressed a desire to keep the whole subject 'off Party lines',<sup>4</sup> although the Earl of Listowel had to make it clear that the Labour Party opposed the Government's proposals.

Reith withdrew his motion at the end of two days as he had always intended to do, feeling 'very tired and very, very disgusted'.<sup>5</sup> Seventeen of the twenty-nine speakers had opposed the Government, however, and as the debate moved to the Commons, there was dissatisfaction on both sides with what was happening. The Broadcasting Study Group, in particular, was highly critical of De La Warr's pledge to allow the BBC to proceed with the building of five new low-powered television stations in order to provide service to 90 per cent of the population before other development could take place.<sup>6</sup> It wished Gammans to modify this declaration in the Commons, and it was still pressing, as in its February Report, for a new Broadcasting Commission on the lines of the American Federal Communications Commission which would control both the BBC and any new sponsoring body. 'Those of us who are anti-monopolists', Orr-Ewing stated, 'believe it is essential that at

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1364-8, 22 May 1952. Gresham's Law, he argued, was a law about money, not about entertainment. 'We still have good films, we still have good theatres, and we still have good music.'

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1329, 22 May 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1334-7, 22 May 1952. The White Paper had also stated (para. 5), that 'the Government would be most unwilling to see any change in the policy of the BBC towards sponsoring or accepting advertisements'. According to Reith (*Diary*, 13 May 1952) De La Warr said that he regretted the White Paper.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 176, col. 1331, 22 May 1952.

<sup>5</sup> Reith, *Diary*, 26 May 1952.

<sup>6</sup> *Cmd.* 8550, para. 11; *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 176, col. 1340, 22 May 1952.

least one competitive station should be operating (preferably in the London area) six months before the next general election.'<sup>1</sup>

The Commons debate produced few surprises, although on this occasion it was opened by a Government spokesman, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, a three-line Whip was enforced, and the issue was pressed to a vote. The outcome was inevitable—a Government majority of 304 to 276 when Morrison pressed a Labour Party amendment, and a final Government majority of 297 votes to 269 on the main question. Those Liberals who were present, including the Liberal Chief Whip, voted with the Government. During the debate almost as much was said about politics as about broadcasting. Labour speakers proclaimed themselves supporters of the *status quo* and made much of words like 'traditional', while the Conservatives, pressing eagerly for change, talked of the need for 'radical' alterations and 'trusting the people'. Profumo was particularly eloquent in this vein. He quoted the *Daily Mirror* and Thomas Jefferson, tilted at 'intellectuals', and declared himself 'horrified by the philosophy which recognises a State-run organisation [an incredible description of the BBC] as the sole arbiter of our taste and even our entertainment'.<sup>2</sup> Whereas in the House of Lords many Conservative speakers had questioned the wisdom of the Government's proposals, in the Commons there was only one Conservative speaker against them—Beverley Baxter, often thought of as the voice of Beaverbrook—and even he concluded that if it came to a choice between sponsored television and a Government defeat he would prefer sponsored television.<sup>3</sup>

Baxter's close association with the Press, which was known to be for the most part hostile to commercial television on protective grounds, did not strengthen his protest. There was much talk—although not as much as later—from the Labour benches about the commercial interests represented by the 'reformers'. For their part the reformers were forceful in rejecting any idea that commercial interests counted with them at all. A few protested too much, but they were obviously far more concerned, as in all party debates, with putting pressure on their own Government and perhaps reaching the public outside Westminster than with converting the Opposition. In any case, they

<sup>1</sup> Orr-Ewing to Gammans, 28 May 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 502, cols. 298–308, 11 June 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 276–7.

had noted with approval a remark of Lord Brabazon in the House of Lords that most of the speakers who objected to change had close links with the BBC.<sup>1</sup> They found the Home Secretary's opening speech, which was designed to be 'reasonable' and 'conciliatory', weak precisely for this reason, and were far more satisfied with Gammans's promise—Patrick Gordon Walker and others had asked for a clearer timetable—that competitive television would not be deferred indefinitely:

The Government are in earnest, not only over breaking the BBC monopoly, but also in permitting sponsored television. They have decided that the BBC shall be allowed to have priority over the completion of the programmes that was held up because of the capital cuts [in April]. But that does not mean that, when adequate resources of money and materials are available, competitive television must wait until the BBC extension is complete in all respects. It does not mean that the BBC will have to put the last coat of varnish on any building that they may put up before competitive television can be started. In fact, it is the hope of the Government that it will be possible before long that this experiment can actually be started and that the controlling body should be set up.<sup>2</sup>

From the archival evidence which is at present available it is not clear to what extent Gammans's speech, which had a noisy reception, fully reflected Government policy. Certainly Anthony Eden was uneasy about such talk, and several members of the Cabinet, including Butler, Crookshank, and Maxwell Fyfe himself, would never have spoken about the subject in this manner. Yet it was language which many Conservatives liked to hear. Herbert Morrison's speech seemed to them to represent the discredited past: it produced a good deal of unintended laughter in places, which obviously rattled the speaker. Captain Waterhouse, even though he stood at the right of the Party, may well have been expressing a widely held Conservative point of view when he made a sharp retort to Morrison, 'Right honourable gentlemen opposite have no right to cast political power in our faces considering what they have done to this country over the last six years.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 176, cols. 1376–80, 26 May 1952. He referred to a recent meeting of the BBC General Advisory Council when 'pep talk' had been provided for the Lords debate.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 502, cols. 328–9, 11 June 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 257, 11 June 1952.

Leaving politics on one side, what was said of broadcasting itself? It was 'not normally', as Morrison put it, 'the subject of acute party division between the parties in this House. Indeed, there is more than one view among the parties.'<sup>1</sup> A few speakers looked happily to Radio Luxembourg, and Gammans was not alone in using the existence of Radio Luxembourg and other foreign stations as an argument for restricting competition to television and leaving out sound. Others saw the omission of commercial sound as an anomaly which would be rectified in time. What emerged most strongly was the idea of a 'competitive' television programme. Even if the BBC was allowed to keep 100 per cent of its licence income, to build its new stations and to extend national coverage, it was insisted, there would still be no second channel—no one used this term—for years to come.

The technical language of the debate was on the whole unsophisticated, although a few speakers were aware of the importance for radio of VHF. For Waterhouse VHF began a new era, opening up 'an almost indefinite system of comparatively short-range wave bands'. There could be no technical argument for monopoly in the future.<sup>2</sup> Sir Ian Fraser, the blind ex-Governor, whose conversion to the cause of competition particularly irritated Reith, looked backwards. Speaking as a former member of the Crawford Committee in 1926, he maintained that even at that distant date in time official support of monopoly had been unanimous only because 'very few of us knew anything about the technicalities of broadcasting'.<sup>3</sup>

In the argument about 'competition' there were many references once again, for and against, to Gresham's Law, and more than one speaker referred to 'box office figures' providing the only criterion for programme policy. Captain Christopher Soames dwelt more on programming than any other speaker on either side of the House, and asked for more sports pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 233, 11 June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 255, 11 June 1952. For VHF in 1951 and 1952 see E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), pp. 338-9. The Government refused to give a go-ahead for VHF in 1951, but supported trials in 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 502, col. 266, 11 June 1952. For the Crawford Committee, see A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting*, pp. 327 ff. and Cmd. 2599. Fraser's point of view seemed to be supported by Coase (see *Public Opinion*, 12 Jan. 1950) with whom Orr-Ewing was in correspondence.



grammes, better News, and more realistic fees. He was interrupted several times by Christopher Mayhew, Labour MP for Woolwich East, who had been also the first interrupter of the Home Secretary. Mayhew, indeed, with his considerable broadcasting experience, including experience of television, was already emerging as the most forceful parliamentary opponent of commercial television. He had been Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1946 to 1950, and after being defeated at the 1950 General Election had been returned to Parliament at a by-election in June 1951. His attitudes to commercial television had been influenced, but not determined, by the fate in the United States of a play about the United Nations, *Those in Favour*, which he had written in 1950. The Americans had bought it for television, had made drastic changes to it, and had gone ahead without his approval, before finally interrupting it frequently, when it was eventually transmitted, with commercials. Mayhew knew how to write as well as how to talk and became a vigorous pamphleteer in the subsequent television campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

One other issue of a different kind was raised in the Commons debate. The proposal in the White Paper that BBC Governors should be appointed in future not by the Prime Minister but by a small Committee was questioned by most Labour MPs. They were unimpressed by the Government argument that the existence of such a Committee would take the BBC 'out of politics' and they were equally opposed to the idea, which was still being widely canvassed, that there might be two Directors-General, one in charge of sound and one in charge of television. Much of interest was said about the role of BBC Governors during the debate, with both sides agreeing that they were 'supreme'. Reith, who had had informal talks with Morrison earlier in the year, would not have been happy about Morrison's statement during the debate that 'they should not regard themselves as a mere advisory committee to the Director-General. They are the masters of the show. They are the captains of the ship.'<sup>2</sup>

If there was some laughter in the House at this point—and Morrison professed that he did not understand why—it was because at this crucial moment in broadcasting history the

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 903.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 502, col. 236, 11 June 1952.

Governors were alone. Haley, like Reith, considered them 'a reserve of freedom'—'most useful', Barbara Wootton, a future Governor, said, when not drawn on, like the gold reserve of the Bank of England<sup>1</sup>—but now they had to be drawn upon. On 6 June 1952, between the Lords debate and the Commons debate, an announcement had been made that Haley at the early age of fifty-one was leaving the BBC to become editor of *The Times*. It was known to all, therefore, that there would be a new Director-General when, following the Commons debate, the BBC's new Charter and Licence were approved on 13 June.

Haley had been contemplating a move for some time after working in the top echelons of the BBC for nearly ten years, and, given his long experience in the newspaper world, the editorship of *The Times* was a position which he found extremely attractive. He was made an offer before the White Paper appeared, but its appearance must have clinched his decision. Indeed, just before the parliamentary debates on it began, he remarked to a friend at a dinner that he was wearing a dinner jacket not tails because 'after three days with the White Paper I thought I would wear a black tie'.<sup>2</sup>

To most people inside the BBC the news of Haley's departure was 'shattering', but not to Reith, who called *The Times* editorship *sui generis*, 'the most splendid of offices'.<sup>3</sup> When news of the resignation was published, Reith wrote in *Ariel*, the BBC's staff magazine, of his successor, that he had held 'the second most responsible office in the country with dignity, devotion and distinction; to the general acclaim'. It was left to the *Daily Express* to ask quietly whether the man in 10 Downing Street was Number Three.<sup>4</sup>

The Governors thanked Haley immediately not only for his contribution to the BBC but for his 'furtherance of moral and cultural values both in and beyond' the Corporation, and a week later fixed the seal on the new Licence and Agreement with the Postmaster-General.<sup>5</sup> Haley's appointment was to terminate on 30 September 1952, but he was to be granted leave of absence from 1 August. He made an effort to say goodbye

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in F. Williams, *Nothing so Strange* (1970), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening Standard*, 6 June 1952.

<sup>3</sup> H. Grisewood, *op. cit.*, p. 179; Reith, *Diary*, 25 April 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Nov. 1952.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 5, 12 June 1952.

personally to everyone in the Corporation, and one of his most impressive last appearances was on a BBC platform before the General Liaison Meeting, a large gathering of all the BBC's senior staff, on 1 July 1952, the first to be held since 19 December 1951. He spoke with feeling of 'a new Charter and a new era', and mentioned that his was not the only staff change: there were many. Jacob, Director of External Broadcasting, who was to succeed him—this was not yet decided—was on leave of absence for one year from 6 May, on Government business. Harman Grisewood, who was to work very closely with Jacob in the future, had become Director of the Spoken Word on 9 May. Ashbridge had retired and Harold Bishop was to become Director of Technical Services; Michael Barry had become Head of Television Drama, Charles Max-Muller Head of Outside Broadcasts (Sound), and F. C. McLean Deputy Chief Engineer. S. G. Williams had replaced P. E. Cruttwell as Staff Administration Officer. Reorganization, Haley said, was almost complete—although not Regional reorganization—and he was sure that it was on the right lines, with greater devolution guaranteed. On sponsoring, he was as adamant as ever. If the BBC did not resist sponsored television, sound would be next. 'Fight against too many hours. Fight against lowering of standards. Fight for all necessary outside cooperation and resources. Television must not become a film industry. Television must remain civilised and adult. . . . You are fighting great issues,' he concluded, paying a warm personal tribute to his staff and to the great 'skills' they applied in all departments of the BBC.<sup>1</sup>

Press comment on Haley's move fell into two categories. Some newspapers dwelt on his future as editor of *The Times*; some looked back to his past with the BBC. All agreed that his 'translation' was 'one of the most interesting personal changes of the year'.<sup>2</sup> The *Evening Standard* said that it was 'unfortunate' that he was leaving just when television was 'flowering', but the *Manchester Guardian* was nearer to the heart of the matter, as Haley saw it, when it said that it was 'improbable' that Haley would have 'returned to journalism had the attitude of the Tory Government towards the broadcasting "monopoly"

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley, Notes for an Address to the General Liaison Meeting, 1 July 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *News Chronicle*, 6 June 1952.

been less cowardly and less influenced by a section of its supporters whose motives are not wholly disinterested'.<sup>1</sup>

All the commentators noted, too, that Haley had been brought up as a journalist and had once served as joint managing editor of the *Manchester Evening News*. The smell of the printers' ink must have been hard to forget. Some quoted his own question, 'Could any newspaper man refuse the editorship of *The Times*?'<sup>2</sup> 'Pendennis' in *The Observer*, contrasting the independence of an editor's work in a newspaper office with a Director-General's involvement in the committee life of the BBC, summed up the implications of the move most neatly: 'If Haley's voluntary exit from the BBC inevitably throws a gloomy light on life in that vastly important organisation, his wish to edit *The Times* brings glamour to this smallest in circulation of our national papers.'<sup>3</sup> *Newspaper World* tried to put the move into perspective by suggesting that to the general public Wilfred Pickles was 'more familiar than Haley',<sup>4</sup> and *World's Press News* concentrated on the point that Haley was a man of the greatest possible integrity who would not be 'hoodwinked by the politicians'.<sup>5</sup> The former periodical—rather against the trend of comment—suggested that Printing House Square would be a more conservative place than Broadcasting House and that a 'keen and alert' Haley would feel there 'the pressure of tradition and the sluggish response, almost resistance, of the tiller to a hand which attempts to set a new course'.

Before Haley's successor, Sir Ian Jacob, then fifty-three years old, was appointed, the Governors also had their new faces and a new Chairman. There was, indeed, a major reshuffle. In the interim, the Acting Director-Generalship was handed to Basil Nicolls, Director of Home Broadcasting, a BBC veteran who had joined the old British Broadcasting Company as Manchester Station Director in 1924 and who, as senior Director in 1952, was very sure—some, including Jacob,

<sup>1</sup> *Evening Standard*, 6 June 1952; *Manchester Guardian*, 6 June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 6 June 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 8 June 1952. Cf. *Manchester Evening News*, which he had cited, 9 June 1952. It referred to 'the pinpricks and frustrations of authority which are at present inherent in BBC organisation'.

<sup>4</sup> *Newspaper World*, 12 June 1952.

<sup>5</sup> *World's Press News*, 13 June 1952.

thought far too sure—of his ground. Reith would like to have seen him as Director-General;<sup>1</sup> others favoured Barnes, with whom Nicolls was not on good terms. When Jacob's name came forward, however, it very quickly won the assent of a majority of Governors.<sup>2</sup> It was made clear in the July Press Release concerning Nicolls that his appointment—much to his own disappointment—was to be only 'until such time as a permanent appointment can be made'.<sup>3</sup>

Jacob, working at Churchill's personal invitation as Chief Staff Officer to the Minister of Defence, was invited to meet the Governors in October 1952, and he accepted without hesitation (and with Churchill's acquiescence) their offer of the Director-Generalship as from 1 December.<sup>4</sup> Appropriately *The Times* stressed the continuity. 'Sir Ian Jacob has been chosen to safeguard and to keep fresh and contemporary the tradition of British broadcasting created by Lord Reith.'<sup>5</sup> Reith himself disputed this,<sup>6</sup> however, and Jacob was prepared not only for new styles but for new men and new measures. There was no talk in *The Times* leader of the threat to the BBC's monopoly—or for that matter of television and its distinctive problems. It was stated confidently, as it might have been stated in 1938, when Reith had left the Corporation, that since it was a monopoly, the BBC had 'to keep faith with all shades of opinion and taste without playing for safety at the cost of vitality'. Privately many people had been talking for months, as Professor Wilson was to do, of the financial pressures 'of a small group of people concerned in the advertisement business',<sup>7</sup> yet *The Times* concentrated rather on the current cultural pressures to make programmes which would appeal to the greatest number. 'The size of the audience', its leader went on, 'is not the measure of success of a broadcast programme.' Haley himself—before Jacob—had used military metaphors in talking about this subject. 'With competition,' he had said, 'you have all the time to go after the big battalions. That means discarding a whole world of things that are worth while. . . . Our responsibility . . . is both to satisfy and to lead; to satisfy current demand and to

<sup>1</sup> Reith, *Diary*, 7, 8 Oct. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> H. Grisewood, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-2.

<sup>3</sup> \*Press Release issued by the Governors (*Minutes*, 17 July 1952).

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 2, 8 Oct. 1952.      <sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 9 Oct. 1952.

<sup>6</sup> Reith, *Diary*, Oct. 1952      <sup>7</sup> \*The Bishop of Bristol to House, 28 May 1952.

lead in raising standards of appreciation so that what is demanded is progressively better.<sup>1</sup>

Not all the Press followed the line of *The Times* in 1952, although, like *The Times*, surprisingly few newspapers mentioned television, let alone the threat to the BBC's monopoly of it. *The Star*, however, noted that Jacob saw 'television's future clearly', even if it was a 'chancy thing' in his home area near Ipswich, while the *Daily Graphic* anticipated his leading the BBC through 'the battlefields' both of radio and television.<sup>2</sup> Jacob was ready for the battlefields. Just because he was not a journalist, he saw very clearly from the outset that there would have to be a new approach to the News—and to politicians. When he had first joined the BBC in 1946 he had stated bluntly that he preferred 'not to allow his vision to be limited or distorted by the restraints and angles of party politics'.<sup>3</sup> Yet he had arrived at Broadcasting House straight from the Cabinet—and the Army—had worked very closely with Churchill, knew politicians at first hand, and believed that the drafting of brisk minutes inside the BBC was as necessary as the preparation of informative news bulletins for the public outside.

There were, in fact, to be several breaches of continuity, deplored by Reith but welcome to many of Jacob's colleagues, when the new Director-General took over. One of the most important was that Jacob did not share Haley's interest in maintaining sizeable BBC reserves. Confident that a substantial increase in future income would flow from combined sound and television licences, although still uncertain about restrictions on capital expenditure and future costs of equipment and programming, he was prepared from the start to spend money. 'We are not poor,' he explained. His willingness to spend more money on television and even on offices and on entertainment was immediately apparent, particularly since an 'Efficiency Committee', headed by Gerald Beadle, had been hard at work not very long before, looking into every possible kind of economy.<sup>4</sup> Jacob did not disparage 'efficiency' or 'economy', but he

<sup>1</sup> Address to the Sixth Imperial Press Conference, 20 June 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *The Star*, 13 Oct. 1952; *Daily Graphic*, 9 Oct. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 1 Dec. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*It was set up towards the end of 1951 by the Board of Management, following a minute by Haley, 9 July 1951: 'Every senior official ought to approach every piece of paper that arrives on his desk from the angle of "Is this really necessary?"'

disliked cheeseparing. His changes involved not only style but method. The Board of Management had re-examined the BBC's five-year and ten-year forecasts in July 1952, and Jacob put great emphasis on a 'Ten-Year Plan' which was approved in principle by the Governors in February 1953. The Government continued to procrastinate about the future timetable, but Jacob was wise to insist—as he did to the first Liaison meeting which he addressed, in June 1953—that 'We must be alert, and one jump ahead of events'.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob's appointment was made by a Board of Governors with a new Chairman, the experienced diplomat (and amateur painter) Sir Alexander Cadogan, chosen by Churchill to succeed Simon at the end of July, after Churchill had expressed dissatisfaction with the first list of names submitted to him. John Adamson and Francis Williams, a Governor only since 1950, left the Board with Simon, so that there was a major reshuffle of Governors. For the first time (following Beveridge) there were now three National Governors, designated as such, on the Board—Lord Clydesmuir, already a Governor, representing Scotland; Lord Macdonald of Gwaenysgor (an ex-miner with a Welsh title but with Lancashire parents) representing Wales; and Sir Harry Mulholland, a brother-in-law of the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, representing Northern Ireland. The total size of the Board rose in consequence from seven to nine. Three other ex-Governors survived besides Lord Clydesmuir—Lord Tedder, the Vice-Chairman, whom a few newspapers had tipped as a likely Director-General; Professor Barbara Wootton, an able, forthright and, when she chose, unorthodox sociologist, who had joined the Board in 1950; and Ivan Stedeford, the experienced businessman who had served on the Beveridge Committee. The new Governors were Sir Philip Morris, Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University (and a former Director-General of Army Education), and Lady Rhys Williams, a Liberal, whose special interests included tax reform.

<sup>1</sup> \*For the Ten Year Plan, see above, p. 9, and below, p. 981; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 7, 21 July 1952; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 13 Feb. 1953; General Liaison Meeting, 16 June 1953.

The Committee's purpose was outlined in Board of Management, *Minutes*, 17 Dec. 1951. The Report was presented on 10 March 1952.

Cadogan was described by Harold Nicolson as 'the calmest man I know', but Cadogan's published diary makes that judgement as suspect as many of Nicolson's judgements on people. He was the first ex-civil servant to be chosen as Chairman of the BBC, although it was less his general Civil Service experience than the more precise fact that he came from the Foreign Office which inspired most Press comment in 1952. After the appointment of Jacob, a former Assistant Military Secretary of the Cabinet, who was also son of a Field-Marshal and grandson of a Major-General, as Director-General, some critics feared that the BBC was becoming too 'official'. 'Too many Brass Hats,' *Reynolds News* complained.<sup>1</sup> There was far more left-wing criticism of Cadogan than there was of Jacob, however, and the criticism was shared in other quarters when Cadogan made it all too clear that he knew nothing of broadcasting, had never seen television, and seldom listened to radio.<sup>2</sup>

Cadogan had himself expressed doubts about his own suitability to Churchill, and much fun, not all of it innocent, was made of his inaugural declaration, supported by a testimonial from Churchill that he came to broadcasting with 'a fresh mind'. 'There are no qualifications,' Churchill had told him privately, when Cadogan asked what they were. 'All you have to do is be fair.' 'And sensible, I suppose,' Cadogan added. Churchill nodded.<sup>3</sup> Questions were asked in Parliament—with Churchill accepting responsibility for appointing Cadogan, but not being prepared to answer questions as to why he had chosen him<sup>4</sup>—and the poets came into their own:

On broadcast features I don't enthuse,  
On televising I have no views;  
On policy making I'm in the dark,  
On sponsored items I make no remark,  
And that is why they have chosen me  
As Chairman of the Governors of the BBC.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Reynolds News*, 7 Dec. 1952. The *Daily Worker* had mounted a campaign against him from the start. See, for example, 5 Aug. 1952, for a statement issued by the Political Committee of the Communist Party. For a strong counter-attack see, for example, the *Glasgow Herald*, 25 July 1952; *The Star*, 25 July 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening Standard*, 26 July 1952.

<sup>3</sup> David Dilks (ed.), *The Cadogan Diaries* (1971), p. 792.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 504, cols. 1482-4, 30 July 1952. Churchill must have got pleasure out of saying that if he had had his way and a small Standing Committee had been



Nicolson, as the one ex-Governor who knew Cadogan well, might insist that the traditional role of the Chairman and Governors of the BBC was 'to maintain truth and virtue . . . not to ascertain whether the housewives of Leeds or Godalming enjoy the Third Programme or whether they do not'.<sup>1</sup> Yet everyone knew in 1952 that programmes, sponsored or unsponsored, counted, and everyone wondered who Cadogan would 'choose' for the critical post of Director-General:

I must find a man, if he can be found  
Who is quite allergic both to sight and sound,  
Who has carved like me his whole career  
In a rather more exclusive diplomatic sphere,  
And who never, never listens to Varietee,  
For the new Director-General of the BBC.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Jacob's appointment as Director-General was recommended by the old Governors, chaired by Simon, before they left office, and Cadogan, who knew him well and found working with him 'pleasant', made haste to ratify it. Nicolls had not been favoured by Nicolson, who played an important part in explaining quickly to Cadogan why he had not been chosen, but it was Barnes's friends who had to discuss with Barnes himself—at rather greater length—why Jacob seemed to them to be the most acceptable candidate.<sup>3</sup>

Simon's departure as Chairman of the Governors in July 1952 provoked less comment in the newspapers than Cadogan's appointment. He had reached the end of his statutory period as a Governor seven months earlier, but along with the other Governors due to retire he had been asked to stay by the Government until it renewed the Charter. Simon had never hidden his Labour Party sympathies and he was to dedicate his book, *The BBC from Within* (1953), to Herbert Morrison. He was out of sympathy with the Conservative administration. He continued to interest himself in BBC affairs, however, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Spectator*, 5 Aug. 1952. Cf. *The Times Educational Supplement*, 1 Aug. 1952, for a very condescending comment.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 26 July 1952.

<sup>3</sup> H. Grisewood, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

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appointed to choose the Chairman, he (Churchill) would not have been in the front line for questioning.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 26 July 1952.

within a few months of attending his last meeting of the Board on 30 July he wrote an article in *The Times* expressing the hope that there would still be an opportunity 'to consider quietly all the different effects, good and bad, which are likely to arise from the adoption of commercial broadcasting'.<sup>1</sup>

The main protagonists of commercial broadcasting had always questioned his qualifications to serve as Chairman. Thus, in 1950, C. O. Stanley had called him 'a complete and utter loss' as far as television was concerned. 'Here is something which requires enthusiasm and imagination. Instead we have a very kind gentleman.'<sup>2</sup> It was the kind of judgement outsiders were prone to make during the 1950s, and it was wrong on two counts. Simon was enthusiastic about television—far more so than Haley who feared its dangers—and he was not always a kind gentleman. Indeed, he was not always an easy Chairman with whom to work. Haley, who had known him through their common Manchester background, knew how difficult he could be. So, too, did the chief officials of the BBC whom he cultivated. The little black book in which he jotted down comments made to him about the BBC and the people inside it was as much a topic of conversation in Broadcasting House as his parties in Marsham Court, parties, like those of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, at which pleasure was always mixed with business. Simon's wife was certainly as keen an interlocutor as he was.

In reviewing Simon's exit in 1952, most sections of the Press referred to one item in his past which might have led to an earlier exit in 1950; and since this incident coincided in time with the exit of Collins from the BBC, the most dramatic of all exits, a 'flashback' to the autumn of 1950 is necessary. It was then that Simon might have resigned, and it was then that Collins did resign. It was then, also, that there were suggestions in the Press, none of them well-founded, that Haley might be going too.<sup>3</sup> All the characters involved in the 'exits and en-

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 3 Sept. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 1 Nov. 1950; *Daily Mail*, 1 Nov. 1950; Stanley was speaking alongside Collins at a Radio Industries Club luncheon.

<sup>3</sup> Jonah Barrington, for example, wrote in an article in the *Daily Graphic* on 19 Oct. 1950 of 'Haley's headaches' which included as the last of his headaches 'public cries' for his resignation. Other papers stressed rightly that Haley had no intention of resigning.

trances' of 1952, except Cadogan, were involved earlier in the rows of 1950, the biggest in the history of the BBC, including George Barnes, who succeeded Collins as head of Television, with the new title of Director.<sup>1</sup>

On Friday 13 October 1950 it had been announced—while the Beveridge Committee was still sitting—that Collins had resigned from his post as Controller of Television and was leaving the BBC. On the same day, Barnes's appointment was announced as Director. 'Sir William Haley has enlarged his Civil Service,' wrote *The Recorder*, 'and television has lost another of its bright young men.'<sup>2</sup> And years later Simon was to claim that 'if we hadn't fired Collins there would be no commercial television now'.<sup>3</sup>

Even at the time, the exit had created as much of a stir as the exit of Haley in 1952, partly because of Collins's own sense of publicity,<sup>4</sup> although few of the commentators in the Press at that time foresaw its long-term repercussions. Most of them, indeed, directed attention rather to the very recent past than to the future, for the resignation of Collins had followed immediately on the cancellation—on Simon's orders—of a repeat of the television play *Party Manners*, written by Val Gielgud, the Head of BBC Drama. This highly controversial action, which seemed to have been prompted by Labour Party clamour, pushed Simon for once—against his wishes—into the limelight. Both Collins on the one hand and Haley and the Board of Governors on the other were at pains to insist—rightly—that the departure of Collins was coincidental and had nothing to do with Simon's cancellation. Yet the conjunction of events could not be completely ignored. 'TV Chief Quits in Middle of Play-Ban Row', 'BBC Television Chief who passed Banned Play Quits Post', and "'Nothing to do with Play'", says Official' were characteristic headlines.<sup>5</sup>

Simon's role in October 1950—on the eve of the publication

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> *The Recorder*, 21 Oct. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> When he was told that Barnes would be Television Director and that he could stay on as Controller, Collins asked for two hours to think over his decision. He 'filled the afternoon papers', Simon complained, before the BBC could make an official statement (quoted *ibid.*, p. 143).

<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 13 Oct. 1950; *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 Oct. 1950; *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, 13 Oct. 1950.

of the Beveridge Report—was a difficult one, not least because he had decided to cancel the repeat of *Party Manners* without fully consulting Haley. He explained his position as completely as he could to Beveridge in person, just as he ‘explained’ the departure of Collins,<sup>1</sup> but the public, at least, found the explanations unconvincing. There were calls from several quarters for the resignation of ‘this elderly Labour peer’, calls which no previous Chairman had heard before, and they still had not been forgotten when Simon left the BBC in 1952, assuring Cadogan that the BBC was ‘an admirable machine’.<sup>2</sup> Characteristically, indeed, it was the one episode in his Chairmanship which was widely remembered.

*Party Manners* was a ‘light-hearted’ comedy, and Gielgud was surprised at the fuss about it. He felt that politicians were surely being unduly touchy if they grumbled about a line in the play like ‘the only consistent political belief held by the English is that all politicians are funny’.<sup>3</sup> Simon, however, saw nothing funny in the play, and claimed very portentously that its plot turned on ‘the apparent willingness of a British Cabinet, in order to win a General Election, to imperil national security by releasing the secret of the atom bomb’.<sup>4</sup> The play was not a satire; and the fact that Simon cancelled a television repeat of it on his own initiative on a day when the *Daily Herald* referred to it as ‘crude, silly and insulting’<sup>5</sup> produced just as strong protests from R. H. S. Crossman in *Any Questions* as from Lord Hailsham.<sup>6</sup> (Crossman, of course, was still treated as an *enfant terrible* at that time by Attlee and many of his Labour col-

<sup>1</sup> He had lunch with Beveridge on 10 Oct. (Simon Papers) when he showed him a note on *Party Manners*. He wrote to him on 14 Oct. about Collins’s resignation. See above, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Dilks, *op. cit.*, p. 792. One complaint in 1950 came from the Listeners’ Association, another from the Leader of the Liberal Party. The Postmaster-General, Ness Edwards, and Herbert Morrison refused a public inquiry (*Hansard*, vol. 478, cols. 2234–6, 19 Oct. 1950). There were Labour counter-complaints about other BBC programmes at this time, for example a complaint from Victor Feather, then Assistant Secretary of the TUC, about *Bedtime with Braden* which seemed to him to be ‘taking the micky out of the Government and our movement’ (*Sunday Express*, 15 Oct. 1950).

<sup>3</sup> V. Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror* (1965), p. 150. See also below, pp. 687–8.

<sup>4</sup> \*General Advisory Council, Verbatim Report, 24 Oct. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Herald*, 3 Oct. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*BBC *Any Questions*, Recorded Script, 13 Oct. 1950. Ralph Wightman defended the ban.

leagues.) Not surprisingly, Churchill looked for a diplomat as Simon's successor in 1952. Collins's own comment on the affair was that it was 'idiotic and discreditable'.<sup>1</sup>

Collins's resignation had been an event of a different order, as Simon himself recognized. Collins was then only forty-three years old, and he had been determined from the start to publicize the 'monopoly issues' which his resignation posed. He was listened to with increasing public attention as he suggested how dangerous it was for key BBC officials to be placed in the position of jobbing gardeners who knew that if they quarrelled with their employers they would never get employment again as jobbing gardeners. Barnes, who was chosen by Haley and the Governors instead of Collins—and Barbara Ward, the youngest and perhaps the most independent-minded Governor still insists that the Governors considered all the issues very carefully—was three years older than Collins. If there was no doubt in the Governors' minds, there was certainly no doubt as to which of the two men in 1950—or, indeed, in 1952—had the easier access to the public. This was one of the points marked against the name of Collins in the Governors' assessment: he might seek to make television 'too popular'. Barnes would keep it within 'the system'.

The real issues in 1950 were seldom commented upon directly. George Campey, the Television Correspondent of the *Evening Standard*, noted, however, that Collins had been pressing for a long time for the representation of Television on the BBC's Board,<sup>2</sup> and Collins himself, in a general statement published—far too quickly, Haley and the Governors thought—only six hours after his resignation, had talked of 'a clash of principles not of personalities'. Collins had cast his own horoscope when he said that it would be 'a grave betrayal' of the BBC's trust 'if a vested interest in sound broadcasting were allowed to stand in the way of the most adventurous development of television'. Having found—so he went on—too much apathy or even open hostility in some parts of Broadcasting House, he was now likely to look to some other as yet unformed organization; perhaps, indeed, to take a leading part in forming it. Such an organization would have to be independent of what he called 'the colossus

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Express*, 15 Oct. 1950, 'It is time to speak up'.

<sup>2</sup> Syndicated article in the *Evening Dispatch*, Edinburgh, 13 Oct. 1950.

of sound broadcasting'.<sup>1</sup> And it would have to appeal directly to the public.

The *Daily Telegraph* had drawn the moral immediately in a leader. Collins had raised, it said, 'the fundamental issue whether the vigorous development of the new medium is possible within the framework of a single monopoly habituated to the different requirements and potentialities of an older one'.<sup>2</sup> And somewhat similar views had been expressed both by John Ridgeway, Chairman of the Radio Industry Council, who referred to Collins's departure as 'a great loss to the [radio] industry', and by those journalists who claimed that Collins had been 'galloping ahead at a pace which reduced some of the old bicycles at Portland Place to a fury'.<sup>3</sup> 'If the BBC, for whatever reason, is handling television with a dead hand,' ran a leader in the *Sunday Mercury*, 'then the BBC monopolistic hold must be wrenched away.'<sup>4</sup> 'He [Collins] left for the same reason as I did,' said Orr-Ewing tersely. 'Television under the BBC is not being treated as it should be. It does not get adequate priority. I am surprised that a man has been taken from sound broadcasting to replace Mr. Collins.'<sup>5</sup>

In 1950, therefore, most of the people who were to express opinions about the future of broadcasting in 1952, had already taken up their positions as they might have done in the first act of a play. There were to be changes, however, in 1953, when the different issues came to a head. Perhaps the most significant new 'entrance' of 1952, in relation to broadcasting history was that of neither a Director-General nor a Chairman of Governors, but of a Queen, even if she did not realize it.

On 6 February 1952 it was announced that George VI had died: the new Queen, Elizabeth, was brought back to England by air from Kenya, where she had just begun a Commonwealth tour. Her Coronation did not take place until 2 June 1953, but preparations for it began even before the announce-

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Oct. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 Oct. 1950. Cf. *Daily Mail*, 20 Oct. 1950, for the support given to Collins by the Radio Retailers' Association, and the *Daily Herald*, 20 Oct. 1950, for the support given by Equity.

<sup>3</sup> *Empire News*, 15 Oct. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Mercury*, 15 Oct. 1950. Cf. *The People*, 15 Oct. 1950, where the 'dead hand' metaphor was also used. The *Nottingham Journal*, 14 Oct. 1950, followed this line of attack, as did the *Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*, 14 Oct. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> *Evening Standard*, 18 Oct. 1950. Orr-Ewing had resigned in January 1949.

ment of the date on 7 June 1952. Long before this there had been the first talk of a 'new Elizabethan Age'. It was clear as the BBC made its preparations for the Coronation that the image of the new Queen would be communicated by television to far more viewers than had watched any television programme before. As yet there might not be quite as many viewers as the scattered listeners who had heard her father's sound broadcasts before and during the Second World War, but there were already enough of them to suggest that television would be the popular medium of the future. This, indeed, would be the medium with which she, like her subjects, would eventually have to come to terms.

## 2. 'Television's Coronation'

TELEVISION cameras had been present at the funeral of George VI, when the picture of three black-veiled Queens at the door of Westminster Hall had caught the sense of what was happening far more than any spoken commentaries. In the majestic drama of the Coronation, however, the television cameras were *inside* the Abbey for the first time and the public, if still a limited one, could feel that it was participating as well as watching. New meaning was given to an ancient rubric as the young Queen was the first monarch to be crowned 'in sight of all the people'. 'People are in on the inside,' wrote a school-teacher, 'even if', she went on, 'only the nobility take part.'<sup>1</sup> For *The Times*, it might have been 'a little difficult' at first for viewers to grasp the fact that what they were seeing was 'not a news film but historic events unfolding', yet 'little by little actuality asserted itself, at first in quaint and splendid trifles'.

'No mere report could have impressed so strongly on those who now looked on the scene that this was a deed of dedication, in which they, too, silently and reverently participated'.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshal appreciated this

<sup>1</sup> Mass Observation Archives. Mass Observation's scattered reporters were asked to send their diaries for the day.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 3 June 1953. Another Mass Observation reporter said that it made the Coronation 'not only a ceremony but a sacrament'.

aspect of the occasion. After a very reluctant start, he gave positive encouragement to the BBC. The *Listener's* critic on the 'spoken word' felt that it was 'a melancholy, but also perhaps a comforting thought that in a few years the eye-witness commentator, swallowed neck and crop by television', would exist only in books—'books on history, psychology, and anthropology, or in historical stage-plays where, like the Greek chorus', he would 'describe events not enacted on the stage'.<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that television in England 'came of age with the Coronation much as radio [sound] had with the General Strike'.<sup>2</sup> Yet there was a big difference. While the General Strike had divided the country, the Coronation united it. There were other differences, too. A young and inexperienced Reith had been the uneasy hero of the General Strike: in 1953 what appeared on the screens was the result of a team effort shared in by high-quality professionals.<sup>3</sup> Reith's motives have to be studied closely in order to understand 1926; the BBC's arts, techniques, and organization have to be studied equally closely in order to understand 1953. 'This was television's Coronation,' wrote Philip Hope-Wallace, 'intimate, detailed, never a step wrong.'<sup>4</sup> There was a far wider frame of reference, too, in 1953 than in 1926. 'The Coronation of the young Elizabeth II,' Christian Dior wrote in March 1953, 'has filled not only the British but, rather strangely, the French, too, and much of Europe with renewed optimism and faith in the future.'<sup>5</sup> 'What a triumph for man to have been able to reduce the world to the span of a little screen,' a French viewer in the Oise wrote to the BBC, 'and to allow illustrious personalities, like Her Majesty, to enter into our homes.'<sup>6</sup> For George Campey, this was 'the magical moment'.<sup>7</sup>

There was almost a year between the proclamation of the Coronation on 7 June 1952 and the Coronation itself on 2 June 1953, and this was a year of intensive planning not only in Broadcasting House but in many other broadcasting organiza-

<sup>1</sup> Martin Armstrong in *The Listener*, 11 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> H. Hopkins, *The New Look* (1963), p. 295.

<sup>3</sup> The team aspect was stressed in an article on 'the small army of BBC men and women who will make it possible' in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 10 May 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Time and Tide*, 6 June 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> 'Reaction to Coronation Television Relays, France and Belgium', 7 July 1953.

<sup>7</sup> *Evening Standard*, 2 June 1953.



tions. After the event, the BBC's official publication recording and celebrating the Coronation was called appropriately *The Year that Made the Day*. It was certainly a Year not a Day that made the mood. The 'conquest of Everest' by the Hunt expedition came just at the right moment—29 May 1953. There was much talk in the Press of 'new Elizabethans', and at least one book about them.<sup>1</sup> When the Day came—C-Day, one reporter called it—it seemed to have been planned as carefully as D-Day had been.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after the death of George VI the first meeting to plan the broadcasting of the Coronation, 'the largest single-day event ever undertaken by the BBC',<sup>3</sup> took place in London; and to get the perspectives straight it is important to note that sound broadcasting, not television, took precedence then and thereafter. The Chairman of the meeting was C. Max-Muller, the Head of Outside Broadcasts (Sound) since April 1952,<sup>4</sup> and representatives from every BBC department interested in the Coronation were present—including Overseas and European Liaison, the Facilities Unit representing the News Division, and Television Outside Broadcasts. Thereafter Max-Muller and Seymour de Lotbinière were the two men responsible for all policy decisions. For both of them this was their second Coronation, and although it was television which was to benefit most from the experience of 1953, what stood out immediately in June 1952 was that 'sound arrangements would constitute the largest (and most complex) single-day operation ever undertaken by the BBC or indeed by any other organisation'.<sup>5</sup> The Sound Outside Broadcast had to be planned without a break from 10.15 a.m. until 5.30 p.m., and R. H. Wood, who

<sup>1</sup> See P. Gibbs, *The New Elizabethans* (1953). For a pertinent critical comment by an American professor, see S. Marcus, 'Mount Everest and the British National Spirit', reprinted in *Representations* (1975), pp. 76–88.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Press Statement, 22 May 1953.

<sup>4</sup> He had started his BBC career in 1934 as an Assistant (Outside Broadcasts) and had become Assistant Head of Outside Broadcasts, Sound, in July 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Retrospective Report by C. Max-Muller on Sound Broadcasting Arrangements, 13 Aug. 1953. A paper on Coronation plans was circulated and discussed a year earlier. Among those taking part were Colonel C. Moses of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, S. Gopalan of All India Radio, Z. A. Bokhari of Radio Pakistan, W. Yates of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, and G. Roos of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. In Yates's words, 'anything colourful would be appreciated'; Moses made twelve specific programme suggestions.

was in charge of the engineering arrangements—he was another ‘veteran’ of 1937 and of every royal broadcast since 1935—did a masterly job.

The fact that the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference was meeting in London during the summer of 1952 facilitated co-ordination.<sup>1</sup> There had been complaints that the BBC’s handling of the funeral of George VI had involved too many studio items and too few comments from ‘the London streets’; and these complaints were fully taken into account in planning the new arrangements. So, too, were complaints that Commonwealth commentators had not had a big enough role at the funeral. For this reason, staff commentators from Australia (Talbot Duckmanton), Canada (Captain W. E. S. Briggs), and the West Indies (Willy Richardson) were invited to join the ‘domestic team’. The demand for more women commentators was only partially met. It was felt that at least two women commentators should be included in the radio team, and after tests had been undertaken with sixty applicants, Jean Metcalfe was chosen to join the experienced Audrey Russell.

More distant precedents were sought than the Royal Funeral: these were found in the complete recordings of the 1937 Coronation broadcast and its technical set-up.<sup>2</sup> There had been only seventeen sound commentary positions in 1937 and three cameras, all located at Hyde Park Corner. Clearly the new operation would be completely different in scale. Much of the ‘research’ needed was severely practical, general or detailed, ranging from important questions of microphone location to what was the length of a Guardsman’s stripe or how should the commentators pronounce the word *pursuivant*. To help all the commentators, a picture ‘gallery’ of all the personalities taking part in the procession and in the service was prepared in Max-Muller’s office.

It was decided very early in the long period of ‘planning and preparation’ that ‘the best method of avoiding confusion’ in a multi-language operation was ‘to divide the various sound programmes into five main categories—the main programme

<sup>1</sup> \*Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference, 1952, *Minutes and Papers*, Nov. 1952. The next Conference was planned for not less than three and not more than four years ahead.

<sup>2</sup> *The Year that Made the Day*, p. 14. For the Coronation of 1937, see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), p. 611.

in English; the BBC European Services; the BBC Overseas Services; visiting commentators from European countries; and visiting commentators from countries outside Europe'. Accordingly, every commentator—and the equipment which he employed, a small ribbon microphone—was allocated to one of these five 'networks'. Since it was obviously impossible for more than a few of the commentators to be present in Westminster Abbey itself—the biggest innovation of 1953 and one which had involved many battles behind the scenes—two British commentators and (with the French Canadian audience in mind) one French commentator were selected. For the domestic programme there were two commentators in the triforium, high above the altar, and two in the Annexe overlooking the assembly area. There were also twenty-nine 'ceremony microphones' so placed inside the Abbey as to provide 'a complete sound picture' for both listeners and viewers. All had to be 'unobtrusive', and the Duke of Norfolk was personally involved in the choice of many of the microphone positions. Some microphones were, in fact, completely hidden from view.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the routes of the processions were made known, 'commentary positions' were chosen, as many of them as possible located—on grounds of expense—within areas controlled by the Ministry of Works. Middlesex County Council proved as co-operative as it had been in 1937, and as many as sixteen positions were placed in an extra storey constructed over the Middlesex Guildhall stand. The first commentary position was in the inner courtyard of Buckingham Palace, where most of the processions began, and twenty-eight positions were planned for Trafalgar Square and thirteen for the Ministry of Works stand near the Victoria Memorial. The site of the new Colonial Office had ten positions commanding an excellent view of the approaches to the Abbey. Altogether, there were eleven sites, each with its own control room.

The control room for all 'ceremony microphones' and for the domestic programme was the Head Verger's office, as it had been in 1937. This and a control room on the Colonial Office site for non-domestic programmes were used as 'master control

<sup>1</sup> Permission was refused for a third (American) commentary point over the triforium.

points' into which the output of the commentary positions was fed.<sup>1</sup> These facilities were far better than any which could have been provided inside Broadcasting House, and it was an invaluable feature of the arrangements that simply by pressing a key, Max-Muller could get in touch with any commentator on the route. He could give the commentators regular time-checks and information not available on the spot. Use was also made for the first time in sound outside broadcasting of television monitors: it enabled radio commentators to describe what was happening inside the Abbey although they were outside the building.

Almost as much attention had to be paid to recording arrangements as to the live transmission, and engineering resources were stretched to their limits. There was still a shortage of recording equipment in London, and orders for new equipment were expedited and all available transportable recording equipment was mobilized from the Regions. So, too, were all available engineers, many of whom would have been off duty on Coronation Day. Even then, equipment providing twelve disc-recording 'channels' and sixteen magnetic tape-recording 'channels' had to be hired from a commercial firm. It was planned to use 2,000 twelve-inch discs and forty-five miles of magnetic tape.<sup>2</sup>

There were even more meetings of officers of the Television Service than there were of the Sound commentators, producers and administrators, with most of the Television meetings still being held in Broadcasting House. It was always more difficult to locate camera positions than microphone positions, and all five cameras inside the Abbey had to be carefully kept from view. Eventually it was decided, with the approval of Dr. William McKie, Director of Music in the Abbey, to have one of the cameras visible amongst the Orchestra (with the smallest possible cameraman, 'Bud' Flanagan, on duty) and outside the Abbey to employ twenty-one cameras at five sites. The control room for the Abbey cameras was built just outside the Abbey—at the East end—and a mobile unit was located in Hyde Park near Grosvenor Gate.

<sup>1</sup> Great care was taken to ensure that, should there be any failure in the circuits, adequate standby plans could be put into effect. A radio transmitter link, for example, was established between the roof of the Abbey and Broadcasting House.

<sup>2</sup> \*BBC Engineering Press Statement, 'Technical Arrangements', 22 May 1953.

Very soon, one basic distinction was drawn by the 'Television programme planners. The first view of 'the great Return Procession' was to be 'panoramic', and the second, from outside Buckingham Palace, was to be 'detailed'.<sup>1</sup> Another early decision was to make the most of and not to treat casually two 'pauses' in the projected arrangements for the day. Viewers were to be allowed what were soon to be called 'natural breaks'. They were also to be given the exceptional opportunity of watching the Coronation in cinemas or other public places, whether or not a charge was made for admission.

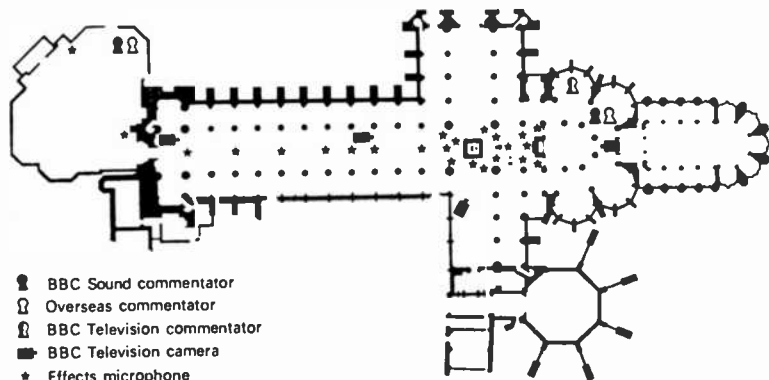
Peter Dimmock, the television producer of the Coronation programme, visited Washington to watch the television coverage of President Eisenhower's inauguration, and used his experience intelligently to make suggestions both about the coverage of the Procession and what was to be done inside the Abbey.<sup>2</sup> He had to keep out ubiquitous 'Peeping Tom' cameras from the Abbey—such cameras had raised hackles even in the United States—while at the same time encouraging, with the help of zoom lenses, very special shots, like that of Prince Charles watching his mother being crowned.<sup>3</sup> The Television commentator behind the triforium was to be Richard Dimbleby, enclosed in his little glass box from 5.30 a.m. until 2.30 p.m. in the afternoon. 'Your voice and the things you say in the Abbey on Coronation Day,' McGivern told him in a special order of the day, 'are of great importance to us. I have full confidence in the fact that in no way you will let us down.' He did not. This was one of the 'royal occasions' in which he was to excel.<sup>4</sup> The main Sound commentator for the British audience, John Snagge, with his unique but familiar voice, did not let down his listeners either. And there were still far more listeners than viewers in 1953.

By February 1953, the General Advisory Council of the BBC had been told that all was ready for the 'great occasion'. For

<sup>1</sup> *The Year that Made the Day*, p. 30.      <sup>2</sup> Ross, *Television Jubilee* (1961), p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> P. Black, *The Biggest Aspidistra in the World* (1972), p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> See J. Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby* (1975), pp. 242 ff., for a very full account. See also L. Miall (ed.), *Richard Dimbleby, Broadcaster* (1966), pp. 78–88, which *inter alia* reprints in full Dimbleby's own account of his experiences at the Coronation as published in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 7 June 1953. 'I have never been so proud or so glad', he wrote, 'that I was able to contribute in a small way to history, even to making a fragment of history.'



13. The Coronation: commentator and camera positions in Westminster Abbey

Sound there would be twelve commentators, and 'every available transmitter' was to be used to provide world coverage. The only regular television service in the Commonwealth at that time was in Canada, and a telefilm recording would be flown across the Atlantic for showing on the evening of 2 June, with 'every effort' being made (significantly) 'to ensure that the films are available . . . in Canada before they are available in the U.S.A.'<sup>1</sup> Three special films had already been made by the BBC's Film Department in advance of the Coronation and these would be shown not only in Canada but, it was hoped, in the United States, Holland, Italy, and Germany. The European audience was not to be neglected. Direct relay across the Channel was to be arranged,<sup>2</sup> although it was emphasized that the provision of a radio link as far as Dover did not mean that equipment was being used 'that could otherwise be used in extending television coverage in this country' and that the BBC was 'not making itself liable for any expenditure abroad'.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Coronation procession and service were thought of as 'the main event', it was soon decided to surround the Coronation with 'a whole week of gala programmes' on

<sup>1</sup> \*Memorandum for the General Advisory Council, 'Coronation Plans', 26 Feb. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 489 ff.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum for the General Advisory Council, 26 Feb. 1953.

Sound.<sup>1</sup> The Queen was to be invited to broadcast. So, also, were the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. There was also to be a feature programme, *Homage to the Queen*, and a 'news round-up programme' reporting the way in which the Queen had been acclaimed on her Coronation 'in all parts of the Commonwealth and Empire'. On the evening of Coronation Day there was to be a two-hour telefilm recording of the television broadcast of the procession and ceremony, and a further film was to be made after the event showing how the Coronation was celebrated in Britain and in other parts of the Commonwealth. 'The idea of the Commonwealth' was to 'thread' through all the related programmes—as it had done in an earlier radio series, *The Concept of Commonwealth*—so that listeners in far distant lands could 'actually feel we are in London' and both listeners and viewers in Britain and overseas could feel that they were part of a bigger whole.<sup>2</sup> On Sound, the Australians were to provide music from previous coronations back to that of Charles II, and (for children) the choir of Appleby College, Oakville, Ontario, was to sing. Three *Scrapbooks* on 'royal years'—1902, 1935, and 1937—were also to be presented, along with Edward German's *Merrie England* and, from Covent Garden, the first act of Britten's *Gloriana*. For a time *Forces' Choice* was to take the place of *Housewives' Choice*, and there were to be special Coronation *Family Favourites* chosen by people waiting along the route of the procession in London. *Take It From Here* was to be pre-recorded on an aircraft carrier; Wilfred Pickles was to report from an 'intimate street party'; and Eamonn Andrews was to interview visitors to London. This wide range of programmes was to be well publicized in the *Radio Times*, which for Coronation week reached a

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid. The earliest 'Coronation programmes' went out in October 1952—*Getting to Britain* and *Getting About in Britain*. Programmes on *The Queen's Velvet*, *Making the Coronation Robes*, and *The New Elizabethan Coins* went out the following month. As late as 3 Jan. 1954 an edited version of the Coronation Service was shown (\**Television Broadcasting News*, 14 Dec. 1953). There was a repeat in 1977. For such broadcasts, see the script of the programme, *Fifty Years of Royal Broadcasts*, narrated by Robert Hudson and produced by Stephen Williams; it was first transmitted on 5 Nov. 1964. See also the 1977 series by Audrey Russell, who has given most broadcasts relating to the royal family, *Audrey Russell Remembers*.

<sup>2</sup> \*These were some of the actual reactions ('Reaction to the Coronation Broadcasts Overseas', Aug. 1953).

peak sale for any British weekly magazine of over nine million copies.

On the great day itself, blustery and cold, which had been preceded by many rehearsals, *Music While You Wait* at 5.30 a.m. in the Home Service took the place of *Music While You Work*. The television team, 120 strong, had arrived at their posts more than three hours before the first television programme at 10.15 a.m., when Sylvia Peters appeared on the screen to announce proudly 'this is a great and joyous day for us all'. There was to be more than one heroine in the Procession itself. A second queen to establish her reputation on 2 June was Queen Salote of Tonga, waving to the crowds from her open carriage in the rain. Yet Queen Elizabeth herself was singled out by all the commentators. 'Even her handbag showed on TV,' wrote the *Daily Mirror*.<sup>1</sup> *The Times* singled out the Sound commentary, picking out John Snagge, in particular;<sup>2</sup> and one Mass Observation correspondent, who felt that television dwarfed the people who appeared on it, preferred sound to vision.<sup>3</sup> For most of the rest of the correspondents and the Press, however, 'real pictures' were preferred to eloquent descriptions. As *The Star* put it, 'Television had cornered the right to put its name first over the BBC door.'<sup>4</sup> 'Television links Provinces with the Abbey' was a headline in the *Daily Telegraph*, in which Marsland Gander referred to 'the greatest day of TV' and added that 'the BBC presented the programmes with a fine sense of drama and fitness'.<sup>5</sup>

Listener and viewer reactions both at home and abroad were very carefully collected and sifted inside the BBC and, when possible, measured. Audience Research tried, indeed, to ascertain *where* as well as when and how many people listened and viewed on Coronation Day. The television figures were remarkable: 53 per cent of the adult population of Great Britain

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1953; cf. the *Daily Express*, 3 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 3 June 1953. 'A Picture in Sound: Broadcasting at its Best'.

<sup>3</sup> Mass Observation Archives.

<sup>4</sup> *The Star*, 3 June 1953.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 1953. Cf. *News Chronicle*, 3 June 1953: 'The BBC has never served the nation better.' The *Manchester Guardian* said simply, 'The BBC did excellent work' (3 June 1953). Similar remarks were being made privately. Thus, the BBC's Head of Religious Broadcasting, the Rev. F. H. House, said that 'the Service in the Abbey was so extraordinarily well done in itself that we should indeed have been idiots if we had not succeeded in producing a satisfactory television broadcast of it' (\*Note to de Lotbinière, 3 June 1953).



—over 19 million—viewed the procession to the Abbey, and 56 per cent—over 20 million—viewed the Coronation Service. Only 12 per cent of the adult population neither listened to nor viewed the Service. Given the magnitude of the television figures, it was clear, of course, that most people were watching outside their homes. The audience for the Service included only 7,800,000 viewing in their own homes as against 10,400,000 viewing in the homes of friends and 1,500,000 in public places such as cinemas, public halls and public houses.

There were several interesting contrasts. Whereas listening figures diminished sharply after the fly-past, viewing figures remained high for the day: 26 per cent of the adult population, for instance, watched *Childeren's Television*. There were no television programmes between 6.20 and 8 p.m., but listening remained modest—with smaller audiences than usual. Of the nearly nine million people who viewed the edited telerecording of the Coronation Service, at least half had already seen it in the morning, and there were 4,700,000 people in other people's homes watching the scenes outside Buckingham Palace at 9.10 p.m.

In every Region except the West the viewing audience outnumbered the listening audience, with the television audience in the London and Midland Regions nearly three times as big as the listening audience. Nearly everyone was satisfied. Asked whether they were 'completely satisfied', 'moderately dissatisfied', or 'thoroughly dissatisfied', 84 per cent of listeners and 98 per cent of viewers said that they were 'completely satisfied'. The satisfaction rate for the Sound commentary on the Service (92 per cent) was the highest ever recorded for a Sound broadcast.<sup>1</sup> The Press gave full backing to such opinions. 'It was a triumph extraordinary,' wrote the *Glasgow Herald*, 'making a new departure in the revolution of communications.'<sup>2</sup>

Nearly three thousand viewers and listeners wrote to the BBC or sent telegrams praising the BBC's performance, and nearly four hundred viewers telephoned Broadcasting House. For once, there were no critical voices. Several blind listeners

<sup>1</sup> \*Listener Research Report, 11 June 1953. In Manchester more than 2,000 people saw the ceremony on big-screen (24 feet by 18 feet) television in the Gaumont Cinema (*Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 1953).

<sup>2</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 June 1953.

praised the sound broadcasts. So, too, did some listeners who could see. 'I do not feel I lost anything,' wrote one, 'but rather gained by listening and not watching.'<sup>1</sup> The viewing enthusiasts included the historian Arthur Bryant, who called the day 'the greatest achievement in the Corporation's history', and the scientist Sir Lawrence Bragg, who claimed that it was not only the visual power but other aspects of the transmissions which should become matters of praise. 'The moral effect has been tremendous,' wrote one viewer.

In retrospect, several newspapers raised interesting points about the visual record. Thus, *The Scotsman* alone noted how viewers missed 'the gorgeous colour', although it added that they were given 'something which seemed, perhaps, even more in tune with the mystique of the Coronation Service—an enchanting succession of pictures in silver, grey and black, sometimes reminiscent of a Dürer engraving'.<sup>2</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* formed a different impression. It referred to 'one beautiful framed picture after another' filling the screen. 'It seemed at times as if we were flicking over a series of the Coronation prints or gazing on the formalised symmetry of mediaeval tapestry.'<sup>3</sup> *The Observer* thought of a 'medieval morality play', and Richard Dimbleby, as he half closed his eyes, felt that he might have been watching 'something that had happened a thousand years before'. The only thing that spoiled the day was the litter left behind by the Peers.<sup>4</sup>

Overseas comments were just as enthusiastic. The Coronation was covered in sound by seventy-three representatives of thirty-two broadcasting organizations, sixteen of them European, and some foreign services carried special programmes as well as commentaries.<sup>5</sup> The President of NHK in Japan, for example, sent a personal message, grateful that BBC tele-

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Note, 'Programme Correspondence about the Coronation Broadcasts' (with Extracts), 29 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 June 1953. Barnes told the Critics' Lunch on 19 Nov. 1953 that 'colour was now assumed in all our orders for buildings and plant' (Barnes Papers).

<sup>3</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 3 June 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *The Observer*, 7 June 1953; Dimbleby, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>5</sup> \*BBC Note, 'The Coronation and European Broadcasting Organisations', 11 June 1953; 'Reaction to Coronation Television Relays, France and Belgium', 7 June 1953.

recordings had been viewed in Tokyo on 5 June, three days ahead of the commercial newsreels.<sup>1</sup> Fears of a geomagnetic storm did not handicap the preparations or the performance, although in summing up the 'lessons learned' from the day Max-Muller stated plainly, 'It is unwise to estimate too closely in the early stages what visiting broadcasters' requirements will be as they are almost invariably altered.' 'The BBC,' he went on, 'should make up its own mind as to how much it can provide and then fit requirements into the scheme.'<sup>2</sup>

The RTF sent six television commentators and observers of its own to London, and it was estimated that a million people saw the Coronation in France. Even the BBC's evening transmissions were shown in France, although not the Queen's speech nor that of the Prime Minister. France, Holland, and West Germany all telecast three BBC pre-Coronation films, *When the Queen is Crowned*, *The Second Elizabeth*, and *What is the Crown?*, and the Germans and the Dutch made just as much of the Coronation itself as did the French. NWDR (Hamburg), for instance, relayed the BBC's entire television output from 10.15 a.m. to 6.20 p.m. as well as the full three hours of evening programmes, and, by special arrangement with Bayerischer Rundfunk, the programmes were available also in the Munich area.<sup>3</sup>

Reception was good everywhere—one viewer in Rome picked up the BBC's programmes with a home-made set—and nearly a quarter of French set owners thought that reception was as good as that normally expected from their local station. They went on, indeed, to ask for more programmes from Britain 'to strengthen the ties that unite us'.<sup>4</sup> 'It was solemn, sacred and impressive,' several Germans remarked, while pitying 'the poor spectators on the streets who looked so wet'. They, too, thought that television would make for a 'closer friendship of nations', while a restaurant proprietor, reasoning on a more mundane level, said that he wished there was a coronation every day 'and

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Paper, 'Reaction to the Coronation Broadcasts Overseas', Aug. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report by Max-Muller, 13 Aug. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*'The Coronation—Television Coverage in Europe', 12 June 1953. The German relays, by seven transmitters in all, were seen by 375,000 people.

<sup>4</sup> \*'Reaction to Coronation Television Relays, France and Belgium', 7 June 1953. For the more long-term effects of the broadcasts in France, see below, pp. 496-503.

then we'd have good business every day'.<sup>1</sup> 'Niets dan lof' was the general Dutch reaction: 'Nothing but praise.'<sup>2</sup>

On Coronation Day the British were encouraged to think of Europe as well as of the Commonwealth. A popular radio programme, *Coronation Day Across the World*, broadcast at 9.15 p.m., included contributions from Hilversum, Paris, Copenhagen and Oslo. The first of these came from a café, the last from a Coronation party in the British Embassy. Later in the evening in the Light Programme Geraldo and his Orchestra could be heard playing late-night dance music from Lille.<sup>3</sup>

Particular attention was paid in London—for different reasons—to the response in the Commonwealth and in the United States. 'The second Elizabethan era begins on a note of spiritual buoyancy', wrote the *Delhi Express*, 'which Britain has never experienced before. At no time in British history has she enjoyed the moral prestige which the Commonwealth including Britain now commands.'<sup>4</sup> Canada received the first batch of telerecordings in RAF Canberra planes: they were supported, after their five-hour journey across the Atlantic and their landing in Goose Bay, by jet fighter planes of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The procedure was called 'Operation Pony Express'. There, too, the talk was of 'a Commonwealth triumph'. A special survey commissioned in South Africa, the only one comparable to that of the BBC's survey in Britain, identified the longest sustained audience ever recorded in South Africa. The survey dealt only with 'adult Europeans', however, and showed that although more than 51 per cent of Afrikaans-speaking adults were listening to the Coronation Service, the British-speaking proportion was as high as 69. Comments from overseas on the telerecorded programmes included a very few critical reactions. The 'formal beauty' of the scenes filmed in the Abbey made a handful of Commonwealth listeners long for 'more realistic' camera shots.<sup>5</sup>

American interest in the Coronation was lively and widespread, and two major networks, NBC and ABC, took the

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., Germany, 17 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., Holland, 8 June 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*The Coronation and European Broadcasting Organisations', 11 June 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Delhi Express*, 3 June 1953. Cf. *Birmingham Post*, 4 June 1953, where there is a heading 'Commonwealth Prestige never Higher'.

<sup>5</sup> \*'Reaction to the Coronation Broadcasts Overseas', Aug. 1953.

BBC's telerecordings via a special television link between Montreal and Buffalo. NBC, like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, made a complete recording of the BBC coverage; ABC used a cut and edited version printed by the BBC. There was a spectacular race, well publicized in advance, between NBC and CBS to get the full BBC telerecordings from Goose Bay as quickly as possible, but NBC failed in an effort to get the recording direct from London (in a Canberra en route to the Venezuelan Air Force) rather than at one remove from Goose Bay. CBS put its programme on the air first (in Boston) at 4.26 p.m., and later in the evening Ed Murrow arrived hot from London on a CBS stratocruiser. It is estimated that eighty-five million people in the United States watched the Coronation programmes. As far as Sound was concerned, radio coverage in both the United States and Canada was an all-time record for direct broadcasting from the United Kingdom.

What American listeners and viewers actually saw and heard differed substantially sometimes from what British listeners saw and heard, and the divergence soon became almost as much a matter of comment in Britain as the 'triumph of television' itself. At an early stage in the planning of the programmes, the United States networks had undertaken not 'to break into the Abbey ceremony with implications of sponsorship' and had promised to conduct their Coronation broadcasts 'with the greatest dignity and good taste'.<sup>1</sup> The networks would have found it difficult fully to honour such an undertaking as far as local American stations were concerned. Yet they were capable of 'lapses' themselves also. Thus, while NBC's *Today*, normally an early morning magazine-type show, billed for 2 June as *Coronation Coverage*, opened at 5.30 a.m. New York time, two hours earlier than usual, using BBC sound commentary and photographic stills, the programme was broken into for spot announcements, news items, and an interview with H. V. Kaltenborn, one of its star commentators, who asked brashly (while the Abbey Service was continuing), 'Is this show put on by the British for a psychological boost to their somewhat shaky Empire?' A one-minute commercial for a

<sup>1</sup> \*North American Service Information Bulletin, June 1953.

deodorant was introduced just before the network returned to the BBC broadcasting of the Anointing. Later there was a notorious interview in the middle of the Communion Service with 'J. Fred Muggs', the 'charismatic chimpanzee', who was solemnly asked 'Do they have a Coronation where you come from?'<sup>1</sup>

NBC was not the only offender. Ed Murrow's CBS programme was interrupted by large numbers of commercials at what the *New York Times* called 'the most inopportune moments', and one advertisement at least capitalized on the fact that an automobile could be called a 'queen'. Two days later the same influential newspaper stated in a leader that an apology was owed to the British and to the Americans as well.<sup>2</sup> Other newspapers spoke of the Coronation being turned in the United States, like Christmas, into a commercial carnival.<sup>3</sup>

British newspapers hostile to commercial television used the American handling of the Coronation as a dangerous warning. The BBC's output had been 'dignified, reserved, delicate, beautiful', but 'oh how wrong it might have been'.<sup>4</sup> Even before details of the American programmes were received, the lesson was being drawn that 'once sponsored radio and TV are admitted, nothing is sacred'.<sup>5</sup> 'Does the fine feat of the BBC', the *Daily Herald* asked, 'suggest that the BBC is in need of "competition" to improve its efficiency? Can anyone believe that a commercially-owned television system, operating on another wavelength, could have done better or nearly as well?'<sup>6</sup>

When the first pictures of the American handling of the programmes appeared on Sunday 7 June, there was very sharp criticism by the British of what had been done, particularly of the chimpanzee. 'The crowning of J. Fred Muggs' was a *Daily Express* headline which included cartoons as well as pictures, and other newspapers soon took up the theme. The *Financial Times*, supporting commercial television, insisted that 'there will have to be safeguards',<sup>7</sup> and Maurice Wiggin, tele-

<sup>1</sup> For J. Fred Muggs and his part in establishing the *To-day* series, see E. Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty* (1975), pp. 146-7, 168, 171.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, 7, 9 June 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *World Telegram*, 7 June 1963. Among the critics was *Variety*, the American trade paper.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 4 June 1953.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Herald*, 4 June 1953.

<sup>7</sup> *Financial Times*, 5 June 1953.

vision and radio critic, wrote in the *Sunday Times* that 'many who had awaited the coming of commercial television with indifference or complacency may have serious second thoughts. It is inconceivable that commercial television could have equalled the BBC's performance on Tuesday.'<sup>1</sup>

An older radio critic, Jonah Barrington, went on in the *Daily Sketch* to describe 'jubilation among the BBC chiefs' as they heard the public exclaim loudly, 'Surely that sort of thing must never happen here'. 'For the first time since this sponsorship battle began, Sir Ian is sitting pretty, and the viewing public, I believe, is solidly behind him.'<sup>2</sup> Certainly Jacob sent round a jubilant message to 'all staff' congratulating them on 'a most notable achievement, worthy in every way of the great event that was being celebrated',<sup>3</sup> and de Lotbinière told Dimbleby, even more jubilantly, 'it was a long road that led to the Coronation theatre, but we got there, and then a miracle happened and we seem to have achieved something beyond most people's dreams'.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever lessons they drew, all commentators agreed that television was 'here to stay' and here to grow. 'The public's appetite' had been 'whetted'.<sup>5</sup> 'Should the BBC cut down what it spends on sound radio,' was *the* question, 'and use the money for the television service?'<sup>6</sup> Maurice Wiggin still believed that the future of creative, imaginative broadcasting, like the future of music, lay with sound, but he held also that 'when television steps out into the world in its role of reporter' it would have 'first claim on the attention of the people'. The people who had tried behind the scenes to stop the television cameras entering the Abbey had been routed, and after 3 June their attitude became nothing more than 'an historical oddity, as anachronistic as the man with the red flag who walked before the motor car'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Times*, 7 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 8 June 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of 3 June 1953. He referred to 'the culmination of a long period of hard and devoted work on the part of everyone in the Corporation'.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Dimbleby, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-8.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Herald*, 4 June 1953.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Sunday Times*, 7 June 1953.

### 3. Link-up

BOTH the domestic and international implications of the Coronation must be seen in longer perspectives than those of June 1953 or even those of royal broadcasting, to be handled so magnificently over the years (and with declining protocol and greater informality) by Dimbleby, Godfrey Talbot, Audrey Russell, Antony Craxton, and Richard Cawston; and in the international context it is necessary to look back earlier than 1953 before looking forward towards 'the age of television'.

Exchange of radio programmes between different European countries has a long history. Thus in 1935, for example, to take one representative pre-war year, British listeners had been able to hear, *inter alia*, a Chopin recital from Warsaw, operas from Milan, Eskimo songs from Denmark, and a programme of Egyptian music from Cairo.<sup>1</sup> Fifteen years later, 'Easter in Europe' was being celebrated by fifteen choirs from eight countries, including choirs in Rome, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, a school for children of displaced persons at Neustadt in Germany, and a village in Oxfordshire. In 1948, Radio Centre, Moscow, had refused a request for a broadcast to Britain of Russian Orthodox Church music, but St. Stephen's Cathedral, Budapest, had joined in the celebrations, and part of Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* had been recorded direct from Prague a week after the Communist coup.<sup>2</sup>

International politics had directly influenced the pattern of international broadcasting arrangements in Europe both during the war and after 1945. The BBC had suspended its membership of the pre-war European Broadcasting Union (UIR) during the spring of 1941, when it had already become clear that the Union was under German influence.<sup>3</sup> It remained

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1951*, pp. 41-6.

<sup>3</sup> The Union Internationale de Radiodiffusion (originally Radiophonie) had been founded in 1926. It had Geneva headquarters and a checking station ('Centre de Contrôle') in Brussels. It did not include the USSR, but the Americans and the British Dominions were Associate Members, and it was also used by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the world body that allocated bands of frequencies to different users. An invaluable account of the work of UIR during



a shareholder, however, in SICUIR, the international holding company which had built the technical 'Centre de Contrôle' in Brussels, and during the winter of 1945-6 it was willing to be associated with 'a meeting of the Union members to discuss the present position and the future of the Union'.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the record of the Union in war-time, Ashbridge was uneasy about supporting it as a peace-time institution, but he recognized nonetheless in 1945 that it was 'desirable that an active broadcasting Union should function as soon as possible in view of the wavelength problems and other matters likely to arise'.<sup>2</sup> Plans went ahead, therefore, with BBC support, for a meeting at Brussels in March 1946 not of broadcasting organizations as such but of representatives from different European countries. The Belgian Government summoned the meeting, which was attended by individuals from twenty states, including the USSR which had not been a member of the pre-war Union, and at Ashbridge's suggestion, Kuypers of the Belgian Radio was voted into the chair.<sup>3</sup>

The British Government's attitude to this meeting was defined not only by the Post Office, which by law determined

<sup>1</sup> \*Ashbridge to Kuypers, President of SICUIR, 14 Dec. 1945. The pre-war 'Centre de Contrôle' had been evacuated from Brussels in May 1940 and moved to Paris, Toulouse, and Geneva before returning to Brussels under German auspices early in 1941. It made its way back to Geneva in 1945 after having been evacuated from Brussels by the Germans, and it was later sent to Austria. In January 1946 it returned to Brussels (\*Glogg to Ashbridge, 7 Jan. 1946). Its pre-war Director, the Frenchman Raymond Braillard, who had been made Technical Head of Vichy Radio during the war, died before the end of the war.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ashbridge to Malderex, the Director-General of Belgian Radio, 30 Nov. 1945, in reply to a letter from him of 20 Nov. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Ashbridge on the Brussels Meeting, 12-15 March 1946. The meeting, which was described as a 'Réunion d'Information', was attended by representatives from Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Eire, France, Britain, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Canada, USSR, and Vatican City. Spain had not been invited to send a representative.

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the war was prepared by R. M. Frewen on 10 Dec. 1945. The Union had lost its British Secretary, Arthur Burrows, on 1 April 1940, and after the fall of Belgium and France and the withdrawal one by one of Allied countries it passed increasingly under German influence. Its publications became subject to German censorship and the German Braunmuhl had a key influence on its policies. When the defeat of Germany became imminent, its Swiss members, including its President and 'interim' Secretary, Glogg and de Reding, made an effort to link up again with Allied organizations, but their role remained controversial in 1945 and 1946. Glogg visited London to see Ashbridge in December 1945.

which wavelengths were available to the BBC, but by Ivone Kirkpatrick of the Foreign Office, who had served as the BBC's own Controller, European Services, during the war.<sup>1</sup> The UIR, he said, might continue to have a useful role to play in technical matters, but the United Nations Organization as a whole would now wish to be more directly involved in all those political aspects of broadcasting which were 'difficult to deal with on a regional basis' of wavelengths. A European agreement by itself would certainly not be enough. There was no tinge of 'Europeanism' in Kirkpatrick's attitude in 1946. He dwelt entirely, rather, on the need for exploratory meetings of the five great powers to deal with future arrangements for wavelengths, and on the importance of preparing an agenda for a large-scale international tele-communications conference. Like the USSR, which intervened decisively at the end of the Brussels meeting, the British Government at this stage obviously did not want to see UIR reinstated 'in something like its pre-war form'.<sup>2</sup>

At the Brussels meeting the USSR began by recognizing that a brand new European organization might effectively meet its interests, particularly if several of its autonomous republics (including White Russia and the Ukraine as well as Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) could be represented in a European Assembly and if the new organization would support a global redistribution of wavelengths which would increase the limited number of wavelengths at the disposal of the Soviet Union. Once this Soviet position became apparent to the other representatives present, the balance of politics shifted in consequence. There was strong opposition, therefore, to the USSR's specific proposal that votes in any new organization should be allotted in proportion to the area and number of transmitters in each country, instead of one vote to each country. A majority of representatives present agreed to a new plan, backed by the USSR, but R. D'A. Marriott, the BBC's spokesman, fearing that any new European organization would be 'in effect under Russian control', made it clear that the BBC should not join any new organization on these terms.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 333-5, 342.

<sup>2</sup> \*I. Kirkpatrick to Haley, 2 March 1946; Note of a Discussion between Haley, Kirkpatrick, and Ashbridge, 6 March 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by R. D'A. Marriott, 12 July 1946.

Marriott's opinion was fully backed by the British Government, which throughout 1945 and 1946 continued to attach top priority to working not through a new European organization but through the UN or one of its agencies. Haley, who was anxious above all not to compromise the BBC's independence to decide, was nonetheless in full agreement with Kirkpatrick that 'a regional broadcasting agency dealing with both technical and non-technical aspects' of broadcasting would not be desirable in 1946. When the majority at Brussels agreed, therefore, to set up a new OIR (Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion), with new statutes, the BBC refused to join and Kirkpatrick continued to advocate the setting up of 'a specialised agency for broadcasting' within the UN with different voting rules, 'under the auspices of, say, the Commission on Human Rights'.<sup>1</sup>

Such *haute politique* raised very different issues from those of programme-exchange between European broadcasting agencies, nor did it have anything at all to do with television, the medium of the future. The only concession the British, who attended as observers, had been able to win at Brussels was that members of the new OIR promised that their statutes (and their organization itself) could be treated as 'interim' pending the meeting of a world conference of broadcasting organizations during the autumn. Meanwhile, since several other countries followed the BBC in refusing to join the new OIR—Switzerland, Turkey, Eire, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Portugal<sup>2</sup>—the way was left open for the survival of the old UIR. The 'Bureau', which had worked out the arrangements for the Brussels Conference,<sup>3</sup> had agreed that the regular annual meeting of the old UIR should be held in Geneva immediately after the Brussels Conference, hoping that with the setting up of a new OIR the old UIR would dissolve itself; but because of the differences at Brussels the outcome was very different. A motion for the dissolution of the old UIR failed to

<sup>1</sup> \*Kirkpatrick to Haley, 13 June 1946. Ashbridge wrote to Kuypers along these lines on 14 June 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Belgium and France were founder members of the new organization, the latter bringing in also Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco.

<sup>3</sup> It included Kuypers, representatives of the BBC, Radio Nederland, Radiodiffusion Française, Československý Rozhlas, and the Soviet Broadcasting Authority.

secure the necessary three-quarters majority at Geneva. Switzerland, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Eire, and Italy voted against dissolution, and the BBC abstained. The old UIR remained in existence, therefore, alongside the new OIR, with a Swiss President, Georges Conus, and four Vice-Presidents, of whom Leon O'Broin of Eire was one.<sup>1</sup>

There was a marked contrast in mood between the Brussels and Geneva meetings. The former was quiet and dignified, and the Conference ended in what the BBC delegate called 'a friendly and conciliatory atmosphere'. The latter, however, was stormy, with tempers running high; and it was only because of the BBC's 'neutral' mediation that the revived UIR agreed, like the new OIR, to dissolve itself if the proposed world conference brought about the creation of a new world broadcasting organization. It undertook also, however, to make available to the OIR—as the 'majority organization'—the 'Centre de Contrôle' in Brussels.

At the end of these manœuvres, there were two European bodies in existence, and the BBC, which had been in such a powerful position internationally in May 1945,<sup>2</sup> was a member of neither. Indeed, the BBC was now not only somewhat isolated in European broadcasting but was being treated coolly by the British Government.<sup>3</sup> Kirkpatrick made it abundantly clear that the Government did not approve of the idea of a world conference on broadcasting being convened by the new OIR, and he urged the BBC to consider very carefully whether tactically it would be better to attend the Conference or boycott it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for a good brief summary, M. Gorham, *Forty Years of Irish Broadcasting* (1967), p. 192. After leaving the BBC Gorham served for seven years as Director of Broadcasting in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 140–1.

<sup>3</sup> \*A disgruntled Kirkpatrick told Haley that 'the present position could scarcely be more unsatisfactory' (letter of 22 July 1946). The US Government, he said, did not wish OIR to be allowed 'to become the prototype for future world organization'. In a handwritten note at the end of the letter Haley wrote to Ashbridge, 'Kirkpatrick said this would be a tiresome letter and it is.' He replied to Kirkpatrick on 25 July.

<sup>4</sup> \*Kirkpatrick to Haley, 22 July 1946. Haley did not believe there had been any lack of liaison as Kirkpatrick suggested. Meetings were held on 29 July and 6 August at which Haley, Ashbridge, Marriott, Kirkpatrick, Gallop, and Angwin of the Post Office were present.

In fact, no such world conference was called for November 1946, for most countries inside and outside Europe were prepared to await the next conference of the International Telecommunications Union, a well-established international body which had been adopted by the UN as one of its specialized agencies. This, it was decided, should be held at Atlantic City in May 1947, and a preliminary meeting was held in Moscow to prepare for it.<sup>1</sup> Once again Kirkpatrick was involved as well as representatives of the Post Office.<sup>2</sup> The uncertainty persisted, with the BBC wisely distancing itself somewhat from official British Government policy. Kirkpatrick continued to press for international broadcasting to be related to the United Nations Organization, through ITU on the technical side and through another organ of the UN, possibly UNESCO, on the non-technical side; but Marriott, backed by Haley, stated correctly that it would prove impossible to do without some regional organization and that it was essential for programme matters to be handled by professional broadcasters and not by non-specialist international organizations.<sup>3</sup>

One unfortunate result of the temporary 'divergence' between the BBC and the Government, however, was that the Foreign Office and the Post Office did not keep the BBC fully informed of the development of their own policies in 1948 and 1949.<sup>4</sup> As early as August 1946, the Post Office, still suspicious of regional groupings, had proposed that to the three consultative committees of the ITU, which included one on radio (CCIR), there should be added a fourth—CCID—to deal with international aspects of broadcasting,<sup>5</sup> but it had been forced to withdraw the idea when neither the USSR nor the USA (not to speak of France and China) supported it. The Post Office, indeed, was in danger of becoming even more isolated than the

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Telephone Conversation between Kuypers and Ashbridge, 19 Aug. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> The last International Telecommunications Conference had been held in Cairo in 1938, but the Montreux Plan for European wavelengths, decided upon in 1939, had never come into force in 1940 as planned. In 1945 countries were still following the obsolete Lucerne Plan of 1933.

<sup>3</sup> \*Marriott to Ashbridge, 27 Aug. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report on a Meeting at the Post Office, 17 Sept. 1946; Marriott to Ashbridge, 21 Jan. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> The Post Office sent its proposals to Ashbridge on 30 Aug. 1946.

BBC had been before it strengthened its own independent initiatives in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

At the 1947 Atlantic City Conference on short-wave allocation and at the subsequent 1948 Copenhagen Conference on long and medium-wave allocation there was further argument about voting procedures as well as about wavelengths.<sup>2</sup> Yet the British differences were largely resolved. The Soviet Union did not arrive at Atlantic City until the Conference was well under way, and there were immediate confrontations both in plenary meetings and at a European planning group of eight countries set up to prepare a draft plan for the Copenhagen meeting. In such circumstances it was essential to present a coherent and agreed British case, and L. W. Hayes, Head of the BBC's Overseas and Engineering Information Department, was nominated by the Post Office as 'Delegate of the Postal Administration of the United Kingdom'. This was the first occasion on which the Post Office, fully aware of the BBC's requirements for long and medium wavelengths,<sup>3</sup> had ever been represented by a member of the BBC staff.<sup>4</sup> The Foreign Office, too, strongly supported the BBC's minimum request, which went up to the Cabinet's Information Services Committee, for one long and twelve medium wavelengths. It noted helpfully how since 1945 the BBC's European Service had suffered heavy losses not only in staff but in wavelengths, and that there had been 'a deterioration in morale from the knowledge that members of the Government of the day were not enthusiastic about its retention'. This statement represented something of a change of position in relation to Europe, but it is interesting to note that 'the Government of the day' referred to was the Coalition Government in its closing months and the 'Caretaker Government'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Marriott, 'Report on a Conference at Paris, 28-29 Oct.', 2 Nov. 1946; Marriott to Ashbridge, 21 Jan. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> See Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), pp. 408-10. A further conference was held on short-wave allocations at Mexico City in October 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*L. W. Hayes, 'European Regional Conference, Preliminary Meeting of Experts', 25 March 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Townshend to Ashbridge, 2 Dec. 1947; Report of a Meeting at which the Post Office and the Foreign Office were represented, 18 Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*For the Cabinet Information Services Committee, see below, p. 524. At its meeting on 11 May 1948 it had before it two papers—the Foreign Office paper and a Post Office paper summarizing wavelength problems since the Madrid Conference of 1932. The BBC's policies were subsequently considered by the

The need for common action was only too apparent, not only at Atlantic City, where the European Planning Group failed to agree on any of the main issues,<sup>1</sup> but at further preparatory meetings in Brussels. The USSR had drawn the attention of the French delegates to the fact that the BBC had two long wavelengths and the French none, and there were many similar cross-communications, details of which were conveyed to the Cabinet's Information Services Committee which was preparing the final British instructions for Copenhagen.<sup>2</sup> The tangled politics of OIR and UIR still complicated the discussions,<sup>3</sup> and although the Copenhagen Plan as it was eventually formulated did not meet what the BBC had said was its minimum request, the final allocation of wavelengths was nonetheless accepted somewhat reluctantly, 'with all its imperfections', as being 'more advantageous than no plan at all'.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-five of the thirty-two countries present at Copenhagen signed it, although the Americans, who wished to safeguard their wavelengths for broadcasting in occupied Germany, refused to accept it.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, it was hoped in many circles that the confusion caused by the existence of two European broadcasting organizations—UIR and OIR—could be sorted out, or that it might be possible to change the statutes of OIR to make it acceptable

<sup>1</sup> \*Two plans were proposed—one by Professor Van der Pol of the Netherlands, the second a Russian plan for which they sought unanimous agreement (Note by Hayes, 25 March 1948).

<sup>2</sup> \*Hayes to Ashbridge, 21 May 1948; Haley, Note on a Conversation with Mayer of RDF (Radiodiffusion Française), 26 May 1948. The Cabinet Information Services Committee discussed the instructions at a meeting on 15 June 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*The OIR issued a statement in Brussels on 19 May 1948 claiming designation as the only representative body for European broadcasting. Ashbridge wrote to Haley on the subject from Copenhagen where he and Hayes were the British representatives, 2 July 1948. He described progress as 'appallingly slow'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of a Meeting at the Foreign Office, 13 Sept. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Jacob to Ashbridge, 29 Dec. 1948. There were further discussions between the Americans, the British, and the French in 1949. There was a full BBC report on the Plan circulated on 21 Sept. 1950. 'Except for reception of the Third Programme which has much improved, the implementation of the Plan has not so far made any striking differences.' See also *Radio Times*, 10 March 1950. There were further notes of 15 March 1951 and October 1952 pointing to 'deterioration' in listening conditions.

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Governors at their May meeting (*Minutes*, 13 May 1948). They continued to urge the case for two medium wavelengths for broadcasting to Europe (Simon to Paling, 10 June 1948).

to the BBC and other countries outside it. Haley emphasized that the BBC was 'as anxious as everyone else is to see established the unity of broadcasting bodies in the European area', but he pointed to the difficulties, including difficulties of principle;<sup>1</sup> and his judgement was confirmed by the failure of a conference convened in August 1949 at Stresa by the Board of Management of the OIR, the Bureau of the UIR, and the BBC. There were four sessions of the Conference at which all the old difficulties were again apparent, particularly those with the USSR, and no agreement was possible.<sup>2</sup> This final failure—one of the failures of the cold war—led directly to the setting up of a completely new organization.

It had been accepted for some time that if the OIR would not or could not modify its constitution to meet British conditions for joining, 'the BBC would take steps to constitute an alternative broadcasting union within Europe';<sup>3</sup> and the idea of including the 'like-minded' sixteen Marshall Plan countries in a new Union, which took shape in 1948 and 1949, gained momentum after the Stresa failure. The BBC had always insisted that France, Belgium, Holland, and Italy would have to be members of such a Union if it were to work at all,<sup>4</sup> and all their delegates made it clear at Stresa that if a new body could be created they would resign from the OIR as soon as they had consulted their own authorities. They hoped, however, that 'the division between East and West could be made with as little friction as possible'.<sup>5</sup>

Sir Ian Jacob was brought into the international discussions to an increasing extent in 1949, when after further complex negotiations in London, Brussels, Paris, and Geneva a preparatory Paris Conference of 'Western countries', belonging either to OIR or UIR or neither, decided in December 1949 to ask the BBC to convene a further conference in 1950. This would have the task of forming a new Union consisting of all the broadcasting organizations of countries in the European Zone

<sup>1</sup> \*Kuypers to Haley, 21 June 1949; Haley to Kuypers, 30 June 1949; Kuypers to Haley, 4 July 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*There is an interesting report on the Conference by Marriott, 16 Aug. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 18 Feb. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Ashbridge, 16 Dec. 1948; Undated Note by Marriott, March 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Marriott on the Stresa Conference, 16 Aug. 1949.



which were members of the ITU.<sup>1</sup> It was proposed at the same time that there should be a 'Mixed Commission' on which both the USSR and the new Union would be represented.

Eleven members of OIR resigned before the end of 1949, and on 10 January 1950 a broadcast in English on the Czechoslovak Radio announced that at an extraordinary general meeting of the OIR in Prague between 5 and 7 January it had been decided to move the headquarters of OIR from Brussels to Prague. A few days later, all the members of the Brussels staff were 'sacked without notice or indemnity'.<sup>2</sup> The way was now open for the setting up of a new European Broadcasting Union (EBU); and the location of the Conference which brought it into being—the Imperial Hotel, Torquay—which at first sight is a little surprising, is explicable in terms of the BBC's stake in the venture and its desire to assemble the delegates outside London. Oliver Whitley of the BBC acted as Secretary, and Jacob was chosen as first President.<sup>3</sup> There were Belgian and Swiss Vice-Presidents, and it was decided to continue to locate the 'Centre de Contrôle' in Brussels (with Henri Anglès d'Auriac as Director) and the Administrative Office in Geneva (with Wallenborn, Secretary-General of the OIR, as the first Director). Efforts were made (at first, in vain) to maintain contact on technical problems of broadcasting with OIR in Prague.<sup>4</sup>

One of the five tasks of the old UIR—programme exchange—had been pushed into the background during the difficult five years after 1949 when politics overshadowed all else; and a Programme Committee was not formed by EBU until 1953, when the Director-General of Swiss Radio, Marcel Bezençon, was appointed Chairman. The Committee did not actually meet until February 1954, four years after the implementation of the Copenhagen plan.

By then Britain was firmly planted in 'the age of television'

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Conference, 13–15 Dec. 1949; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 19 Dec. 1949, agreeing that invitations should be sent. An important memorandum by Jacob, 'European Broadcasting Union', dated 10 Feb. 1949, was also submitted to the Governors.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by Marriott, 28 Nov. 1949; Report of a Telephone Call, 3 Feb. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of the Proceedings, 6–14 Feb. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Jacob to Koloskov, 12 Feb. 1950.

and other countries were moving into it. Radio links continued to operate, but although there were critical experiments earlier, it was not until June 1954 that a television link between eight countries was announced.<sup>1</sup> It was not until January 1955, indeed, that a BBC Press Release was published revealing that an order had been placed with the Post Office for a permanent two-way television link between London and the Continent.<sup>2</sup> The magic word 'Eurovision' was invented not by an organization or a committee, but by an individual, the journalist George Campey, who employed it as early as 1951.<sup>3</sup>

France, which had been involved with Britain in all the political squabbles of the late 1940s, was the pioneer along with Britain in European television exchange. She had restarted her television service—very modestly—in 1945, whereas regular television programmes did not begin in Holland, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, and Denmark until 1951, 1952, 1953, 1953, 1954, 1954, respectively. Even in France there were only 15,000 sets in the Paris area in 1950 and it was not until 1951 that French Radio changed its name from Radiodiffusion Française (RDF) to Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française (RTF). As late as the summer of 1954 there were still only 10,000 sets in Germany,<sup>4</sup> while of Italy's 34,000 television sets, many were to be found not in homes but in cafés and public places. The chronology of link-up between European countries depended on the timetable of development of the different national systems and of the underlying decisions, necessarily separate, to build the forty-four transmitters which were in use when the 1954 'Eurovision Plan' was announced.

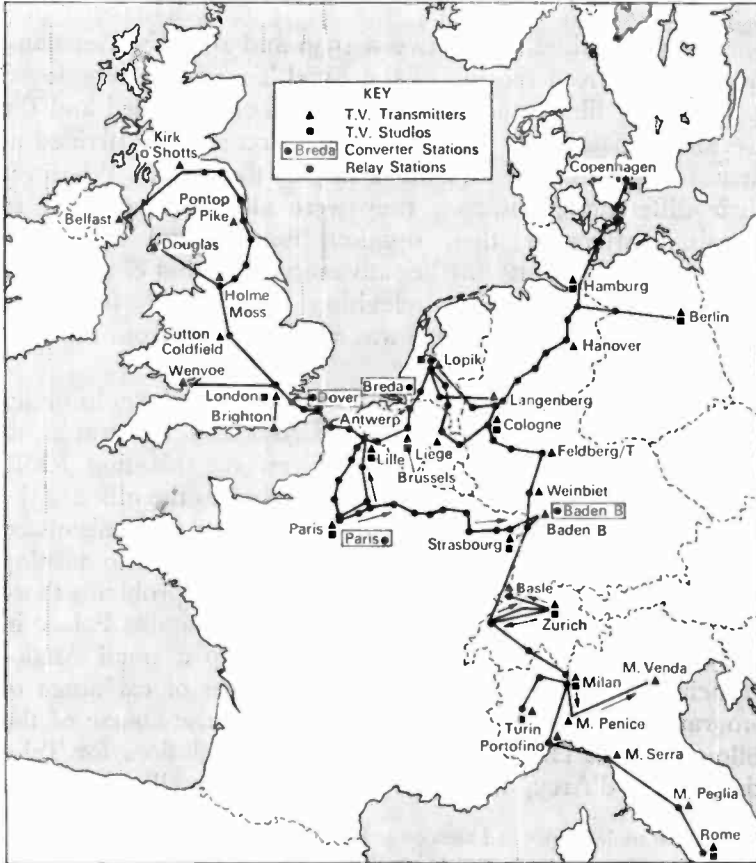
The year 1950 was the first real landmark in post-war European television history; it was the year not only of the founding at Torquay of the EBU, but of the first cross-Channel television. Appropriately, too, it was the year of a great centenary; 23 August 1950 marked the hundredth anniversary of the laying of the first cross-Channel submarine cable; and past

<sup>1</sup> *Picture Post*, 5 June 1954: 'TV Eurovision: How did this link between seven European countries and Britain come about?' The article pointed out that 'Eurovision is not something that has materialised overnight'. 'When the switches are thrown on June 6 it will mark the end of an experimental era that started in 1950.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Press Release, 'European Television Programme Exchanges', 12 Jan. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> G. Campey, 'And Now Eurovision' in the *Evening Standard*, 5 Nov. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> There were already, however, eight German transmitters.



14. Eurovision chart, *Picture Post*, 5 June 1954

and future were deliberately brought into relation with each other as a BBC mobile camera unit broadcast live cross-Channel scenes from Calais to London. Hitherto, it had been impossible to transmit outside-broadcast television programmes from points further than thirty-five miles from the television network, but working on very short wavelengths the ninety-five miles from Calais to London no longer proved an insuperable obstacle.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, there were other problems in the way of exchange of programmes, for television in France was developing on different lines from television in Britain, both technically and

<sup>1</sup> \*Memorandum on 'International Television', April 1954.

organizationally. Before the war, in 1939, it had been presented on 455 lines, but between 1939 and 1944 the Germans, transmitting from the top of the Eiffel Tower, had employed 441 lines for film transmission.<sup>1</sup> When the war ended and the Germans smashed the transmitter, the French were divided at first about the number of lines to employ themselves. Whatever their differences, however, they were all convinced that in certain matters—in their opinion ‘fundamental matters’—French technique was ‘further advanced than that of any other country’. High-definition television was prized (explicitly more than colour), and there was active interest from the start in long-distance transmission.<sup>2</sup>

Post-war French television had not passed back again under the direct control of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs, as it had been before 1939, and the new organization RDF, Radiodiffusion Française, was closely linked to the office of the President. Its head, Wladimir Porché, who had been dismissed by the Vichy Government in 1940, was determined to develop good relations with the British, however many problems there might be in relation to OIR.<sup>3</sup> He visited Alexandra Palace in 1949, when he and Haley agreed to set up a small Anglo-French Committee to examine the question of exchange of programmes,<sup>4</sup> and his interest grew during the course of the following year. His Head of International Relations for Television, Jean d’Arcy, appointed in 1950, had excellent relations

<sup>1</sup> The first trials in 1933 had been on 30 lines, and the Eiffel Tower transmitter, opened in November 1935, operated a 180-line service. The decree establishing 455 lines was promulgated on 1 July 1938. The Eiffel Tower was converted to 455 lines later in 1938. For the war-time story, see above, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Y. Angel, ‘The Present State of Television in France’, Feb. 1947. ‘The equipment at our disposal would enable us at present to make an exploitation quite as intensive as that of the British, but the composition of the programmes would, in the beginning, have to be different; as they would have to include a large proportion of tele-cinema.’ \*Television Advisory Committee, Note on Television in France, 14 Jan. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Porché, who had been the pre-war head of French Television, was fired from his post in 1940 by the Vichy Government, and was appointed Director-General of Broadcasting in 1946. He left RTF in 1957 and became a Conseiller d’État.

<sup>4</sup> The BBC representatives on the Committee were Marriott and Imlay Watts and the RDF representatives Armand and Gilson. One of the results was an agreement to exchange newsreel film, but this proved one-sided since nearly all the French film was 16 mm and the British 35 mm. The French had an obvious advantage in this respect. When the Committee met again on 5 Jan. 1940, the BBC included an engineer, Proctor Wilson, in the party.

with McGivern,<sup>1</sup> and there were other contacts also. Thus, Collins had met his French counterpart as early as 1949.<sup>2</sup>

This, however, was only part of the background of the pioneering ventures of 1950. Between 1945 and 1950 French radio and television interests had been in the thick of a competitive struggle not only to settle television policy in France itself but to secure a common European standard. One French group (René Barthélemy and the Compagnie de Compteurs) had begun by pressing for a very high definition 1029-line system, and the other (Henri de France and Radio Industrie) for an 819-line system.<sup>3</sup> It was the second of these two systems which in November 1948 won the victory inside France, a victory announced by François Mitterand, then Minister of Information. There was a temporary reprieve, however, for 441, the line system which had been used by the Germans and which was to remain in limited use in parallel, from the Eiffel Tower, until January 1956.<sup>4</sup>

Naturally it was the victorious 819-line system which the French were keen to see adopted elsewhere, although there were some French officials who claimed that standardization was not very important since exchanges could be made in the form of film recordings and definition-transforming apparatus. Nonetheless, a study group of CCIR (the Radio Consultative Committee of the International Telecommunications Union) had been set up in Stockholm in 1948 to seek to achieve a common standard, and the study group was still meeting (in London and Geneva) in 1950.<sup>5</sup> A full meeting of CCIR was planned for July of that year with the hope that the issue would be settled finally. It was not.<sup>6</sup>

There had always been an element of drama in the European

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern wrote an interesting account of a visit to France in October 1949, noting how the French, whose production methods were, in his view, crude, nevertheless had 'a daily news and newsreel service'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report on a Visit, 15 June 1949.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Collins, 29 June 1949. After the decree of November 1949 the 819-line system came into force on 15 December 1949, but the 441-line system was to continue for over six years.

<sup>4</sup> The parallel system was retained until 3 Jan. 1956 when the 441-line transmitter caught fire. Thereafter the 819-line service functioned alone. 'What a glorious night that was', d'Arcy has said of the fire.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ridgeway, Chairman of the Radio Industry Council, to Haley, 15 June 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 19 June 1950; Pawley, op. cit., p. 315.

line struggle, not only because of the desire of the French to demonstrate the merits of their system—as they did in Copenhagen in 1948<sup>1</sup>—but because it was the determined policy of the Radio Corporation of America to promote, along with Philips, its Dutch ally, a uniform 625-line system in Europe.<sup>2</sup> The line frequency of a 625-line 50-field signal was almost the same as that of the American 525-line 60-field signal, agreed upon in 1941 before Pearl Harbor; and a European adoption of 625 lines would have made, therefore, for partial transatlantic standardization as well. Given this dream, Philips' 'technocrats' were already envisaging 'West Europe encircled by a television pipeline—a vast network of coaxial cable taking television from country to country'.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, East Europe came into the vision too, for the Soviet Union had switched from 441 to 625 lines in November 1948, and Czechoslovakia and Poland were using 625 lines experimentally.

Aggressive American sales policy met with resistance between 1948 and 1950—not least from the Scandinavians—but advocates of the 625-line system were vociferous and pertinacious, and by 1950 Hamburg, Belgium, Denmark (which had started with 567 lines), Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland had been won over. British interests wished not only to retain a 405-line service in Britain, but to win allies abroad; and the Chairman of the British Radio Industry Council, J. W. Ridgeway, believed that it might be possible to persuade the French to adopt the British system of 405 lines instead of the 441 lines of their limited parallel service—this, in turn, would have favoured the sale of British rather than American television receivers in Europe—provided that the British 'recognized the merits' of the high-definition 819-line system, which was favoured in the Vatican City as well as in Paris.<sup>4</sup> A European parallel provision could thus be devised.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by the Television Advisory Committee, 14 Jan. 1948: 'The Press and experts' were said to have been 'cold and sceptical' before the demonstration and 'enthusiastic' afterwards.

<sup>2</sup> \*G. M. Wright to Ashbridge, 22 March 1948, reporting that Philips was about to install a high-power television transmitter at Eindhoven using the American 525-line system.

<sup>3</sup> G. Campey, 'And Now Eurovision' in the *Evening Standard*, 5 Nov. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*By the RIC plan, the French would have changed their parallel low-definition service to 405 lines on the understanding that in the event of the BBC's using 200 megacycles for television distribution, the 819-line standard would be adopted.

The scheme had little chance of success, although it was discussed with the Post Office. Abortive though it was, however, it directed the attention of the British television industry to the possibilities of link-up programming with France. Stimulated by the possibility of selling sets in Europe, the RIC pressed hard for large-scale exchange of programmes by direct transmission between Britain and France in the 'mutual interest' of both countries and their viewers. 'No system beyond the purse of the people' would have 'a mass appeal', it was stated, and a joint Anglo-French endeavour could 'guarantee' such an appeal. 'In the long view' television could offer 'a means of promoting understanding and unity of outlook among the nations of the Western world.'<sup>1</sup>

RIC suggested using radio links between Lille and Paris (not yet ready) and between Wrotham, where there was a BBC experimental station, and London, but while the BBC welcomed programme exchange 'in principle', it refused to 'slur over the problems involved' or to become 'unrealistic about the potential cost of the RIC scheme'. Characteristically, perhaps, it suggested also that the whole matter should be referred to the Television Advisory Committee, a sure way of delaying action.<sup>2</sup>

There was, nonetheless, one immediate BBC initiative. Collins told McGivern on 20 June 1950 that he should go to Paris to discuss programme exchange—'what proportion of BBC television programmes Radiodiffusion would like to take, and what proportion of Radiodiffusion programmes, based on known audience tastes here and on BBC programme standards, you would like to see introduced into the BBC Television

<sup>1</sup> \*Radio Industry Council, Memorandum of 15 June 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 28 June 1950; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 6 July 1950.

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In Europe as a whole, all television broadcasts in the 41/68 mc/s band would have been on the basis of 405 lines and all broadcasts in the 174/216 mc/s band on the basis of 819 lines. (Report of a Conversation between I. C. McLean of the BBC and S. Mallein of RDF, 28 June 1949.)

<sup>5</sup> \*Porché to Haley, 7 June 1950; Ridgeway to the Postmaster-General, 15 June 1950. In fact, no single standard was adopted, although from July 1950 the 625-line pattern came to be known as the 'CCIR standard', and it was brought into use by several European countries between 1950 and 1954. The 625-line system did not make its way to Britain until 1964 (see Pawley, *op. cit.*, p. 315). For continued 'divergences' in 1951, see *EBU Bulletin*, 15 Jan. 1951, where it was stated that so far 'agreement had only been reached on points of secondary importance'.

Service'.<sup>1</sup> A fruitful meeting followed, although McGivern soon came to the conclusion after talking to his French opposite numbers, Jean Luc and Paul Gilson, that in order to make progress further study was necessary both of 'the artistic problems' and of 'all the technical, financial and legal questions' involved.<sup>2</sup> The last set of problems—including artists' rights, which had posed few serious problems in sound broadcasting—had tended to be ignored or underplayed by the RIC.

There followed a meeting at the Post Office in London on 27 June at which Ridgeway continued to press for the RIC scheme. Unless it were implemented, he threatened, 'there would be no outlet whatever for the British radio industry in Europe'. It was agreed in consequence that discussions of an informal kind should start in Paris at once and that meanwhile there should be a second meeting between the Post Office, the RIC, and the BBC in London.<sup>3</sup> At this second meeting, an *aide-mémoire* was prepared for submission to the British Embassy in Paris.<sup>4</sup> Haley remained concerned, however, both about the 'justification for spending listeners' money in transmitting a picture to Calais without reciprocal benefits' and about possible French fears that 'the RIC and the BBC were ganged together to foist British programmes and the British system on to the French'.<sup>5</sup> He thought of French and British broadcasting organizations as natural allies, but he wanted as far as possible to keep both the radio industry and the Post Office away from the centre of future negotiations.

This became possible after the failure of the RIC scheme in 1950, although the failure was not the fault of the BBC. The French were willing to back it at the meeting of Study Group XI of the CCIR in Geneva in July 1950, but the Germans were not. Nestel, the German delegate, announced that Germany was compelled to accept the 625-line system because of a decision recently made by the USSR to adopt it. Western Germany, he pointed out, could not agree to any system which would have the effect of perpetually cutting Germany in two,

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 20 June 1950. Jean Luc had succeeded Jacques Armand as Director of Television in 1949. He was himself succeeded in 1951 by Jean Arnaud.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Luc and Gilson, 23 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Bishop to Ashbridge, 28 June 1950, reporting on the meeting.

<sup>4</sup> \**Aide-Mémoire* of 19 July 1950. The meeting took place on 3 July.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Wynn on a Board of Management meeting, 3 July 1950.



and his point proved decisive. Thereafter the BBC followed its own link-up plans.

Late in the year, H. L. Kirke, the BBC's Assistant Chief Engineer, visited Paris with Haley, Ashbridge, and Nicolls to compare reception on 819 and 441 lines. They felt that 'the overall result' of the 441-line system, when tried out in France, was 'at least as good as anything done at Alexandra Palace'—possibly because of excellent, even lavish, lighting in which the French excelled<sup>1</sup>—and that there was ample scope for further exchange of programmes between BBC and RDF. They agreed with the French that the Anglo-French Television Committee should be expanded in future to include on each side two representatives of the programme staff, one of the technical staff, and one of the legal staff.

The Anglo-French Television Committee went on to meet several times, and it considered a number of interesting suggestions for programme exchanges, including a Paris version of *Pagliacci* (with a British producer and cast), a film of a boat journey from the Seine to the Thames, and, for good measure, a relay of a whole week's programmes from Paris in July 1951. Yet many problems, not all of them technical, continued to restrict progress. Copyright proved particularly difficult, and no solution seemed in sight which would settle the difficult issue of 'artists' rights'.<sup>2</sup> A resolution had been passed at the first General Assembly of the EBU in September 1950 recommending member bodies not to sign agreements with authors' societies, artists' unions, music publishers, record manufacturers or distributors and producers of cinematographic film—all of whom were demonstrating 'increasing international solidarity'—without first getting in touch with the Administrative Office of the EBU; and this influenced bilateral Anglo-French consultations.<sup>3</sup> As late as January 1952, when an EBU statement on the subject of exchange was released for the press, there had still been no settlement. Marcel Bezençon, Director-General of the Swiss Radio, was still engaged in a study of the

<sup>1</sup> \*Report on a Visit to France, 17-19 Oct. 1950. There is little doubt of the superiority of French lighting at this stage.

<sup>2</sup> \*Marriott's Note of a Meeting, 7 Dec. 1950. *Pagliacci* was produced in February 1950 by Eric Fawcett, but the boat trip film was not produced until 1954 and even then it was produced by a French team.

<sup>3</sup> \*Resolution of the EBU General Assembly, 26 Sept. 1950.

position of 'the artists' unions', and the statement referred briefly and generally to 'safeguarding artists', authors' and others' rights, and legal and technical issues'.<sup>1</sup>

By then Knott had visited Paris, greatly impressed by 'the tremendous amount which was achieved with so little in the way of money, staff and resources generally',<sup>2</sup> and Arnaud, Gilson, Chédeville, the Chief Engineer, and d'Arcy had visited London for further talks about direct relay between London and Paris. Whatever the difficulties, there was enthusiastic discussion at this stage of the possibility of going so far as to devise a regular joint television programme for French and British viewers.<sup>3</sup> Haley was as enthusiastic as his colleagues, and invited Porché, with whom he was on excellent terms, to visit Lime Grove and to attend some of the celebrations of the Festival of Britain, another of the great centenaries of 1951. A characteristic red-ink note on the back of a Knott memorandum which had been sent to Haley 'for interest' by Barnes read, in Haley's handwriting, 'For more than interest—for envy, reflection, stimulation, questioning, puzzlement, wonder, energising, exhortation, self-examination and a whole general quickening of the phagocytes. Thanks.'<sup>4</sup>

Haley, who knew how heavily French programmes relied on films, had advised Porché the year before to keep television and sound broadcasting in France under 'single control'. 'The idea which some people have that television is more analogous to the films than to broadcasting does not seem to us to bear examination. . . . Our view is that in years to come sound and television will have to merge into an integrated broadcasting programme.'<sup>5</sup>

Porché told Haley on his Lime Grove visit that French television was working on about one-third of the total sum budgeted for British television, although the breakdown between the different constituent elements—programmes, engineering,

<sup>1</sup> Press Statement of 21 Jan. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Knott to Barnes, 17 April 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of a meeting of the Anglo-French Liaison Committee, 3-4 July 1951. RTF's London Representative, Jacques Sallebert, was also present. The scheme, involving a joint programme, was to use the Paris-Lille circuit on 819 lines with RTF cameras and correct the signal to 405 lines somewhere between Lille and London.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of 17 April 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*Haley to Porché, 7 July 1949. Porché wrote an extremely interesting reply on 18 July 1949.

building and equipment—was similar.<sup>1</sup> The two men possibly drew different conclusions from such facts. Certainly Porché stressed then and later the many difficulties RTF faced, suggesting that, because of shortages of money, sponsoring might be introduced, probably not on television but on radio. He reiterated in January 1952 that exchanges of programmes would be desirable not only between Britain and France but inside EBU as a whole. For his part, Haley, while impressed by French economy in production, was equally impressed by the economic possibilities of supplying BBC programmes to France. He had been told by Marriott that 'in France already' and in other European countries 'in a few years' time' there was an immense potential market for BBC television transcriptions 'on a scale that there never has been for sound programmes'.<sup>2</sup>

The meetings between Haley and Porché speeded up the plans for exchange, and extensive technical tests were carried out during February, March, and April 1952. A British lines 'converter' was built by the BBC and installed at Mont Cassel, half-way between Paris and London, and a French lines 'converter' in Paris itself, and these developments made possible detailed preparations. Pictures were to travel from the Eiffel Tower to the Town Hall at Lille, from Lille to Mont Cassel, from Cassel to Alembon near the French coast, and a crucial forty miles from Alembon to Swingate (near Dover), Wrotham, and London.<sup>3</sup> Standard Telephones and Cables were to provide the equipment for the final link which ended at the University of London's Senate House, with cable to Broadcasting House, Alexandra Palace, and the three other television stations of the BBC.<sup>4</sup> The key BBC figures in the venture—very determined figures—were McGivern, Imlay Watts, Martin Pulling, and T. H. Bridgewater, while W. Proctor Wilson, the head of Research, developed the essential 819-405 line converter. On

<sup>1</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 25 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Marriott, 7 Dec. 1950; McGivern feared, however, that the French regarded 819 lines as a kind of 'new frontier, a form of "physical copyright"' (McGivern to Barnes, 13 Nov. 1951). D'Arcy had explained that, given the strategic importance of electronics, 'France was determined to maintain a healthy TV industry so that the military needs of the country in this respect would be met'.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Press Release, 21 April 1952.

<sup>4</sup> EMI manufactured much of the necessary equipment for the Alembon-Swingate-Wrotham circuits.

the French side Stéphane Mallein (in charge of technical facilities) and Jean d'Arcy (in charge of programmes and fully backed up by Porché) ensured the maximum co-operation with the British.

The long-awaited relay of a whole week's programmes from Paris took place at last in July 1952. It ended appropriately with 'Quatorze Juillet', yet began less appropriately not with fireworks but with a thunderstorm which drove the guests from the gardens of the British Embassy and delayed the reception of the first pictures in London. In the *Radio Times* Haley had called the week's programmes 'a single stride which makes history' and Porché a 'new bridge thrown from here to London by the magic of our century'.<sup>1</sup> Haley was at pains also to describe the technical difficulties. 'Not only two countries but also two different technical standards are being linked.' Yet he stressed also that what was thought then to be 'magic' would not long be thought of in this way. 'It is the beginning of something which will one day be a commonplace. Pictures are not, perhaps, an international language but they are near to being one. To be able to see instantaneously what is happening in another country is going to have a far greater impact than merely to receive a description of the same events.'<sup>2</sup>

Television at that time still took up only four programme pages out of thirty-one programme pages in the *Radio Times*, but Haley and Porché stole the front page. There were also two pages of description by McGivern, whose aim, he professed, was 'to bring added variety and colour to your screen'. From the British Embassy viewers would pass to the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe with Sylvia Peters, Jacqueline Joubert, Richard Dimbleby,<sup>3</sup> Étienne Lalou, and Georges de Caunes as guides. The 'Paris of the arts' would figure in the programmes as much as the Paris of cabaret or the Paris of fashion (with a mannequin parade on a Bateau-Mouche). There would also be a place for the Paris of sports (with a programme from the Vélodrome d'Hiver near the Bir-Hakeim Bridge). Before the 14 July climax, viewers would be asked 'to pause . . . and

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 4 July 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* For the technical side, see M. J. L. Pulling, 'Eurovision Technical Operations, A Survey' in *EBU Review*, no. 55, June 1959.

<sup>3</sup> 'He speaks fluent French: we watched with awe as he expertly ordered himself a red rose for his buttonhole at the Gare des Invalides' (*Radio Times*, 4 July 1952).

remember the Paris that suffered and fought in the last war'. This was, after all, the year 1952, less than eight years after the liberation of Paris.<sup>1</sup>

Public reactions to the programmes were a little less enthusiastic than had been expected or at least hoped for, given the fact, as d'Arcy pointed out, that the subject matter, 'principally chosen by the BBC', was of greater interest to British viewers than to French. The Military Tournament had the highest audience rating (69) and the very first programme (*Bon Voyage*) the lowest (42). High Mass had the second highest rating (68). Even then, French reactions to British military tournaments were usually 80 or more. Panel members were asked how many of the broadcasts they had seen and whether they thought such broadcasts were a good idea: 35 per cent had seen all or most of them, 41 per cent some, and 24 per cent only a few. Of those who had seen as many as two, 69 per cent approved. The 'more consistent' viewers were the most enthusiastic, but even they did not want too many such programmes. The wisdom of providing 'such a large dose of Paris within such a short time' was questioned.<sup>2</sup>

The most favourable comment treated the Anglo-French week as Haley had done, as a foretaste of the shape of things to come. There would soon be 'an enormous widening of the scope of the programmes'. 'A mutual exchange of features can be envisaged ultimately with all the countries of the Atlantic community, not excluding America.' The language of pictures was 'almost as universal as [the language of] music'.<sup>3</sup> 'After this week's relays from France it is obvious that the international impact of television will have its effect on Western civilisation.'<sup>4</sup>

The 'internationalism' of radio was featured in a different context in July 1952—the opening of the Olympic Games at Helsinki—but the opening ceremony was transmitted direct by the BBC's Home Service not by Television because it was not

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 July 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Audience Research Department, 'The Paris Programmes', 21 Aug. 1952: 'The language difficulty irritated nearly everyone reporting, and viewers said with some indignation that the amount of translation and guidance given had proved quite inadequate.' French official reactions are described in Porché to Haley, 17 July 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Birmingham Post*, 10 July 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 July 1952.

yet 'as simple to relay an outside broadcast from Finland as it is from France' and film had to be employed.<sup>1</sup> It was not until May 1953, the year of the Coronation, that Bishop told Barnett of the Post Office how the Belgians, who were just about to start their television service in October, wanted six hours a week of BBC programmes;<sup>2</sup> and not until July of that year that a conference of West European countries was held at Broadcasting House to discuss 'international relays'. The French, Belgian, Dutch and German broadcasting organizations were represented then, as was the Chief Engineer of the EBU, and tentative plans were prepared for a programme exchange at Christmas. A further conference was held in September, when it was decided to postpone the exchange until Easter 1954.<sup>3</sup>

The Coronation programmes not only gave an immense fillip to international television, as we have seen,<sup>4</sup> but popularized the use of the word 'Eurovision', particularly in France. Yet BBC engineers, in particular, were not convinced that, given heavy installation costs, direct relays of a non-regular kind had any marked advantage over films (of the kind that could be flown in from Helsinki). Thus, after 'the Paris week', Martin Pulling, the Senior Superintendent Engineer, Television Broadcasting, who was to represent the BBC at the July and September meetings, told d'Arcy (to the latter's consternation) that 'quite a number of the subjects chosen for the programmes could as easily have been filmed as televised and saved all the expense of establishing a television link'.<sup>5</sup> The Coronation speeded up technical development,<sup>6</sup> but during the autumn of 1953, as Wynn put it, the estimated cost of providing 'a permanent network of radio links' was being

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 11 July 1952, 'The Olympic Games at Helsinki' and P. Dorté on 'The Games in Television'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Bishop to Barnett, 1 May 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of Conference, 28-30 July, 8-9 Sept. 1953; Note by R. T. B. Wynn, 22 Oct. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> See above, pp. 468 ff. D'Arcy reported that when the 1952 Paris trials were taking place and news of the death of King George VI came through, both the British and French teams resolved to make the most of the Coronation as a great television event.

<sup>5</sup> \*Anglo-French Liaison Committee, *Minutes*, 15-16 Oct. 1952. He did not appreciate, d'Arcy has said, that the medium can be the message.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 24 Nov. 1952.

fixed so high that it could be justified only 'if an extensive programme interchange were foreseen'.<sup>1</sup> Post Office rentals were high, too, and the Post Office would make no concessions.<sup>2</sup> There were other absurd financial difficulties. Although British equipment was allowed into France duty free between 1950 and 1954, the British Customs refused to make any concession for French receiving equipment, and changed their policy only after Foreign Office intervention.<sup>3</sup>

An 'extensive programme exchange' depended both on European understanding between different broadcasting organizations through the Union and on their capacity to secure the support of the artists' unions. The former was easier to secure than the latter. From 1950 onwards, the newly formed EBU under Jacob's presidency provided an effective grouping to push the idea of 'Eurovision'. Yet inside some European countries—particularly Britain—and across the boundaries of them all the artists' unions were either wary about or deeply resistant to rapid development. In April 1953 the British Musicians' Union objected, for example, to international diffusion of *Café Continental* in test programmes for the Coronation.<sup>4</sup> It was not impressed by the fact that television contracts—like BBC sound broadcasting contracts—specifically covered 'the simultaneous rediffusion of the performance by every means in the United Kingdom and overseas' and that it was on this basis that 'reciprocal relations' had been worked out between different national broadcasting bodies.

There had been no problems involved in the general diffusion of sound, which could never be contained inside frontiers, but television, a more expensive medium organized separately inside frontiers, offered the possibilities of securing new forms of contract; and the International Federation of Musicians, which the Musicians' Union was instrumental in founding, was

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Wynn, 22 Oct. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Jacob to Porché, 17 Aug. 1954. 'What we are asking the BBC to pay for this link', Sir Ben Barnett of the Post Office told Jacob in October 1954, 'is entirely in line with the charges we make for other links. . . . I do not see how we can depart from this general basis, since if we were to do so, it would mean a subsidy to broadcasting and television development' (Letter of 26 Oct. 1954).

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Bridgewater and Inlay Watts, 14 May 1956.

<sup>4</sup> \*Letter from the Musicians' Union to Streeton, 27 April 1953; Note by Bottomley, 26 May 1953.

obviously going to 'organize a general opposition to simultaneous television relays' and to seek to win the support of other unions, like Equity. It was successful enough in its opposition to ensure that the imaginative word 'Eurovision' itself could be described as a 'new and ominous word' in *The Stage* in March 1954. In that magazine emphasis was placed not on the increased opportunities of European television but on 'the threat to employment in all the countries concerned'.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, BBC officials sometimes felt disheartened. As McGivern wrote in July 1954, 'television programme exchange between as many as eight countries is too complicated and imposes too many difficulties. Such exchange should be reserved for special occasions, e.g. Christmas.'<sup>2</sup>

The Corporation's official attitude in 1952 and 1953 was that both BBC and EBU should continue to stand firm against the effort 'on the part of artists and their Unions to enforce any change in the contractual position'.<sup>3</sup> Yet the Belgian Radio, which could not afford to make expensive television programmes itself, breached this pattern when it decided to pay performers and rights-holders for regular relays from France and Holland;<sup>4</sup> and by January 1954 the BBC itself was willing to consider views expressed in the Legal Committee of EBU that a distinction might be drawn between 'ordinary relays' and 'common use of television programmes'.<sup>5</sup> Representatives of the different international federations of actors, musicians, and variety artists met in Paris in April 1954, and soon afterwards the BBC's Solicitor recommended that negotiation should begin with them on the basis of the Legal Committee's proposals.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Stage*, 11 March 1954. \*In a letter from Gordon Sandison, General Secretary of British Actors' Equity, to Streeton, Head of Programme Contracts, 31 March 1954, it was stated bluntly that the BBC's contractual right to relays did not cover 'such a thing as "Eurovision" which was not contemplated when the contract was drafted'. The point was reiterated in a further letter from Sandison on 28 April 1954, stating that Eurovision patterns would have to be discussed at 'the international level' (quoted in memo from Streeton to Bottomley, 29 April 1954).

<sup>2</sup> \*McGivern to McCall, 6 July 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 1 June 1953; Note by Bottomley, 26 Nov. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 16 Nov. 1953.

<sup>5</sup> \*Streeton to Bottomley, 6 Jan. 1954; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 15 March 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*Robbins to Grisewood, 24 May 1954.





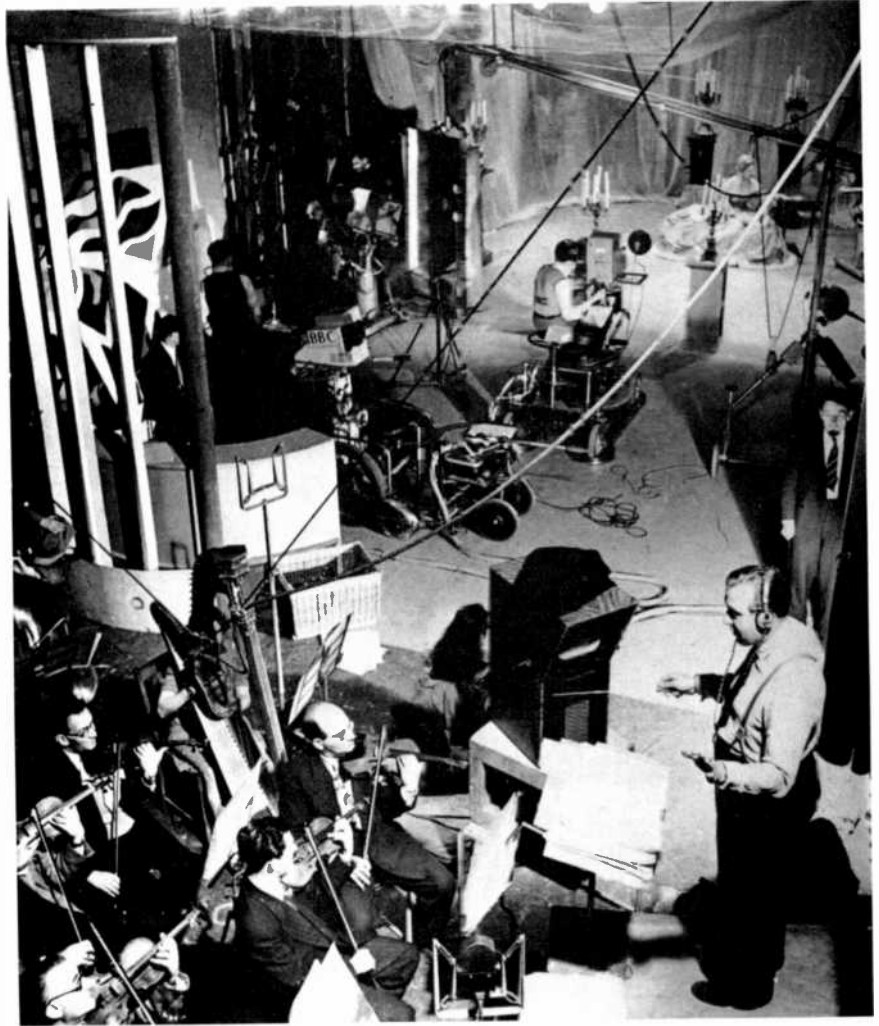
9a. *Much Binding in the Marsh.*  
Maurice Denham, Richard  
Murdoch, Maureen Riscoe,  
Kenneth Horne, Sam Costa



9b. *Take It From Here.*  
Wallas Eaton, Dick Bentley,  
Alma Cogan, Jimmy  
Edwards, June Whitfield



9c. Billy Bunter (Gerald  
Campion) and Mr. Quelch  
(Kynaston Reeves)



10. Eric Robinson rehearsing at Alexandra Palace

The new and more flexible approach<sup>1</sup> did not produce quick results, however, and negotiations lingered on for years until an agreement was eventually reached in 1957.<sup>2</sup>

The meetings of the unions in April 1954 resulted in the banning of a number of programmes scheduled for the first great 'Eurovision' exchange from 6 June to 4 July 1954, by far the largest television project ever carried out,<sup>3</sup> and, among others, programmes to Britain from Versailles and from the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen had to be cancelled.<sup>4</sup> Such actions, however, did not detract from the excitement of the occasion, the official birth of Eurovision. They even added to it. 'BBC to defy Musicians' Ban on Eurovision' read one newspaper headline.<sup>5</sup> 'The unions can't stop Eurovision' read another. Praise for the engineers, like J. T. Dickinson (ex-BBC) and Mallein (ex-RTF), both now of the EBU, and for the administrators was universal. Jean d'Arcy, for example, was hailed as 'the originator and architect of Eurovision',<sup>6</sup> while Lille, with its 305-foot Town Hall belfry tower, suddenly acquired an unexpected new European reputation as 'the television capital of Europe'.<sup>7</sup>

Four thousand miles of radio circuitry were being employed, and the 'lines' problem in television transmission was solved by the use of standard converters enabling networks operating on different standards to be connected together. In Paris converters

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 31 May 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*The later stages in the period covered in this volume are described in a report of a meeting between the EBU's Legal Adviser (Straschnov) and Hardie Ratcliffe, Sandison, and Swinson on 6 July 1954, in Union proposals submitted in September, and in Board of Management, *Minutes*, 20 Sept. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2 June 1954.

<sup>4</sup> In place of *Café Continental* the BBC broadcast what it called an 'aperitif'. It was based on recorded music, and all the announcers (known as 'speakerines') from countries represented in London took part. This was certainly a 'watered down' aperitif, although there were gains for viewers in the fact that the Versailles show was replaced by racing from Le Mans and the Davis Cup tournament.

<sup>5</sup> *Evening News*, 4 June 1954. Most newspapers were critical of the unions.

<sup>6</sup> *News Chronicle*, 4 and 5 June 1954. For one interesting engineering achievement, the microwave radio link across the Alps, see *Engineering*, 9 July 1954. The Radio Industry Council, in a special Press Release, pointed out that nearly £2 million of British TV equipment was used by different countries in the link-up.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1954. The *Manchester Guardian* (5 June) called it the 'nerve centre' and described in detail the work of the control engineers in a city with 'a grey Manchester sky'. For the engineering story, see *Engineering*, 9 July 1954, and Pawley, op. cit., pp. 397-400.

accepting 405- or 625-line signals changed them into 819 lines and 441 lines, and at Breda in Holland a converter accepting 819 lines or the British 405 lines changed them into 625-line signals. Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy were all using 625 lines. The element of risk in the whole European operation appealed to the imagination. 'It is TV's biggest gamble,' both the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Mail* exclaimed, quoting Cecil McGivern, who had invented the new term 'neurovision'.<sup>1</sup> 'Is TV trying to run before it can walk?' asked the *Daily Sketch*, answering for itself, 'Yes, and why not?'<sup>2</sup>

The pictures on the first day (Whit Sunday) were said to be of 'high quality', 'far better', Pulling said, 'than expected'.<sup>3</sup> There was only one break in the vision signal in the first relay from Montreux, although there was a little 'distortion' in the Sunday evening programme from Rome.<sup>4</sup> *The Star* was suitably patriotic. 'Though the first European TV hook-up was an even greater success than the experts themselves had dared to hope, this was not really so surprising. For Britain has always led in the technical field and this great new chapter is essentially another triumph for the BBC in the story of television's development.'<sup>5</sup>

The 'Eurolook' programmes themselves were described privately by McGivern 'as a mixture of specially built programmes and normal programmes.' 'We offered normal programmes,' he said.<sup>6</sup> Others had not. The first two programmes were certainly out of the ordinary—the 'Fêtes des Narcisses' from Montreux in Switzerland and a tour of the Vatican with a blessing from the Pope and a statement by him in six languages.<sup>7</sup> So, too, was a relay of the magnificent *Palio* from Siena, which the BBC had to telerecord and show later because it did not want to hold back transmissions from Wimbledon. Britain, sporting as ever, contributed the Richmond Horse Show, the British Games at White City, and the Queen reviewing the RNVR Parade. The Dutch introduced *their* Queen, Juliana, and her daughter, Princess Margriet, in a sixty-minute

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5 June 1954; *Daily Mail*, 5 June 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 7 June 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 7 June 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*McGivern to McCall, 6 July 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 6 June 1954.

<sup>5</sup> *The Star*, 7 June 1954.

<sup>7</sup> For an interesting report, see the *Catholic Herald*, 11 June 1954, and *Universe*, 11 June 1954. The Pope was introduced by Father Agnellus Andrew.

children's programme, and Germany arranged a visit to a youth camp on the Rhine with the grand old man, Dr. Adenauer, as the principal guest. Denmark presented an agricultural show and Belgium (which had separate French and Flemish programmes) a Parade in the Grand' Place in Brussels. The Press especially praised the Italians before the event, calling them 'the most television conscious of the newcomers and also the most imaginative in programme production'.<sup>1</sup> Yet McGivern thought afterwards that the French contribution had been outstanding—'first-class television and, in my opinion, most stimulating'. He returned, however, to his first observations. 'It was a *tour de force*, and though Eurovision welcomes this type of evening, it cannot *live* on it.' D'Arcy himself agreed with this verdict, adding that it could be accomplished 'only once in every two years'.<sup>2</sup>

This was not the message which the Press seized upon, nor were McGivern's 'ratings' the same as those of the public. 'Eurovision of the near future', wrote *The Star*, 'should not be something to be specially and occasionally arranged. The ideal to be obtained is a permanent European circuit to which viewers in each land will be able to tune in as they please.'<sup>3</sup> The Audience Research 'reaction index' placed World Cup Football first—six matches from Switzerland (in only two of which England was playing)<sup>4</sup>—while *Voulez-vous jouer avec Paris?*, which McGivern particularly liked, had an audience reaction of only 54. By contrast, *Copenhagen Rendezvous*, which McGivern thought 'pedestrian' and 'not worth international exchange', had an audience reaction of 71.<sup>5</sup> Further to fill in the picture,

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2 June 1954, which quoted McGivern on a recent Italian production of *Romeo and Juliet* which he described as 'brilliant'. Cf. *News Chronicle*, 4 June 1954: 'Mr. Ronnie Waldman's producers could learn a lot from the technique displayed in Milan and Rome.'

<sup>2</sup> \*McGivern to McCall, 6 July 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *The Star*, 10 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> England drew 4-4 with Belgium. 'There was hardly a flutter in the picture . . . until just before half-time,' Marsland Gander wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 1954. 'Millions throughout Britain, whatever their disillusionment at the result, must have felt that this transmission alone justified the experiment with the European TV network.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Audience Research Report, 'Television Continental Exchange', 16 Aug. 1954. England versus Uruguay had a rating of 85. The biggest audiences were for England versus Belgium and Brazil versus Hungary.

many French critics thought the British programmes 'unexciting'.<sup>1</sup> Yet 'the experiment' as a whole received 'a cordial endorsement' on both sides of the Channel: as many as 81 per cent of the British audience sample felt that it had been 'very well worth while'. Switzerland was the country which came top of the English poll for desirable future television programmes with 74 per cent, and France came second with 67 per cent.

The Press was even more enthusiastic than the BBC's sample audience. Some journalists saw Eurovision—with its own distinctive signal—as 'an entirely new means of communication'.<sup>2</sup> Others believed that it could 'forge the first genuine link between the peoples of Europe'.<sup>3</sup> For Marcel Bezençon, Chairman of EBU's new Programme Committee, 'what would appear to be Utopian today will perhaps form part of our daily life tomorrow',<sup>4</sup> and for the *Daily Express* 'it was not only history: it was evidence that world-wide TV cannot be far away'.<sup>5</sup> 'Was there ever a quieter, yet more exciting revolution than the one that took place last night in thousands of British homes?' it asked. 'Who says that to be alive is no longer the fun it once was?'<sup>6</sup> The *Yorkshire Post* also referred to Eurovision making the world 'a happier place', but demanded in more recondite fashion what it would have meant to Tennyson, who had described the Victorian submarine cable as 'thunderless lightnings striking under sea'.<sup>7</sup>

The European Broadcasting Union was sufficiently impressed by the success of this first experiment to decide at a Conference in Sestri Levante in July 1954 to push Eurovision further. It

<sup>1</sup> *Paris Presse*, 8 June 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 2 June 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *Picture Post*, 5 June 1954; the *Daily Sketch*, 8 June 1954, called television 'a world peacemaker', and the *News Chronicle*, 14 June 1954, like *Picture Post*, referred to possibilities of a Russian link. So, too, did the *Sunday Express*, 25 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *The Times*, 7 June 1954; see also *Radio Times*, 4 June 1954. *The Times* wisely pointed out, however (19 July 1954), that 'international understanding will not be forwarded by the exchange of visual news unless there is also, over the years, some appreciation of the cultures with which the events are informed.'

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 June 1954.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* *The Evening Standard*, 7 June 1954, criticized Dr. Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, 'a declared enemy of television', and suggested that he should 'reconsider his antipathy' in the light of the Pope's use of the new medium. Cf. *Time and Tide*, 12 June 1954.

<sup>7</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, 8 June 1954.

was to be extended this time, as McGivern had hoped, by an exchange of 'round day-to-day programmes' with nothing 'specially prepared';<sup>1</sup> and after further discussions the decision was taken to carry out a new series of tests between October and the end of the year. The new series began with a piano recital by Claudio Arrau in London for French and British audiences, and nine countries saw and heard the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge, on 23 December. Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve came from Paris, and on Boxing Day there were Winter Sports from the Bernese Oberland with Peter Dimmock as commentator. New Year's Eve was celebrated twice, for Italian time was one hour ahead of the British. Viewers could see what was happening in Milan and Portofino before they could see what was happening in London and Edinburgh.

Thereafter there was a temporary lull, although, all in all, the number of transmissions co-ordinated by EBU's 'Centre de Contrôle' in Brussels increased from 55 in 1954 to 91 (a total of 115 hours) in 1955.<sup>2</sup> Britain lagged somewhat behind, however, in the new 'Eurolook' and was less involved in the 1955 exchanges than several other European countries.<sup>3</sup> The existing European technical network had been described at Sestri Levante as 'provisional and precarious', and Britain's links with it in 1954 and 1955 were still not 'permanent'.<sup>4</sup> There were cost differentials, too, between Britain and the Continent. Much of the expense of installing and maintaining television links on the Continent had been borne by NATO, but there had been no such 'subsidy' in Britain.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, there-

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 July 1954: 'Eurovision will go on and on.' Cf. *The Times*, 16, 19 July 1954. R. McCall, Assistant Director of Television Broadcasting, and Imlay Watts represented the BBC at the Italian conference. Nine countries in Europe saw the King's College Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on 23 Dec. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> See M. J. L. Pulling, 'The Development of Eurovision', in the *Journal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers*, vol. 6, no. 62, Feb. 1960.

<sup>3</sup> *The Star*, 10 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *News Chronicle*, 17 July 1954; \*BBC Press Statement, 12 Jan. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Bishop, 'Permanent Television Links with the Continent', 11 Aug. 1954. The Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office told Parliament on 13 Dec. 1954 that as far as further European broadcasts were concerned there were many difficulties to overcome, including 'the high cost involved' (*Hansard*, vol. 535, col. 94, 13 Dec. 1954).

fore, *The Times*, in a well-informed leader, linked technological progress both to economics and to programming:

The television relay system throughout Europe will need to be as automatic and matter-of-fact as the present international telephone system. Rents will have to be paid whether the relays are being used or not. Countries in mid-path will need to pass on programmes even though they themselves are not taking them. . . . What is going to be relayed is, however, more important than how it is going to be done. Owing to the great expense, international television will develop to permanence only if the traffic becomes worth while.

*The Times* noted also the continuing problem of artists' fees and rights, adding (was it Haley who wrote the leader?) that 'all the battles sound broadcasting fought will have to be won again' and that 'the struggle will be more bitter because television offers the public more'.<sup>1</sup>

The battles remained tough, as we have seen, but if the year 1955 did not fulfil all the highest hopes of 1954 it was only partly because of such struggles<sup>2</sup> and only partly because the 'permanent' technical link-up between Britain and the Continent was still not completed.<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Imlay Watts, who was the BBC's energetic representative on EBU's Programme Committee, McGivern claimed that it was not so much that Europe was waiting for Britain as Britain for Europe. 'Frankly, I propose to be much more selfish with regard to Europe than up to now. We must squeeze this orange. And it is fair to do so. Though we have not managed to give Europe anything brilliant yet, we have given them much more than they have given us—in advice, know-how and in number of transmissions. . . . The European countries are, as the result of my pressure, beginning

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 19 July 1954.

<sup>2</sup> There were protests from artists' unions on both sides of the Channel in December following a 75-minute cabaret television performance from Paris (*Newspaper Chronicle*, *Daily Mirror*, 30 Dec. 1954).

<sup>3</sup> \*By mid-September 1954 workable, though temporary, cross-Channel radio links had been set up jointly by the BBC and RTF, and these remained in use until September 1955 when at last a permanent Post Office radio link was brought into service. See Sir Harold Bishop, 'Twenty-five Years of BBC Television', *BBC Engineering Monograph*, no. 39, Oct. 1961. Jacob had hoped that the permanent link would have been constructed far earlier (Jacob to Porché, 17 Aug. 1954). The Board of Management's *Minutes*, 20 Sept. 1954, record a decision to interrupt exchange at the end of the 'experimental period' on 2 Jan. 1955. The installation of the permanent link was announced in a Press Release ten days later.



to plan further and further ahead, but we have more pressure to exert before the position is really satisfactory.'<sup>1</sup>

More than anyone else, McGivern, when he looked into the future, spurned rhetoric and wrestled hard with the problem of how to make 'the traffic worth while'. He had told the Radio Industries Club luncheon impromptu earlier in the year—before the first great link-up—that 'you can only work in television and radio if you believe that you have not only got to entertain people but you have not got to talk down to them. . . . You talk to human beings who have worries, doubts and ignorance, and you try to satisfy that. That is our interest in Eurovision.'<sup>2</sup>

## 4. 'London Calling'

EXCHANGE was only one aspect of international broadcasting during the early 1950s. The second was what the BBC came to call in 1948 'External Services', 'broadcasting to people in other lands'. 'The first aim of these Services,' the BBC told the Beveridge Committee, 'is the provision of an accurate, impartial and dispassionate flow of news.'<sup>3</sup> News was supplemented, however, with talks and a wide range of other programmes, including music and features. The Beveridge Committee concentrated on those dealing with 'a projection of Britain upon the world outside',<sup>4</sup> but to get a complete picture of what was on offer it is necessary to turn to the thirty-page magazine *London Calling* which had a circulation of 15,000 copies a week in 1955. The 'External Services' also included the BBC's Transcription Service, an increasingly lively enterprise, which in 1953 distributed 658 radio programmes and over a hundred

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern to Imlay Watts, 27 Nov. 1954. Two days later McGivern backed an Italian suggestion that there should be a European 'International Competition'. Each country would hold its own national heats, and there could be quarter- and semi-finals, and the final in various European capitals.

<sup>2</sup> \*Address to Radio Industries Club Luncheon, 22 April 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by the Director-General on 'The Principles and Purpose of the BBC's External Services'. The Note was asked for by the Governors (*Minutes*, 3 Oct. 1946). Cmd. 6852 (1946), the Labour Government's first White Paper, had described news bulletins as 'the kernel of all overseas broadcasting'.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116 (1951), para. 238.

telerecordings and films to other countries,<sup>1</sup> and the Monitoring Service, which collected and with great skill analysed and interpreted broadcasts from other countries, whether the broadcasts were designed for their own citizens or for audiences abroad.<sup>2</sup>

'External Services' were one of the five major divisions of the Corporation, and it was *via* its headquarters in Bush House, as we have seen, that Sir Ian Jacob, like Hugh Carleton Greene after him, reached Broadcasting House. The staff of over 3,800 in 1955 included about 1,500 in administration and programming, 400 in monitoring, and the rest in engineering and ancillary services, and the total output of the Services in broadcasting hours—552 a week—was more than that of the three Home Radio Services and the Television Service combined.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the output of programmes in foreign languages—over forty in 1955—the General Overseas Service in English was on the air for twenty-one hours out of twenty-four with much of its material selected from BBC home programmes.

Whatever the prospects for international television, broadcasting to people in other lands was still essentially a matter for the sound broadcasters. Television transmission 'over great distances for direct reception by the public', Sir Noel Ashbridge insisted in 1952, was not 'just round the corner'. Further advances in technology were necessary. Ashbridge envisaged chains of highly directional microwave stations—but not broadcasting by satellite—and thought that the financial difficulties in the way of progress were as great as the technical obstacles.<sup>4</sup>

In an 'age of television' during the 1960s and 1970s, some of the styles of external broadcasting were to echo the styles of

<sup>1</sup> For the origin of the London Transcription Service, see A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 186–7, 344–5. \*At a meeting on 25 May 1945, with R. A. Rendall in the Chair, the main object of the Service was defined as 'the projection of Britain by good radio'. There is a full note on the Service by J. B. Clark, 31 Dec. 1946, and the kind of openings envisaged were well described in a note on 'Potentialities of BBC Rebroadcasting in Canada', 7 Dec. 1948. The Board of Management approved in 1952 of the setting up of a central transcription office to handle all sales of BBC film overseas (*Minutes*, 27 Oct. 1952) and a Unit was set up in December. Jacob had first raised the issue of television transcriptions in an interesting paper of 22 Sept. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 159–61.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Handbook*, 1956, pp. 104–5. These figures followed cuts as from 27 March 1955. See below, p. 541.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Noel Ashbridge, 'World Broadcasting on Short Waves' in *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953.

home broadcasting in earlier phases of its history. Yet during the late 1940s and early 1950s the external broadcasters were forced, somewhat to their initial surprise, to turn yet again to the difficult issues raised in external broadcasting itself during the 'war of words' between 1939 and 1945. Indeed, a new 'war of words' began after the briefest of respites in 1946 and 1947. The Government, which continued to finance the service by a direct grant-in-aid, which was fixed annually, was in a position to determine the scale and range of the operation of external broadcasting, as it had done during the war, and although it did not control the detail of what was put over,<sup>1</sup> it could always influence what may be called 'the temperature'. 'Hot' and 'cold' metaphors—of a pre-McLuhanesque variety—were in general currency almost from the time Sir Ian Jacob took over as head of external broadcasting.

The sense of a 'cold war', the origins of which can be traced back before the end of the war in 1945, was greatly intensified in 1948 and 1949,<sup>2</sup> and it was then that the temperature really rose. The Czech coup of February 1948 had a profound influence on public opinion, but already the division of Europe into 'blocs' was being sharpened.<sup>3</sup> A number of well-known dates

<sup>1</sup> When in January 1949 the Government provided funds for the BBC to install a powerful new broadcasting station in Malaya (see below, p. 518), Christopher Mayhew on behalf of the Government insisted that the Government must not regulate output. A backbench Labour MP, Leslie Hale, said that it was important to correct any 'misapprehension'. The Government had 'the right to be consulted about the times and the languages—in other words about the ambit and the kind of broadcasting to be done but no right to be consulted about what is put over the broadcasts. That remains the responsibility of the Corporation' (*Hansard*, vol. 460, cols. 368–80, 20 Jan. 1949).

<sup>2</sup> For events and attitudes in 1947, see above, p. 161. The BBC was not directly affected by the Truman Doctrine as it was enunciated in March 1947, although changes in American foreign policy were very fully reported. There was also very full reporting of General Marshall's speech at Harvard University on 5 June 1947 offering substantial American aid to European countries, and of Bevin's immediate response. The formation of the Cominform in Oct. 1947 was also fully reported, as was the Russian (and Cominform) break with Tito's Yugoslavia in March 1948.

<sup>3</sup> There is already a huge literature on the 'cold war', its origins and progress, with different historians putting forward conflicting interpretations. See, *inter alia*, J. W. Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since World War II* (4th edn. 1971); G. F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (1952); N. A. Greebner, *Cold War Diplomacy* (1962); H. Seton-Watson, *Neither War nor Peace* (1962); L. S. Halle, *The Cold War and History* (1967); G. Kolko, *Politics of War* (1969); J. L. Geddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (1972); and Sir John Wheeler-Bennett and A. J. Nicolls, *Semblance of Peace* (1972).

still stand out as landmarks—17 March 1948, the signing of the Brussels Treaty; 31 March 1948, the ratification by Congress of 'Marshall Aid'; 24 June 1948, the beginning of the Berlin blockade by the Soviet Union; 26 June 1948, the introduction of the British-American air lift; 2 November 1948, the surprise re-election of President Truman, already being attacked from left as well as from right, a supremely practical politician with a Bomb and a Doctrine; 4 April 1949, the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington; 12 May 1949, the final lifting of the Berlin blockade.

Although broadcasting had its own list of key dates during this period, most of them less publicized than these landmarks, it recorded all these major events and in many respects was influenced by them. Thus, Norman Macdonald, the BBC's correspondent in Berlin, was intelligently anticipating events before they happened in 1948, and Czech listeners were continuing to listen to the BBC after the coup. Six months before the coup, the Czech Ministry of Information had discovered that one in five people out of a national sample listened to the BBC. Six months after the coup, an American member of the United States Social Services Research Council, Dr. David Rodnick, estimated that one in two owners of wireless sets in Czechoslovakia were listening to the BBC and three in four when Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart was giving his weekly talk from London. 'Your audience in Czechoslovakia', Rodnick told the BBC, 'is far greater than that of the Czechoslovakian Broadcasting System.'<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to compare the text of BBC Home and Foreign News Bulletins during the first stage of the 'cold war' with the reports of news bulletins produced by other broadcasting organizations. As during the war, BBC news remained strictly factual: it was also remarkably broad in its coverage. Russian listeners, receiving three news bulletins a day, were treated like other East European listeners and given a diet of facts about their own country as well as about 'the West'. 'Look it up for yourselves' was one piece of recurring advice as the statements of Soviet leaders—particularly in the controlled press—were subjected to close exegesis. 'Facts have been emerging as the really potent force,' wrote Tangye Lean,

<sup>1</sup> 'Through the Iron Curtain', Supplement to *London Calling*, 28 Aug. 1952, p. 7.

Controller, European Service, referring to the whole East European services, in 1950. 'In the long run our strength depends on this respect for facts, and the weakness of the dogmatist lies not only in his denial of them (which may be a source of immediate strength) but in the fatality which throws him into a more and more dizzy recession from the real world as he seeks to reconstruct it in defence of his obsession.'<sup>1</sup>

Particular East European audiences were offered what seemed to be particularly relevant facts, but there were exceptions in special circumstances, like the fact that because of timing the Bulgarian Service was the first news source in the world to carry the news of the death of King George VI.<sup>2</sup> There was never any divergence between the policy followed in European Services and that pursued in the Home Services of the BBC. Thus, British listeners heard as much during the early stages of the Berlin air lift about Soviet statements as about British and American statements, and the day-by-day account during the last stages of the blockade of the complex diplomatic manoeuvres did nothing to exaggerate the British role. Listeners were told, for example, of a Soviet-controlled Berlin radio comment stating that an agreement in 1949 might be the starting point for further understanding between 'the two biggest powers on earth'—Russia and the United States.<sup>3</sup> There was no beating on a British drum or any special concentration on the statements of the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. Listeners were given an immediate assessment, however, of Marshall's important Harvard speech of 5 June 1947 offering a 'life line' to Europe and, on the day of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, a kind of editorial line. The idea of a 'voice of NATO' programme was completely rejected.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T. Lean, 'Broadcasting to Eastern Europe' in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IV, no. 4, Winter 1949/50.

<sup>2</sup> *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953, p. 9. Martin Esslin added that 'it is a sad reflection on conditions behind the Iron Curtain that people there listen to London not only to hear of events in the outside world, but also to find out what is happening in their own countries.' For plans to transfer news responsibilities inside the BBC, see below, pp. 574-7.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC 1 p.m. News Bulletin, 5 May 1949. Cf. the statement by Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State, quoted in the 9 p.m. News Bulletin on 11 May just before the end of the blockade.

<sup>4</sup> \*BBC 9 p.m. News Bulletin, 5 June 1947; L. Miall, 'The Start of the Marshall Plan' in *The Listener*, 4 May 1961; BBC News Bulletin, 4 April 1949; Note on 'The BBC and Coordination within NATO', 5 Aug. 1953

There was a continuing contrast between the way in which Russia and the United States—before and after the enunciation in 1947 of the ‘Truman Doctrine’—handled ‘propaganda’ with enthusiasm and the way in which the British, particularly perhaps those associated with broadcasting, treated it reluctantly.<sup>1</sup> Soviet transmitting stations had been engaged continuously since 1945 in ‘peace’ propaganda—often through international front organizations—dwelling on the ‘war-mongering’ attitudes of the Allies, and such themes multiplied in 1948 and 1949. The United States, which had welcomed peace in 1945 by drastically reducing the volume of its war-time international short-wave ‘Voice of America’ broadcasts,<sup>2</sup> was by 1947 producing lists of ‘subversives’ inside the country (particularly inside the media) and was advancing an international ‘crusade for freedom’.<sup>3</sup> The main problem of American propaganda was not deciding what to say—that was taken for granted—but how to organize it.

In Britain it was pluralism which was taken for granted. Official foreign policy commanded both Labour and Conservative support, but the critics were never silent, particularly on the left. Not surprisingly, perhaps, both Russian and American initiatives and reactions were treated with suspicion in post-war Britain. When ‘Voice of America’ broadcasts

<sup>1</sup> For war-time reluctance, see *The War of Words*, pp. 6–7 and *passim*. Tangye Lean in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IV, no. 4, Winter 1949/50, p. 204, spoke of ‘our reluctance to indulge in a war of words’. In 1955 Harold Nicolson returned to themes he had discussed in 1941 (*BBC Handbook, 1941*, p. 30) in an important contribution to the Twenty-first Anniversary Report of the British Council. ‘We are bad at self-advertisement and even at self-explanation’ (p. 4). For a contemporary critique of British attitudes and policies, see J. Coatman, ‘Overseas Broadcasting’ in *The Twentieth Century*, Jan. 1951: ‘The truth is that not only the programmes, but the efforts of different external broadcasting systems cancel each other out in this propaganda war of the nations and tend to reduce the whole thing to a wasteful extravagance.’ Coatman’s demand for more precise and systematic BBC propaganda was attacked in *Pravda* (*The Twentieth Century*, Sept. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> On 31 Aug. 1945 the State Department absorbed a number of other organizations. There was a review later in 1945, but proposals in 1947 for a public corporation, supported by public funds, were not accepted. See B. Paulu, *Factors in the Attempts to establish a Permanent Instrumentality for the Administration of the International Broadcasting Services of the United States* (Ann Arbor University, Minneapolis, 1949).

<sup>3</sup> See E. Barnouw, *The Golden Web* (1968), pp. 238–42, 246–52, and R. E. Elder, *The Information Machine: The U.S. Information Agency and American Foreign Policy* (1968), pp. 35–6.

began to be directed at the Russian people from February 1947 onwards, contrasts were often drawn in Britain between the tone of these broadcasts and those of the BBC's recently founded Russian Service.<sup>1</sup> The idea of there being 'subversives' inside Britain was discounted, and the whole process of 'witch-hunting' was repugnant to large sections of all the main political parties. It was felt by most of their members—if not by Sir Waldron Smithers—that there was room in external as well as in home broadcasting for expressions of different points of view. Nonetheless, not all dissenting elements were represented consistently and there could be difficulties at moments of crisis with individual broadcasters, even when the 'pluralism' of opinion was explicitly recognized.

In the autumn of 1947—before the Czech coup—there were already signs of a shift in British official policies. The Foreign Office circularized British embassies in Eastern Europe in November 1947 in an effort to assess the impact of British broadcasts on East European countries; and in January 1948, following a decision taken at Cabinet level, a new directive was issued setting out the terms of 'an anti-Communist publicity policy' abroad. There was no suggestion in the new policy that citizens of East European countries should be incited to 'subversion'—this was explicitly ruled out—but 'a vigorous systematic attack' on Communist propaganda techniques was proposed, 'to give a lead to our friends abroad': it was to be treated in future as a natural part of broadcasting and other information services.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC always encouraged a positive approach—'projecting the essential merits of our own way of life'<sup>3</sup>—and tried to avoid attacks on other people's ways of life. Jacob, who was forthright as well as efficient, recognized how important it was in broadcasting to Communist countries to 'avoid the abstruse'

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 148–50. \*Hugh Carleton Greene took up some of these differences at a meeting with a group of Conservative MPs including Beamish, Profumo, and Selwyn Lloyd, on 23 May 1950 (Note of a Dinner). He stated clearly that in his opinion in the event of another war there should be 'no such top-heavy organisation as P.W.E.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Jacob, 17 Nov. 1949; Warner to Jacob, 15 June 1950. There were suggestions in 1949 and 1950 that there should be a cold-war successor to the war-time 'V Campaign', but these were turned down.

<sup>3</sup> \*Tangye Lean to Ralph Murray, 21 Oct. 1950.

and to be 'bang on the target and incisive'.<sup>1</sup> Yet he also insisted throughout—and the point was communicated to British embassies abroad (as it was to the Beveridge Committee)—that 'treatment of news items to foreign and home audiences must not differ materially and news bulletins must be completely objective'.<sup>2</sup>

There was room for differences of emphasis and of response during the 'cold war' both between the BBC and the Foreign Office, between particular British embassies overseas, and even between different officials inside the BBC. Jacob and Clark, however, were always in close touch with the Foreign Office about 'the lines' considered 'appropriate' in particular 'circumstances',<sup>3</sup> and the Russians made little attempt to draw subtle distinctions between attitudes in Bush House and Whitehall. However different British external broadcasting was from American external broadcasting, this did not prevent the Soviet Government from bitterly criticizing the BBC in 1948, 1949, and 1950, and bracketing it with 'official' American broadcasting. 'The BBC does not belong to the British people,' it was said, and was 'in the worst, dirty hands of the enemies of the people of their own country'. This was a comment on the Moscow Home Service.<sup>4</sup> Russian foreign-language broadcasts echoed the message. Moscow in Polish in March 1949 described the BBC as a 'crying radio crocodile' and in German called its broadcasters 'mad agitators and disruptionists',<sup>5</sup> while a few months later in November Vyshinsky spoke of the need to

<sup>1</sup> \*Jacob to Lean, 9 April 1948. See also 'The British Broadcasting Corporation in Peace and War' in the *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Telegram of 17 April 1948, 'The Principles and Purpose of the BBC's External Services.' In a further memorandum to the Beveridge Committee it was stated that 'the presentation of news to different audiences at home and abroad must necessarily vary according to the interests of those audiences, but *not* news itself'. For other aspects of news broadcasting, see below, pp. 575-6.

<sup>3</sup> \*Clark to Warner, 9 Aug. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Monitored Text of a Talk by Leonidov, 6 May 1950, in which individuals were mentioned; they included Haley, Jacob, Kirkpatrick, and Bruce Lockhart. Cf. a talk of 15 April 1951 by Romanov, 'Who runs the BBC'.

<sup>5</sup> \*Monitored Texts of 27 March, 12 March 1949 respectively. Cf. a reference to 'imperialist scribes and announcers' in Romanian, 25 March 1949. The *Daily Worker* strongly criticized the BBC in 1949, particularly on 15 Nov. 1949. For an early anticipation of the effects, see L. Marsland Gander in the *Daily Telegraph*, 17 Feb. 1948.



stamp out its 'unbridled and slanderous political lies'.<sup>1</sup> The very success of the BBC in reaching Russian—as well as Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, and East German—audiences accounted not only for such diatribes, but for the introduction by the Soviet Government in April 1949 of a policy of jamming, which Vyshinsky openly admitted for the first time in his November statement.



Г-н Макнейл, любитель «чистого воздуха»

HOW MOSCOW REACTS:  
from a *Pravda* cartoon

'MR. MCNEIL LOVES  
CLEAN AIR'

Mr. McNeil said: 'Open the windows; open the doors; let a draught of clean air into Soviet Russia.'

I ought to add that the doors and windows are always open for clean air, but it is not from the West and beyond the sea; that such clean air reaches us.

Vyshinsky—16 November 1949

15. From *World Review*, February 1950

The 24th of April 1949 is one of the lesser-known dates in the chronology of the cold war: it was then, without warning, that the BBC's Russian Service was first jammed (just before the lifting of the Berlin blockade). There had been jamming of American broadcasts in the Far Eastern areas of the Soviet Union as early as March 1948, and by August 1949 there were reports of jamming of American (but not of BBC) programmes to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Greece, and China.<sup>2</sup> At later

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, 17 Nov. 1949, describing a speech he had made at Lake Success the previous day. The *New York Herald Tribune* (Paris edition), 14 Jan. 1949, describes a parody of a BBC broadcast in *Krokodil*.

<sup>2</sup> C. A. Siepmann, *Radio, Television and Society* (1950), p. 302; *New York Times*, 25 Aug. 1949.

dates British broadcasts to some of these countries were jammed also. The jamming was very highly prepared and organized, more highly organized than German jamming during the Second World War, with up to a thousand jamming transmitters being employed.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of interference by jamming there were immediate diplomatic and other protests, including protests in the Soviet Union itself. Thus, on 4 May 1949, less than a fortnight after the first jamming, a letter was left in the Moscow office of *British Ally*, the newspaper still being published in Russian in Moscow, complaining of the withholding of 'the truth' and praising BBC broadcasts and, it must be added, those of the Voice of America, as 'a breath of fresh air in a prison-like atmosphere'.<sup>2</sup>

The American reaction to jamming was to double the budget of the Voice of America<sup>3</sup> and to work closely with the British in taking counter-measures. Some other NATO broadcasting organizations co-operated also, including the Italian, the Greek, and the Canadian. Transmissions in Russian were reorganized to allow the maximum number of frequencies to carry the same broadcasts simultaneously, and the Voice of America transmitters were brought into play along with those under the control of the BBC in a linked system.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, the Soviet jamming organization was subjected to increasing strain, with the result that the Postmaster-General could claim in reply to a question in the House of Commons in October 1949 that 'adequate reception should be obtained at nearly all times in most parts of Russia on one or more wavelengths'.<sup>5</sup>

Parliament showed great interest in 1949 not only in Soviet jamming—with most Labour backbenchers as critical of the Soviet Union as Conservatives—but in the whole range of external broadcasting. Haley and Jacob had addressed Conservative backbenchers, some of them sceptical or even hostile,

<sup>1</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 71, 273, 398, 432-3, 693. For Russian war-time jamming of German radio, see p. 398.

<sup>2</sup> Supplement to *London Calling*, 28 Aug. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 302. For American criticism of 'the Voice' see W. H. Wells, 'The Mumble in the Voice of America', *Harper's Magazine*, Jan. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> The steps taken were reported to Parliament. *Hansard*, vol. 467, cols. 2960-1, 30 July 1949.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 468, cols. 159-60, 26 Oct. 1949.

early in 1948,<sup>1</sup> at a time when cuts in resources were being proposed, and had won their support. They were active, too, in persuading the Labour Government itself in April 1948 not to drop lunch-time broadcasts to European countries and so reduce the importance of the European Service.<sup>2</sup>

The scale of British external broadcasting remained impressive, and in 1949, when several of the BBC's foreign-language services were celebrating their tenth anniversaries,<sup>3</sup> Hebrew, Urdu, and Indonesian were added to the list, the first languages to be added—apart from Russian—since 1945.<sup>4</sup> The American State Department, which had been collecting details both of 'competitive' international broadcasting and of the number and distribution of listeners with short-wave sets in different parts of the world, noted during the summer of 1949 that the volume of British 'external broadcasting'—and the budget sustaining it—was greater than that of the USA or the Soviet Union. In August 1949 Great Britain—with its widespread Commonwealth relationships as well as its interests in the cold war—was broadcasting 687 hours a week of 'international broadcasting' as against the 434 hours of the Soviet Union and the 214 hours of the USA.<sup>5</sup>

Britain's role in external broadcasting was usually described in the British Press not in the language of statistics but in the highly-coloured language of adventure and romance. Thus, there were references in 1948 and 1949 to Bush House being a 'modern tower of Babel' rising high 'like a . . . cliff from the

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 21 Jan. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*BBC Memorandum for the Select Committee on Estimates, 1950. There was, nonetheless, a Government cut of £330,000 in the BBC's estimates, affecting non-European services. The Woolferton transmitters in Shropshire were leased to the Voice of America.

<sup>3</sup> The ten-year anniversaries, usually celebrated by special programmes, included Afrikaans, Portuguese and Spanish (for Europe), Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Romanian, Serbo-Croat, Greek, Turkish and Slovak (introduced in that order between 14 May and 31 December 1949). A feature series *Ten Years After*, which dealt with European reconstruction, was first broadcast in the Light Programme and was later broadcast in most of the European foreign-language services.

<sup>4</sup> The Urdu Service began on 3 April 1949 and the Hebrew and Indonesian Services on 30 Oct. 1949 (*Annual Report, 1949-50*, pp. 37-43). In the same year, because of devaluation, the size of the BBC's New York Office was halved.

<sup>5</sup> Siepmann, *op. cit.*, p. 303. Voice of America broadcasts were relayed, however, by a chain of stations from Tangier to Hawaii. See 'Radio in the Cold War' in *The World Today*, June 1954.

Strand', a tower where the lights never went out and the teleprinters chattered for twenty-four hours a day. Russians on their collective farms and in fishing villages as far away as the coast near Vladivostok could hear London speaking at 3.15 a.m. London time, it was pointed out, and at 4.30 a.m. it was the Romanians' turn. 'From the Strand through the night and through the day the news streams out to Skelton, grey and white village in the Cumberland hills, to Rampisham in Dorset, Woofferton in Shropshire, Crowborough in Sussex, Ottringham, perched on Spurn Head, where the long waves get a smooth water passage to Scandinavia and the Baltic.'<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the Voice of America, the popular accounts continued, 'the BBC's Overseas Service is proud of its independence from the Foreign Office (which, however, it has the duty of consulting)'. The Voice *told* the world: the BBC always began its *communiqués* more gently: 'it is believed that'. Yet 'the new trend' in broadcasting and information, already mentioned,<sup>2</sup> was also a matter of comment—the 'markedly less detached tone' early in 1948 and the willingness to fight back. BBC officials were quoted to this effect, as was Lindley Fraser, Head of the German Service since October 1946. 'We wanted not only to counteract the false news from Leipzig and Berlin, but also to show them [the East Germans] that they are not abandoned and forgotten.'<sup>3</sup> Programmes to East Germany now included 'What you are supposed not to know', *News from the West* and *Facts give the Reply*. There was nothing distinctive about such an approach. James Monahan, eight years younger than Fraser and Head of the West European Service since 1946, and Hugh Carleton Greene, Head of the East European Service since December 1948, told exactly the same story as Fraser.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *John Bull*, 3 Dec. 1949. See also *Sunday Dispatch*, 21 Aug. 1949, reporting more 'hot' BBC broadcasts; *Everybody's*, 10 Sept. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 511.

<sup>3</sup> *John Bull*, 3 Dec. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Other Heads of Department in the European Division included Gregory Macdonald, Head of the Central European Service; Arthur Birley, Head of the South European Service; Denis Winther, Head of the Scandinavian Service; J. A. Camacho, Head of European Productions; and H. G. Venables, Head of European Presentation. All but the last of these were in their early or middle forties. Venables, however, was only thirty-eight in 1950 and Donald Hodson, Head of European Talks, only thirty-six. Other young members of the European staff included J. G. Weightman, Senior Programme Assistant in the French Section, and Stuart Hood, the Italian Programme Organizer.

The Beveridge Committee was interested in the 'control of programme output' inside the External Services, and Parliament was interested in the 'hitting back' process itself. 'Was there sufficient critical control of what has gone out in the BBC's foreign language programmes,' the BBC was asked at the Committee's hearings on 27 October 1949, 'in order to see that it does present Britain fairly?'<sup>1</sup> The BBC's reply was set out in some detail in a paper, 'The Critical Control of Programme Output in the Overseas Services',<sup>2</sup> which not only referred to 'the constant interchange of advice, criticism and guidance' but included full notes by Patrick Ransome on particular programmes, their presentation and reception. Ransome, an international lawyer, who had joined the BBC as a Research Assistant in the Overseas Division in 1941, was a careful and sensitive critic who also made many positive suggestions about what might be broadcast. He continued to produce 'output reports' until March 1953, the year before his death.

The demand for more 'hitting back' had been initiated among a group of Conservative backbenchers, led by Major Tufton Beamish, who had long complained that the European Service was badly understaffed and that 'every farthing spent would be a gilt-edged investment'.<sup>3</sup> When the Postmaster-General told Parliament during the autumn of 1949 that the BBC was then broadcasting to thirty-four countries in their respective languages, not counting the countries of the Commonwealth, and was using sixty-four short wavelengths, it was a Labour backbencher, however, Francis Noel-Baker, who asked, 'would not my right honourable Friend agree that the value and prestige of the overseas programmes of the BBC are out of all proportion to their cost?'<sup>4</sup> Paling responded noncommittally and did not reply to a further question put by Noel-Baker about the need to avoid 'false economies'. The Government was clearly

<sup>1</sup> Cind. 8116 (1951), paras. 242-4.

<sup>2</sup> \*The Paper was dated 22 Nov. 1949, and critical notes on the output of a number of particular services, including the French, were added as appendices. The process of self-criticism can be traced in the Minutes of the European and Overseas Programme Meetings.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 1948.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 469, col. 403, 2 Nov. 1949. One long and one medium wavelength were also being used. Christopher Mayhew on behalf of the Government rejected the idea of substituting broadcasts to the Baltic States for those in Hebrew (*ibid.*, vol. 470, col. 345, 23 Nov. 1949).

unwilling to confirm that for the cost of a small cruiser Britain was in return receiving the services of a battle fleet.<sup>1</sup>

There was always an inherent difficulty in Britain contributing substantially to the financing of the cold war and at the same time dealing with its own pressing financial problems, problems which began with the loss in war-time of foreign income and investments, and continued after the war with the end of Lend-Lease and the controversial American Loan of 1945. The British and Americans might share certain basic assumptions about the bases of 'democratic propaganda', but 'the dollar crisis' pulled them apart. Nor was it only the Americans who found it difficult to organize 'the war of words' in peacetime. In Britain, too, it was not always certain what the organizational pattern of a 'co-ordination' in 'overseas information' and 'overseas publicity' could and should be.<sup>2</sup> The result was that once the European crisis years of 1948 and 1949 were over—followed, though they were, in 1950 by the Korean War—the range and scale of the BBC's External Services were again subject to highly critical scrutiny. Haley might write in 1951 of BBC External Services broadcasting as the 'most massive and stable of all international broadcasting efforts', but neither the massiveness nor the stability could be taken for granted. Nor could his sensible dictum—very different from that underpinning American external broadcasting—that 'the whole basis of the effort is a full, regular and continuous service. The heat is never turned on or off this or that country.'<sup>3</sup>

The annual grant-in-aid to the Corporation covered both revenue and capital expenditure, and it had to be drawn upon to cover the costs of such items as a high-power relay station for the Far East built at Tebrau in Malaya in 1949, the operation of the Post Office lines network, and anti-jamming and

<sup>1</sup> The phrase was used by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart in *Time and Tide*, 28 Oct. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> There is a useful brief discussion of the neglected topic of co-ordination (with some international comparisons) in J. B. Black, *Organising the Propaganda Instrument: The British Experience* (1975). At first, following the demise of the Ministry of Information, the Lord President of the Council was the 'co-ordinator' (*Hansard*, vol. 420, cols. 520-1, 7 March 1946). Later Patrick Gordon Walker took over as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (*ibid.*, vol. 448, col. 2540, 19 March 1948).

<sup>3</sup> Sir William Haley, 'Broadcasting as an International Force', the Montagu Burton Lecture, University of Nottingham, 1951, p. 8.

defence measures.<sup>1</sup> In a wide-ranging historical survey, written in 1953, Clark referred to 'the pressure of successive budget cuts' and the consequent 'drastic reduction in the effective use (apart from the anti-jamming barrage operations) of transmitters, on which to a very great extent the strength and reliability of reception depends'. 'There is a sincere hope,' he added, 'that the present restrictions can, in the years to come, be removed, so that where necessary services can be restored or extended.'<sup>2</sup>

The actual amounts received and asked for were as follows:

BBC OVERSEAS EXPENDITURES

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Requested by the BBC</i>	<i>Authorized</i>	<i>Issued</i>
1949/50	4,500,000	4,450,000	4,365,000
1950/51	4,750,000	4,685,000	4,634,500
1951/52	5,230,000	4,750,000	4,740,000
1952/53	5,500,000	4,750,000	4,695,000
1953/54	—	4,950,000	4,905,000
1954/55	—	5,015,000	5,105,000

These global figures necessitated the cuts in particular services in three successive years to which Clark referred. Thus, in 1950/51, a cut of £65,000 entailed a reduction in the coverage of the European Services and of the English services for North America,<sup>3</sup> and in 1951/52 and 1952/53, with governments of different political complexions in power, there were further problems, many of them deeply disturbing to Jacob and his colleagues. They remained firmly convinced that whatever ministers might say, what the BBC was doing was crucial to the national interest.

In May 1951 the General Overseas Service was reduced from twenty-four hours a day to twenty-one, Spanish in the Latin American Service from five-and-three-quarter hours a day to three-and-three-quarter hours, and Portuguese from three-and-a-half a day to one-and-a-half hours. All in all, the

<sup>1</sup> \*Notes for a Meeting, 17 Nov. 1949. Haley told Jacob on 22 Nov. 1949 that it was not in his view 'wise apportioning' for the British Council 'to have nearly half the money granted to the BBC'.

<sup>2</sup> *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Report and Accounts, 1950-1*, pp. 42, 78.

Latin American Service was nearly halved. Greek for Cyprus, only recently introduced, was dropped, and Afrikaans reduced from three-quarters of an hour a day to a quarter of an hour. French was reduced by three-quarters of an hour a day, Dutch by six minutes, German for Austria by a quarter of an hour a day, and German for Germany by three-quarters of an hour. At first, it was feared that 160 posts would be lost, but the eventual loss was only forty.<sup>1</sup> A few compensatory increases were made. Thus, the three half-hour programmes to East Germany broadcast five days a week were extended to seven days, and an extra hour was added to the Arabic Service in 1951, followed by an extra quarter-hour in January 1952.<sup>2</sup> There was also a temporary increase in the Persian Service during the oil crisis between June and August 1951.

This second round of cuts under the Labour Government, which was followed in February 1952 by further drastic cuts under the Conservative Government, shattered Jacob's hopes. These had been jeopardized, indeed, almost from the very moment he sought to quantify them. In July 1949 he and his colleagues had drafted the BBC claim for financial support within the framework of a three-year plan for all the 'overseas information services', and the plan involved a limited but real expansion.<sup>3</sup> The figures, however, were so drastically revised by the Government that the suggested cuts would have had the effect, in Jacob's opinion, of forcing the BBC to abandon 'operations which we believe to be of [immense] value in prosecuting the "cold war", in binding us to the rest of the Commonwealth, in promoting the export trade, and in making our weight felt in the world'.<sup>4</sup>

The Treasury did not like three-year plans with 'a rising curve of expenditure',<sup>5</sup> but only relatively small cuts were made, in fact, in the estimates for 1950/51.<sup>6</sup> Jacob persisted, therefore, in asking for more at once—for such items as new transmitters at Georgetown, to serve North and South America and the West Indies, and in the Middle East; for hiring of air

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report and Accounts, 1951-2*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1952*, pp. 113, 120; *Annual Report and Accounts, 1951-2*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> The Plan was circulated on 15 July 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Draft Three Year Plan.

<sup>5</sup> \*D. Proctor (Treasury) to Haley, 7 Feb. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> *Annual Report, 1950-1*, p. 42.



time from Radio Ceylon; for transcriptions for colonial schools (these were to be paid for out of Colonial Development and Welfare funds and not out of the grant-in-aid); and a new television transcription service. He was willing to abandon the idea of a three-year plan, which he knew might be amended by a future government; but he was determined to direct attention consistently to what he believed to be national priorities.<sup>1</sup>

During the last year of the Labour Government he was in complete disagreement with Hugh Gaitskell, the newly appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was anxious to make very large cuts indeed in the grant-in-aid to the BBC and in financial provision for other information agencies. Gaitskell did not seek to hide his own opinion that 'propaganda could be sacrificed without serious effects'.<sup>2</sup> The gulf in thinking between him and Jacob was wide, and cuts were inevitable. As one of the BBC representatives on an official Working Party set up to consider ways of making them, Jacob insisted (picking up a Haley metaphor which he himself had already used)<sup>3</sup> that 'broadcasting is not something that can be turned on and off like a tap'. It was necessary to fight 'a long-term campaign to get and maintain one's audience and to hold one's own in a highly competitive field'.<sup>4</sup> The gulf was not a party political one, and Jacob's argument was fully supported by Simon in a private letter to Attlee in January 1951. 'The BBC's Overseas Services are in reality an integral part of national defence, and at a time when defence is being so considerably expanded it is essential that the Overseas Broadcasting Services should at least be maintained.'<sup>5</sup>

News of likely cuts led to widespread comment in the Press in February 1951 (one month after the publication of the

<sup>1</sup> \*'The Case for a New Approach to Overseas Information Expenditure', 19 Sept. 1950. Haley was dubious about abandoning three-year planning (Haley to Jacob, 30 Aug. 1950), and so was Bevin (letter from Ernest Davies to James Griffiths, 31 Oct. 1950).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of a Meeting on 14 Nov. 1950. Gaitskell cited the Latin American Service as 'an example of expenditure which was probably unjustified either by necessity or by results'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Jacob to Cliffe (Cabinet Office), 17 Nov. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*He wrote these words to Air Chief Marshal Sir John Slessor, Chief of the Air Staff, on 29 Nov. 1950 after attending a Working Party meeting. He also wrote to the same effect to Sir Edward Bridges on 3 Jan. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*Simon to Attlee, 23 Jan. 1951. Attlee replied the following day that he and his colleagues would 'give careful consideration to what you say'.

Beveridge Report), with only the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Worker*, an unusual alliance, supporting Gaitskell's 'stand'.<sup>1</sup> The *New Statesman* pressed for the continuation of the Latin American Service (just after Peron had suppressed *La Prensa*);<sup>2</sup> *The Economist* urged a NATO Political Warfare Executive;<sup>3</sup> and the *Daily Herald* quoted words from New Zealand, 'Your British voice is not loud enough'.<sup>4</sup> 'The Voice of America booms,' wrote the *Daily Mail* comprehensively, 'the Voice of Stalin roars, the Voice of Britain must whisper.'<sup>5</sup>

Opposition MPs and backbencher Labour MPs joined in the protests. R. A. Butler, for example, described the 'arm of broadcasting' as 'one of the most vital that we can use in our general defence arrangements', and John Profumo, like others who were critical of the BBC's home monopoly, nonetheless asked for an increase in expenditure on External Services. Ernest Davies, on behalf of the Government, parried the questions. He spoke of collaboration with the United States Government in relation to the Voice of America, but added that there was no liaison with Radio Free Europe, 'a non-governmental organization', sponsored by Americans, which was soon to begin broadcasting to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania from transmitters located in Western Europe.<sup>6</sup> A few days later, Gaitskell changed his tone somewhat and answered along similar lines. 'I am well aware of the importance of broadcasting to the Iron Curtain countries,' he said—he did not mention any others—'but I am also aware of the importance of economy in public expenditure.'<sup>7</sup> This time it

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 21 Feb. 1951: 'Mr. Gaitskell cuts down by £500,000 the amount of tax-payers' cash which the BBC wastes on propaganda overseas.' *Daily Worker*, 28 March 1951: 'BBC cuts staff, but not tripe.'

<sup>2</sup> *New Statesman*, 31 March 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *The Economist*, 24 March 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Herald*, 10 April 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Mail*, 31 March 1951.

<sup>6</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 484, cols. 1268-72, 21 Feb. 1951. The first Radio Free Europe broadcasts began on 1 May 1951. The Chairman of the National Committee for Free Europe was Charles D. Jackson, psychological warfare chief, who had worked with R. H. S. Crossman in North Africa and later with SHAEF in Paris. The Soviet Union was not covered by the broadcasts. Radio Free Europe in its beginnings employed 200 Germans and 135 Czechs and Slovaks.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1913-14, 27 Feb. 1951. Profumo took up the question on this occasion also, as he did on 4 April 1951 (*ibid.*, vol. 486, cols. 182-7).

really was the Chancellor of the Exchequer speaking and not a politician with reservations about the role of the BBC.

At the end of the chapter—and everyone knew it was a chapter rather than a book—Gaitskell cut the BBC's estimate first from £5,330,000 to £4,650,000 and, after continuing protests, to £4,750,000.<sup>1</sup> The extra £100,000 saved the BBC at the eleventh hour from cutting 'channels to Europe which, if lost, might never be regained'.<sup>2</sup>

Before the Conservative cuts of the following year, Jacob had set up an External Services Economy Committee inside the BBC. It met twenty-eight times between 21 May and 11 July, but failed to see any possibility of making 'easy large-scale economies'.<sup>3</sup> The Corporation had been 'forced to be continually looking for savings', Jacob told Haley, 'and can hardly have overlooked any large skeletons in the cupboard'.<sup>4</sup> Haley, whose interest in External Services was less profound than Jacob's, was impressed not so much by the conclusions of the Committee as by the spirit in which it had set about its work. His main interest, indeed, was in considering whether or not he could introduce similar reviews elsewhere in the Corporation.<sup>5</sup> 'The idea of cuts in other places,' he replied to Jacob, 'does not lead to a tautening of muscles but rather induces acute frustration and depression.'<sup>6</sup>

The sense of 'acute frustration and depression' never quite reached Bush House even in 1952, when, after intense BBC lobbying, the new Conservative Government proposed the cruellest cuts of all. Jacob stated the BBC's case in a letter to Selwyn Lloyd at the latter's request on 20 November 1951. 'Whereas three years ago we were still leading the field,' he argued, 'we have now fallen far behind Soviet Russia and are being passed by the Voice of America.'<sup>7</sup> The figures spoke for themselves:

<sup>1</sup> Morrison gave details on 4 April 1951 (*ibid.*), when the Government's policy was strongly criticized not only by Profumo but by Eden. The revised cut, decided upon on 6 April, was announced on 11 April (*ibid.*, cols. 991-3). \*It was referred to in a letter from Warner to Jacob, 5 May 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*External Services Monthly Meeting, *Minutes*, 18 April 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of the External Services Economy Committee, 14 July 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Jacob to Haley, 12 Sept. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 987.

<sup>6</sup> \*Haley to Jacob, 13 Sept. 1951.

<sup>7</sup> \*Jacob to Selwyn Lloyd, 20 Nov. 1951.

## WEEKLY HOURS OF EXTERNAL BROADCASTING

	1948	1951
BBC	650	550
USSR and satellites	440	1050
Voice of America	240	320 +370 in repeats

For Jacob the moral was plain. 'It seems to me that at a time when we are doing our utmost to strengthen the Western world in order to prevent war we should be expanding the activities of the BBC's Services rather than . . . paring them down.' Nor should it be thought, he added, that the only important part of the BBC's work was in Eastern Europe and Russia. This was 'a complete misunderstanding of the situation'. The task was 'world-wide', and it included the strengthening of 'the cohesion of the West' as much as the undermining of the East. Finally, engineering issues were involved as well as issues of programming. 'We have gone rather dangerously far in paring down our technical facilities by cutting out everything that is not absolutely essential.'<sup>1</sup>

Selwyn Lloyd acknowledged Jacob's letter along with the BBC estimate of £5,500,000.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, yet another committee of ministers, this time headed by Lord Salisbury, was considering more generally all expenditures on 'information services'.<sup>3</sup> Churchill had refused to follow the Labour Government in designating one single Minister to co-ordinate these services,<sup>4</sup> but during the winter of 1951/2, after the Conservative victory at the October general election, Salisbury played the key role in high-level discussions, which brought in Anthony Eden, the new Foreign Secretary, as well as the BBC. Again it was the pressure of economic circumstance rather than perception of the international situation which dictated policy.

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid. The argument had the full backing of the Chiefs of Staff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Selwyn Lloyd to Jacob, 26 Nov. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Parallel to a ministerial group, an Overseas Information Services (Official) Committee, headed by Sir Christopher Warner, had been examining critical issues in June and July (\*Warner to Clark, 4 June 1951).

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 494, cols. 874-5, 26 Nov. 1951. He made another statement on the subject on 3 March 1952 (*ibid.*, vol. 497, col. 29).

The effort to reduce government expenditure, which was felt to be essential 'if we are to survive as a country',<sup>1</sup> led once again, for all the earlier Conservative criticism of the Labour Government, to a freezing of the BBC's grant-in-aid at the figure for the previous year and, since costs were rising, the freezing obviously meant that the Corporation 'will be obliged either to drop or to curtail certain overseas services'.<sup>2</sup>

It was not surprising, therefore, that when Eden announced the freezing in the House of Commons, he was almost as roughly handled by the Opposition as the Labour Government had been the previous year. 'Does the right hon. gentleman', Herbert Morrison asked, 'remember that when the late Government made some reductions in expenditure on these services there was terrible opposition from the Conservative Party at that time? Is he now going to do the very thing his party opposed when in Opposition?'<sup>3</sup> A later critic along the same lines was Anthony Wedgwood Benn, who asked naughtily whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer, R. A. Butler, who had criticized the Labour Government's cuts so strongly the previous year, had been consulted about the freeze. Cuts once made, he suggested, were very difficult to restore.<sup>4</sup>

The Press was more consistent than the parties and once again questioned the Government's approach. 'Poor economy', wrote the *Daily Telegraph*;<sup>5</sup> 'short-sighted' was the view of *The Scotsman*.<sup>6</sup> The hand of the Treasury behind the actions of two successive governments was obvious enough, and while the *Financial Times* pointed out rightly that 'it stultifies long-term planning and interferes with current operations',<sup>7</sup> *The Economist* called for an 'early review of the whole functions and responsibilities of external broadcasting' by 'a small permanent committee empowered to keep under review the whole field of broadcasts to the Commonwealth and other countries'.<sup>8</sup> Other critics referred to the menace of Soviet jamming,<sup>9</sup> while behind the scenes Jacob was telling Salisbury that the BBC

<sup>1</sup> Lord Salisbury to Jacob, 10 Jan. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 495, cols. 638-9. 4 Feb. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 497, cols. 407-12, 5 March 1952. 'The difficulty with economy,' Selwyn Lloyd retorted, 'is that nobody wants to make the economy.'

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 12 Feb., 11 March 1952.

<sup>6</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 Feb. 1952.

<sup>7</sup> *Financial Times*, 28 Feb. 1952.

<sup>8</sup> *The Economist*, 16 Feb. 1952.

<sup>9</sup> *The Times*, 11 Feb. 1952; *Sunday Times*, 17 Feb. 1952.

would have to spend £80,000 a year on this item alone.<sup>1</sup>

The full implications of the Government's proposals were assessed with increasing alarm in Broadcasting House and Bush House. Already, a month earlier, Malcolm Frost had been forced to study economies in the Monitoring Service which he had formed from scratch in 1939 and which he then headed; he had concluded that a 20 per cent cut in expenditure would reduce output and efficiency by 50 to 60 per cent.<sup>2</sup> More generally, Jacob had concluded in February that even if drastic internal economies of £365,000 were made, they would still be inadequate in the light of Government policy.<sup>3</sup> The biggest saving suggested was £140,000, to be obtained by moving the Latin American Service from Aldenham to Bush House, along with a further economy of £74,000 on operations, but in addition savings on the European Services were suggested of such an order that Tangye Lean protested that the European Service was being unfairly penalized.<sup>4</sup>

Jacob wrote to Salisbury again on 19 February 1952 at Salisbury's invitation, reviewing the post-war history of External Services. 'On 1 January 1947 we were broadcasting 714 hours per week, whereas on 1 January 1952 we were broadcasting 565 hours per week. (The equivalent Cominform figures are 381 hours per week and 1,119 hours per week).' Each year 'a financial ceiling was fixed considerably lower than that required to maintain the current level of activity', and each year the individual foreign-language services 'were in the position of someone owning a sand castle and trying each time the tide comes up to build a wall round it to prevent erosion. Such a person is not likely to start rebuilding the castle; his efforts are concentrated on strengthening the wall.' The total money involved was one-third of one per cent of the defence budget,<sup>5</sup> and the very least that the Government should do, he

<sup>1</sup> \*Jacob to Salisbury, 14 Jan. 1952. Note by Jacob on 'The Russian Jamming Campaign and Measures to Meet It', 11 Jan. 1952. Major Tufton Beamish raised the question in the House of Commons (*Hansard*, vol. 497, cols. 5-6, 3 March 1952), as did others two days later (*ibid.*, cols. 407-12).

<sup>2</sup> \*M. Frost to Jacob, 3 Jan. 1952. For Frost's war-time role, see *The War of Words*, pp. 24, 188, 362.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of External Services Special Meeting, 6 Feb. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*Tangye Lean to Jacob, 6 Feb. 1952.

<sup>5</sup> For a public statement at this time of the argument for broadcasting within a defence policy, see *The Economist*, 9 Feb. 1952, 'The War of the Wavelengths'.

suggested, was to initiate an inquiry. Broadcasting was a long-term affair, and 'once it has been decided that such and such services must be operated, the money ought to be found year by year until a new assessment changes the pattern'.<sup>1</sup>

Salisbury 'side-stepped' the demand for an inquiry,<sup>2</sup> and the BBC was inexorably forced into listing a large number of cuts both in monitoring (£30,000) and in particular services. The Latin American Service was to be particularly hard hit—even the production of all transcription programmes for Latin America was to be stopped—but that was not enough: the *Arabic Listener* was to cease publication, the Dutch, Danish, French, German, Norwegian, and Portuguese Services were to be reduced, and the Belgian and Luxembourg Services abolished. *English by Radio*—a staple, first introduced experimentally in 1943<sup>3</sup>—was to be pruned, and all in all 130 jobs were to disappear.

The list was formidable, but it was not the size of the list or the nature of individual items in it but the heavy cost of dealing with jamming which made the Government think again. This was a sufficiently dramatic issue on which to appeal to Parliament and the public, and after further thought, Eden stated in the House of Commons early in April that 'we are determined . . . that Soviet Russia shall not decide how much broadcasting we do'.<sup>4</sup> Even then the Government stalled until the autumn, and refused a supplementary estimate before eventually offering an extra £30,000 out of an unanticipated saving on the defence budget.<sup>5</sup> When the grant for the following year, 1953/54, was made, it included an increase of £200,000, but it was emphasized that 'there could be no hope of restoring any of last year's serious cuts, especially in the Latin American field'.<sup>6</sup>

The one big new decision was that of the Government in October 1952 to launch an official inquiry into the broad span

<sup>1</sup> \*Jacob to Salisbury, 19 Feb. 1952. He also prepared a paper, 'Notes on the BBC's External Services', 28 Feb. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Jacob, 4 March 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See *The War of Words*, p. 523. In 1948 the possibility of providing a standard course capable of adaptation and translation into various languages was explored. The result was a *Listen and Speak* course.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 498, col. 2289, 7 April 1952.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Jacob, 11 Jan. 1952; Note on a Working Party Meeting, 12 June 1952; *Annual Report, 1952-3*, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Annual Report, 1952-3*, p. 34.

of Information Services, under the Chairmanship of Lord Drogheda.<sup>1</sup> The terms of reference of his Committee, which included one member of the Beveridge Committee, Mary Stocks, and one highly experienced broadcaster to Eastern Europe, Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart,<sup>2</sup> the former Director-General of PWE, were 'to assess the value, actual and potential, of the overseas information work of the Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, Colonial Office, Board of Trade and Central Office of Information; the External Services of the BBC; and the work of the British Council; to advise upon the relative importance of different methods and services in different areas and circumstances; and to make recommendations for future policy'.

Before the Drogheda Committee was set up, there had been a preliminary Cabinet Committee of Inquiry at the official level which was headed by J. W. Nicholls of the Foreign Office. It met for the first time on 21 April 1952 and completed its work on 11 July.<sup>3</sup> Its members were divided as to the need for a further independent inquiry but unanimous about the importance of all 'overseas information work' in the Commonwealth, Europe, and in the 'cold war' (still referred to as such). They implied, moreover, that the opportunities of savings were restricted. So, too, did the Drogheda Committee itself, which obviously disappointed the Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>4</sup> To a large extent, indeed, it substantiated arguments put forward earlier by Jacob in setting out three objectives of an information services strategy—first, 'to support our foreign policy'; second, 'to preserve and strengthen the Commonwealth and Empire'; and third, 'to increase our trade and protect our investments overseas'. The Overseas Information Services had been handicapped hitherto, it argued, by the 'lack of a generally accepted body of principles to justify their existence at all or to define their potentialities and limitations'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 505, cols. 1003-4, 22 Oct. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> The other members were J. W. Platt, Gervas Huxley, Donald McLachlan, Victor Feather, and Laurence Heyworth.

<sup>3</sup> Ministers had promised such an inquiry in April (*Hansard*, vol. 498, col. 1665, 2 April 1952). The body was not to be the same as the Overseas Information Services (Official) Committee referred to above, p. 524 n.3.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of a Meeting by J. B. Clark, 7 Oct. 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 9138 (1954), *Summary of the Report of the Independent Committee of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services*, p. 6.



The main recommendations of the Drogheda Committee were not published (as a White Paper) until April 1954<sup>1</sup>—the full Report was never published—and it was obvious that pending the conclusion of the Committee's work there would be no further major change in the structures, procedures, or scale of external broadcasting. As has been the case so often, therefore, in British history, the existence of a committee was used to justify inaction. Jacob had no alternative but to wait—and to have prepared for the Committee an immense mass of paper. As many as eighteen BBC memoranda were duly produced, ranging from 'the Monitoring Service', 'the Far East,' and 'the Effective Use of External Broadcasting'—very broad themes—to 'the Tebrau Project' (in Malaya) and 'A Note on BBC Listeners in Delhi'.<sup>2</sup> There were few references to television except in relation to the needs of a Transcription Service, although a personal note from Sir Robert Fraser, the future Director-General of the Independent Television Authority, then writing from the Central Office of Information, suggested that 'the future pattern of sound broadcasting seems doubtful' and that the supply of films and television materials would 'gain in importance' within the information complex.<sup>3</sup>

More important in proving a case than these memoranda was the actual work of the BBC External Services during the year 1953, when the Drogheda Committee was meeting and reaching its first conclusions. There was a sense, indeed, in which 1953, Coronation year, was a 'showcase year' for the External Services as well as for BBC Television. On Saturday 19 December the BBC completed twenty-one years of overseas

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. The Committee, which first met in October 1952, finished its work in July 1953 and a draft Report was in the hands of the BBC as early as August 1953. It was originally hoped that the recommendations would be published in time to affect the 1954/5 budget (\*Note by J. B. Clark, 28 April 1954).

<sup>2</sup> 30 per cent of licence holders in Delhi heard the BBC at least once a week and 36 per cent of regular BBC listeners heard the BBC's Hindi Service. Many of the memoranda dealt with overseas listener research, a subject of considerable controversy during 1955; they included a general memorandum on methods and results. The Committee was also sent supplies of the scripts, including Andrew Martin's column for Hungarian listeners, a satire by M. Stoe for Romanian listeners, a Czech Service talk by Dr. Jan Pauliny-Toth, a talk by a Russian refugee and a commentary by Anatol Goldberg (Russian Service), and answers to letters from East Germany.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Robert Fraser, 'The Working of the Overseas Information Services', 29 April 1953.

broadcasting, and an imposing collection of 'reminiscent' programmes was prepared both for Home and Commonwealth audiences. Much of the activity had been discussed at the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference of June 1952, the first since 1945, when there was a comprehensive review of technical and programming matters.<sup>1</sup> Yet the experience of Coronation year itself, as J. B. Clark pointed out, had cast its spell. 'We have had experience', he said (briefly pushing the cold war to one side), 'of what broadcasting can mean to this great family of nations.'<sup>2</sup> This was a time, he felt, for looking back to the 1930s, long before the 'war of words' had begun. The special number of *London Calling* was introduced, therefore, by Sir Cecil Graves, the first Director of the old Empire Service, in an article called 'Pioneer Days'. 'People rather laughed at us,' he wrote of the early years from 1932-5. Yet 'who would dare to-day to say which aspect of British broadcasting was the more important—the Home or the External?'<sup>3</sup>

Within the pattern of external broadcasting, broadcasting to the Commonwealth still had a special place in 1953. Yet the range of 'imperial' considerations which influenced the War Cabinet when it was contemplating the future of British broadcasting in 1944 and 1945<sup>4</sup> was widened during the late 1940s and 1950s, for these were years of significant change within 'the Empire and Commonwealth' itself (as Winston Churchill always called it) as well as within Europe. The chronology of change in this context influenced external broadcasting at least as much as the chronology of the cold war. The two chronologies, indeed, were intertwined. The independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 was followed in 1948 by the independence

<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference, Report, Nov. 1952. The first preparations for the Conference had been in the hands of R. D'A. Marriott, but when he became Head of the Transcription Service he was replaced by Farquharson. There had been earlier talk with Charles Moses, General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, about making Australia the rendezvous. One of the themes of the Conference was education, and there was a separate education committee. See also above, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> \*Draft by J. B. Clark, 19 Dec. 1953: 'We all know how difficult it is for members of a family to keep in touch when they are separated by thousands of miles, however often they write to each other. . . . How much more does this apply to great nations, each with its own problems and its own aspirations.'

<sup>3</sup> *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> See above, pp. 34-5.



11a. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh visit Lime Grove, 28 October 1953



11b. *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier, Alexandra Palace, 19 January 1947



12a. Type D disc recorder. 1948



12b. Editing magnetic tape. 1951

of Burma and Ceylon and the end of the British mandate in Palestine, in 1949 by the establishment of Communist China, and in 1950 by the Korean War. And soon afterwards it became clear that the future of a new 'multi-racial Commonwealth' (of which the old Commonwealth dominions of settlement were only a part) would depend not only on the dynamics of change in Asia—the opening of the BBC's Malayan transmitter in 1951 was related to this<sup>1</sup>—but on the development of Africa—West, South, Central, and East: probably, it was thought, in that order. There were differences of outlook and perspective in the different parts of the Commonwealth, but the growing sense of common endeavour and purpose among the political leaders of colonial or 'liberated' peoples and the policy of the Soviet Union and of Communist China in focusing on 'colonialism' and 'neo-colonialism' as major international issues ensured, first, that distinctive 'colonial' questions could not be considered entirely outside the cold war context, and second, that the timetable of change towards independence was speeded up.<sup>2</sup>

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were more hopes than fears in Britain about the future of the new 'Commonwealth'. Some still saw it as a viable alternative to an extended European commitment. Others saw it as a 'third force' in the world, an example of voluntary co-operation and directed change which no other group of countries could emulate. The BBC's pre-war Empire Service, founded in 1932, the beginning of the whole external services effort of the Corporation, had been conceived of primarily, though not exclusively, as a service for expatriates and people of British descent. Scattered about the world, they could pay a visit home every time they listened. "They heard the chimes of Big Ben with the people crossing Westminster Bridge, shared the news with their relatives in Cheam, took part with delight in a journey on the

<sup>1</sup> From Malaya an auxiliary retransmitting service, known as the British Far Eastern Broadcasting Service, was designed 'to improve the strength and reliability of the reception of BBC services directed to the East and Far East generally' (*London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953). BBC programmes in Vietnamese (1 hour a week) started on 6 Jan. 1952. *London Calling Asia* had begun on 13 May 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*A paper prepared by the Monitoring Service on 3 July 1950 dealt with 'The British Colonies in Soviet Propaganda'. A later paper of 16 Feb. 1953, 'Africa in Soviet Propaganda', noted that Soviet interest in Africa was still less than in Asia and that more often Soviet external services were directly addressed to the peoples of Africa or were in African languages.

Flying Scot or a tug threatening to catch up the Oxford crew in the Boat Race.<sup>1</sup> The audiences of the post-war world, however, were from the start far more mixed and far more curious. 'Second-language listeners' wanted to know of different things, sometimes in their own first languages. They were concerned, too, with the interpretation of social and political change within the Commonwealth as a whole.

The only element of fear expressed in the Colonial Office's evidence to the Beveridge Committee centred on 'the subversive activities of those who rely upon ignorance to breed mistrust', but it saw broadcasting from Britain as an antidote to these. It laid emphasis, too, on positive programming and on assistance to new broadcasting organizations in the Commonwealth 'of a more direct and comprehensive nature' than had been necessary before.<sup>2</sup> The BBC was ready and willing to supply such assistance. It recognized also that, however great the changes, there was an important cultural continuity. The 'second-language listeners' often shared similar interests with the British and, on the whole, were thought to be more 'serious-minded' than the pre-war audience for Empire broadcasts. 'To be admitted to the English fireside may not have the same family significance as for people of British descent,' it could be said, 'but it has some of the excitement of taking up a British Council Scholarship for a course of study in Britain. Direct access to the technical and political thinking of London, to the concerts, light music and even the state occasions has an attraction for them which is easily under-estimated.'<sup>3</sup> Big Ben was 'our Mutual Friend'.

In 1949 the British Government made available a new grant, which at the time was related to ambitiously conceived schemes both for 'development' and 'welfare'. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech-Jones, was anxious for the colonies to treat broadcasting as a necessary public service and to use it as an instrument of social and political advancement.<sup>4</sup> During the four years between the new grant and the Coronation, therefore, more than forty broadcasting schemes

<sup>1</sup> 'The Impact of Broadcasting, I' in *The Round Table*, no. 198, March 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 8117 (1951), pp. 277-8.

<sup>3</sup> *The Round Table*, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> E. Watrous, Broadcasting Officer at the Colonial Office, 'Broadcasting in the Colonies' in *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953.

were launched in twenty-seven colonial territories. Nigeria, with one of the largest operations, organized 'a flourishing regional and national service'; Lusaka, facilities for a six-language programme; the Seychelles a scheme to increase broadcasting from one hour a week to one hour a day; Tanganyika and Sarawak, the first radio stations in their countries, in Dar-es-Salaam and Kuching.

BBC engineers surveyed the West Indies in 1945, East and Central Africa in 1946, West Africa in 1949, Tanganyika and Uganda in 1950, and the Gold Coast in 1953; and W. A. Roberts made a comprehensive tour in 1954-5. BBC programme-makers and administrators were involved also. Thus, in 1953 a Broadcasting Commission, led by J. Grenfell Williams, the Head of the BBC's Colonial Service, produced an ambitious plan for the future of broadcasting in the Gold Coast, which was warmly welcomed in Accra, and the following year Williams was heading a Commission in Kenya. The General Overseas Service of the BBC might be heard throughout the world, but it was believed that in the long run independent colonial broadcasting services would have to stand on their own feet. It was hoped, of course, that they would be effective customers for BBC programmes. The recently formed Colonial Schools Transcription Unit was a testimony in 1953 to the interest attached to colonial education,<sup>1</sup> but it was not only educational programmes which it was thought might be taken up. BBC news bulletins were still staple items in many independent countries.

In the BBC's evidence submitted to the Drogheda Committee, as in the special number of *London Calling* for the twenty-first anniversary, the services to the Colonies, to the Dominions and to Latin America were thought of as complementary to the services being distributed to Europe. The following figures were presented:

<sup>1</sup> Howard Marshall in *London Calling*, 10 Dec. 1953. For the General Overseas Service in 1953 and the work of Cyril Conner, Head of Overseas Programme Services, and of Clifford Lawson-Reece, its Head of Operations, see an article by Wynford Vaughan-Thomas (*London Calling*, loc. cit.), on 'Round the World in the BBC Studios'. No. 200 Oxford Street was still the centre of operations. J. W. MacAlpine was Assistant Controller (Overseas English Services), Douglas Ritchie, General Overseas Service Organiser, and Rooney Pelletier, North American Service Organiser. People in sixty-one centres were listening to *English by Radio*.

EXPENDITURE ON EXTERNAL SERVICES FOR SIX YEARS, 1947-48 TO 1952-53\*

	European	English	Eastern	Far Eastern	Singapore/ Ceylon	Latin America	Transcriptions	Total Broadcasting	Monitoring	Civil Defence	Total
1947-48	1,286	1,472	257	64		361	205	3,645	251		3,896
1948-49	1,346	1,367	266	69	240	353	210	3,851	281		4,132
1949-50	1,450	1,413	288	78	209	367	227	4,032	350		4,382
1950-51	1,572	1,428	289	96	408	369	237	4,399	355		4,754
1951-52	1,693	1,413	322	120	104	291	198	4,141	437	81	4,659
1952-53 (Estimate)	1,872	1,510	297	130	125	172	199	4,305	445	70	4,820

\* The above amounts, in £1,000s, include both Capital and Revenue direct expenditure and a share of Common Services.



It was a truism that the global background to this effort was a 'shrinking world' in which disturbances in British Guiana and Kenya could coincide with rows between Church and State in Poland and arguments about the future of Trieste; a world in which there could be jamming of BBC services in Hebrew and Persian as well as in Polish and Hungarian. The Hungarian jamming continued even during the football match between Hungary and England in November 1953, when the Hungarians asked for a live commentary in Magyar for their own radio.<sup>1</sup> And in 1956, one year after the close of the period covered in this volume, crisis in Hungary was to coincide with the Suez crisis in the Middle East. Violence never ceased to be a part of the scene after 1945. The fact that windows in the British Embassy in Belgrade were broken in October 1953, almost immediately after a BBC broadcast setting out the terms of an Anglo-American statement on the future of Trieste, was taken characteristically as a sign that 'many Yugoslavs listen to these broadcasts'.<sup>2</sup>

It is not clear whether or not the Drogheda Committee paid much attention to the content of programmes. If so, it must have been struck by the variety. Sport had always been popular, not only Test Matches or Wimbledon, but games of all kinds from the Olympics and international football matches down to weekly fixtures.<sup>3</sup> Also popular were talks and discussion programmes. Their range was wide enough to tempt all tastes. Thus, alongside the discussions of the highly successful *Asian Club*, founded in 1951, listeners could hear a series of talks on 'The Unity of European Culture' (T. S. Eliot was one of the speakers), weekly readings of Joseph Wechsberg's articles on life behind the Iron Curtain (with the title *The Hammer and Sickle*), and a daily analysis of the Slansky trials for Czech listeners, including inset recordings of Czech radio programmes.

The Committee might have noted that the peak point of listening to the East German broadcasts of the BBC came in August 1953. The purpose of distinguishing programmes to

<sup>1</sup> \*Report by the Director of External Broadcasting, 2 Sept. to 30 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid. For the match, see below, p. 848.

<sup>3</sup> \*177 members of the BBC's European Service staff were engaged in broadcasting the 1948 Olympics (Report by the Director of Overseas Services, 2 Sept. 1948).

East Germany from the main German Service was 'not to effect a geographical split in the target areas but to form and clarify the output'. Programmes for the East concentrated on 'political warfare' themes. Those for 'Germany as a whole' were like those designed for other Western European countries.<sup>1</sup> They included *Commentary for the Evening*, *Radio Newsreel*, *This Week in Parliament*, talks on science, literature and art, and occasional plays.<sup>2</sup>

If the BBC held that it was 'irrelevant and feckless' to try to tell too much about Britain itself, except in features, to people who were listening 'in the conditions which obtain behind the Iron Curtain', it cannot have found it easy to explain to West European audiences the main trends of British policy outside—or inside—Europe between 1945 and 1955. The BBC paper on Western Europe submitted to the Drogheda Committee referred to the use of regular commentators like Lindley Fraser, William Pickles (on the French Service) and Ruggero Orlando, who had become 'well-known personalities among their audiences', and of 'personality speakers' like Harold Nicolson and Jacques Duchesne; yet it admitted that the effectiveness of what they could say was in doubt. The golden years of the war were fading. 'Britain's relationship—at once very close and yet slightly aloof—with the Continent is at any time liable to misunderstanding; at a time like the present when the nations of Western Europe are required to make a great common political and economic effort, such misunderstandings may be more than usually acute, wasteful and dangerous. Britain has, for instance, been continuously attacked in Western Europe for her attitude to European Union, the European Defence Community and the Iron and Steel Community. On such matters

<sup>1</sup> There was a separate Austrian Service, relayed on an Austrian medium wavelength, but when the Austrian Treaty was ratified in July 1955 this relay, which had served over a quarter of all Austrian listeners, came to an end.

<sup>2</sup> \*BBC Evidence to the Drogheda Committee, Paper 11, 'BBC Broadcasts to Eastern Europe', 8 Jan. 1953. The Yugoslav programmes also were said to approximate more closely to programmes addressed to Western audiences than any other programmes addressed to Communist countries. A fuller paper on the subject was drafted on 31 Dec. 1952. It emphasized that the broadcasts to the Soviet Union were transmitted not to a mass audience but to a privileged audience with advantages not open to all. There is an interesting radio script on the subject, written by Martin Esslin and first broadcast on 3 Oct. 1952, *Through the Iron Curtain*.

the British point of view must be clearly and repeatedly stated.' There was no hint of recognition in this paper that the British might have been more in need of guidance to avoid their own misunderstandings (or ignorance) than the French and Germans were. It was taken for granted that 'the background of the British attitude' was 'Britain's special position as mother country of the Commonwealth and as banker to the sterling bloc'.<sup>1</sup> The great war-time contribution of the BBC to the European resistance was not mentioned, nor any hopes of Britain participating in moves towards European unity.

Nor were attitudes towards the United States—another source of difficulty—mentioned in this paper. Indeed, no special paper was prepared on this subject, although there were papers on the Far East and the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> There had been drastic reductions in the staff of the Research Department of the BBC's New York Office during the middle months of 1947, and in December of that year the Overseas Services Division had produced a paper on the North American Service at the special request of Lady Reading, who 'asked what might be done to get more BBC programmes on American air'.<sup>3</sup> It was taken for granted that there was 'community of interest' but that far more 'regular and extensive' communication would be useful.

The Americans were not receptive to external short-wave broadcasting beamed directly at them, whatever beaming they employed themselves, but they welcomed the chance of listening to a number of imported BBC programmes on their own wavelengths. 'It may be', the Overseas Services Division stated, 'that a *strictly limited* number of *cultural*, as against political, programmes could be distributed free of cost without undue

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Evidence to the Drogheda Committee, Paper 14, 'BBC Broadcasts to Western Europe', 19 Jan. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Paper No. 12 on the Middle East, 7 Jan. 1953, emphasized the need to co-ordinate output and to establish the fact that 'the British have a particularly clear and sympathetic understanding of the Muslim civilisation and the problems facing the Muslim world'. Programmes were concentrating on aspects of British life which it was thought would be useful and relevant to Middle Eastern countries—'health services, municipal government, etc.'. There was a large audience. Over the previous three years an average of 132 letters a week had been received from Arab countries and 52 from Iran. At the height of the Anglo-Iranian crisis of January to April 1951 the number of letters from Iran reached 185.

<sup>3</sup> \*Paper of 22 Dec. 1947, 'The North American Service'. J. Warren MacAlpine, then Director of the Service, had produced an earlier paper on 25 Sept. 1946.

inconsistency with Britain's poverty, and without offence to the Department of Justice.' Fortunately 'rebroadcasting' did not necessarily depend on this. Twenty months later, Warren MacAlpine, as Assistant Controller of the Overseas English Services, emphasized how difficult it was to extend rebroadcasting further in the United States, 'a field of most intensive and self-assured domestic radio'.<sup>1</sup> Yet at that time and later there was a substantial volume of rebroadcasting, and the main obstacle to increasing the scale of the service was 'lack of budgetary scope at this end'.<sup>2</sup>

Similar financial difficulties had greatly reduced the scope of the BBC's Latin American Service, and, as the BBC told the Drogheda Committee, the successive cuts had produced sharp reactions in Latin America itself. There had been the first outcry in 1951 when *La Voz de Londres* ceased publication—many Argentinians offered to pay a subscription for future issues—and there had been hundreds of protests in Press editorials early in 1952 and when various BBC Latin American offices were closed. 'No doubt the British Government knows what it is doing,' wrote the *Correio da Manha*, for example, in Rio de Janeiro, 'but our impression is that the BBC is well worth a battleship or an atomic bomb. Can it be possible that the Word is to be the chosen victim?'<sup>3</sup>

A summary of the report of the Drogheda Committee appeared in the Press in April 1954,<sup>4</sup> and it made it plain that the Committee favoured the restoration of a higher level of 'programme and/or technical activity' in the Latin American as well as in the General Overseas and certain European services.<sup>5</sup> *The Times* welcomed not only the 'comprehensive

<sup>1</sup> \*Memorandum of 16 Aug. 1950. Cf. Sir Ian Jacob, 'The North American Service', 7 Sept. 1950: 'The fragmentation of broadcasting and the commercial system in the U.S.A. severely limit the impact that BBC programmes can have on the American public.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Barbara Halpern, 29 Aug. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Quoted in the Appendix to BBC Paper No. 10, 'Broadcasts to Latin America', 26 Nov. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times* and other newspapers, 29 April 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*The BBC had welcomed these proposals in a paper of 25 Sept. 1953, 'Comments by the BBC Board of Governors on the Drogheda Committee Report'. In a further note of 28 April 1954 J. B. Clark made it clear that the full Report was secret and that no one in the BBC should treat any of the Drogheda Committee's recommendations as binding until the Government had accepted them.

approach' in the summarized Report—the emphasis on a strategy<sup>1</sup>—but the proposal in it (which it admitted was not applicable to the BBC's External Services) that the British information services should be directed at 'the influential few and through them at the many'. This proposal was in line with *The Times's* own philosophy, but it was very different from that of more popular newspapers which asked for more external broadcasting everywhere. There was very sharp criticism indeed of the Committee's suggestion that all broadcasting to 'our friends' in Western Europe should stop.<sup>2</sup> 'How to lose friends (15 million of them) and alienate people' was the title of the 'Cameron Commentary' in the *News Chronicle*.<sup>3</sup> 'An affront . . . a discourtesy', was the verdict of Darsie Gillie, the respected correspondent in France of the *Manchester Guardian* and a pillar of the BBC's own war-time service to France.<sup>4</sup> *The Economist* complained not only of the content of the report but of the delay which Ministers had shown in considering it; its article 'Cinderella in Downing Street' included the most trenchant of all the public criticisms.<sup>5</sup>

Behind the scenes, Jacob had been an even more trenchant critic from the time that he had received a copy of the Report in the August of the previous year. Could nothing be done to 'stop this nonsense?' he asked.<sup>6</sup> Cadogan also pointed out to responsible Ministers that the Report paid no attention to the Monitoring Service or to considerations of defence, and that no suggestions for the extension of overseas broadcasting could compensate for the loss of the services to Western Europe.<sup>7</sup> 'It would be crazy', an influential and high-ranking general told them, 'to drop broadcasting to Western Europe while increasing it to Latin America.'<sup>8</sup>

During the long-delayed debate on the summary of the Drogheda Report in Parliament on 6 July 1954 many of these

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 529. *The Economist* praised the emphasis on co-ordination, 10 July 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 29 April 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 14 May 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 3 May 1954. Cf. Robert Boothby to *The Times*, 14 May, and the French Ambassador (Corbin) to *The Times*, 16 July 1954.

<sup>5</sup> *The Economist*, 8 May 1954; *Manchester Guardian*, 29 April 1954.

<sup>6</sup> Letter of 18 Sept. 1953.

<sup>7</sup> Note of a Meeting at the Foreign Office, 7 Oct. 1953.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Jacob, 17 Oct. 1953.

criticisms were echoed as they had often been echoed in Parliament before.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the speech of Ernest Davies, leading off for the Labour Opposition, recalled many previous Conservative statements. 'The BBC presents the voice and the views of the free world, and is still regarded as speaking with the most authoritative and objective voice in Europe. . . . British prestige, leadership and influence in Europe would suffer irreparable harm were this voice to be dimmed or to go unheard.'<sup>2</sup> From the Conservative back benches John Rodgers, who claimed that he for one was saying exactly what he would say if a Labour Government were in power, objected to British reserve and restraint about the word 'propaganda'. Why fear the word? The suggestion that the French, Italian, Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Portuguese, and Swedish Services should all be stopped to save £135,000 seemed to him to be a matter of alarm. 'The risks one takes to do so make one boggle.'<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Anthony Nutting, the Joint Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in replying to the debate agreed to reconsider the position of the services to Western Europe, did not stifle Press comment. The *Manchester Guardian* summed up the opinions of the most vociferous and still unsilenced critics. 'The aloofness of Britain's post-war policy has puzzled many of our friends, especially after the high promises held out by Sir Winston Churchill. The closing down of British broadcasts will, unhappily, be read as another sign that we are not greatly interested in our neighbours.'<sup>4</sup>

Many of the neighbours soon showed that they remained interested in Britain, as hundreds of letters were received by the BBC from all parts of Western Europe. 'We think of a kind of estrangement, an intellectual chill which would occur across the Channel,' was one French comment.<sup>5</sup> 'The proposal to abolish these Services,' commented an Italian editorial, 'shows up once more the curious hostility with which the democracies regard propaganda; the lesson of Germany and Italy was not enough, apparently, for England.'<sup>6</sup> 'It cannot be denied that

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Davies had asked for a statement on the Report on 21 June 1954 (*Hansard*, vol. 529, col. 4, 21 June 1954). For the debate of 6 July, see *ibid.*, cols. 2047-108.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2053.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2070.

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 6 July 1954. Cf. *The Scotsman*, 7 July 1954.

<sup>5</sup> *La Presse de la Manche*, 20 July 1954.

<sup>6</sup> *Il Mondo*, 10 Aug. 1954.

the arguments used make rather depressing news for a West European reader,' remarked a newspaper in Norway, heading its article: '“We will gladly pay for BBC broadcasts” say Norwegian sailors.'<sup>1</sup>

The Drogheda proposals to abolish the West European Service were not implemented in 1955. Nor, however, were the proposals for substantial increases in expenditure on overseas broadcasting. The *status quo* was to be maintained—as far as the Government was concerned—until 1956. There were some further cuts, however, both in the European Service and in the General Overseas Service from March 1955 onwards.<sup>2</sup> Only five staff were made redundant, but programme allowances fell. It was small consolation that the BBC's European Service moved in October 1954 from the crowded premises in the Centre Block at Bush House, which they had shared with various government departments since 1941, into premises specially adapted for them in the South-East Wing.<sup>3</sup> 'Although the Government has given a twelve-month reprieve to seven of the BBC services to Western Europe,' wrote *The Spectator*, 'the threat of extinction still hangs over these services.'<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, 'rival radios' continued to deliver their messages oblivious to the appeal of *The Times* for a 'truce to abuse'.<sup>5</sup> There was less talk of the 'cold war', but there was still little talk of 'coexistence', let alone of peace.

## 5. 'One in Three'

IF EXTERNAL broadcasting had been financed from licence money, home listeners might have paid more attention to its problems. As it was, from 1945 to 1955 the wide range of issues relating to external broadcasting was far less well known outside

<sup>1</sup> *Adresseavisen* (Trondheim), 21 May 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Circular by Clark, 3 March 1955; *Annual Report, 1955-6*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1954-5, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> *The Spectator*, 25 March 1955.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Professor G. J. Renier to the *Manchester Guardian*, 16 Aug. 1955; *The Times*, 17 May 1955. 'Unlike armaments, a decisive lead cannot be quickly built up in words.'

Broadcasting House than inside it except intermittently—and then sometimes sensationally—in the columns of the Press. During these years there was not even the kind of competition for resources between external broadcasting and television which had enlivened debates about broadcasting development before 1939.<sup>1</sup> All the competition centred on Home Sound versus Home Television, by now the main issue in broadcasting policy, with Barnes pointing out, whenever he could, how much greater television programme costs were bound to be, if only because of the ‘engineering’ input. Although BBC staff might be transferred from the External Services either into Sound or Television, within the Home Sound services the spectrum of Home, Light, and Third—with the Regional variants of the first—began to be taken for granted almost as if it rested on the facts of nature.

There were critics inside the BBC, however, who challenged some of the favourite assumptions. ‘Instead of being one step ahead of our audience, we are half a dozen’, Denis Morris, Head of Midland Regional Programmes, wrote from Birmingham to London in May 1954,<sup>2</sup> claiming that both the Home and the Light programmes had become ‘more highbrow more quickly than those to whom the programmes have been addressed’. Meanwhile, at least one rebel voice from ‘highbrow’ Oxford offered ‘three cheers for the Home, three beers for the Light’, but only ‘three tears for the Third’—on the grounds that the last of the three was betraying the country ‘to that bitter philosophy of self-absorption and self-interest which characterises much modern writing and composing’. ‘Manned by people of intelligence, but thwarted artistic impulses,’ the policy of the Third seemed to him to dissolve too often into ‘intellectual pettiness of a kind which is only possible in an age so unsure of its relations with the arts.’<sup>3</sup>

Morris believed that those involved in sound broadcasting were training their sights on ‘the wrong enemy’, television. ‘We have taken too conscientiously the brief that D.-G. Haley gave us when he envisaged the Light Programme listener being passed on to the Home Service and the Home Service to the

<sup>1</sup> A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 613–19.

<sup>2</sup> \*Denis Morris to Wellington, 18 May 1954, 22 Feb. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> David Hughes in *The Isis*, 12 Nov. 1952.



Third and the Third to those even rarer heights where only celestial music sounds.' It was not only, in Morris's view, that the Light Programme had become far too serious. Many listeners found the Home Service programmes 'consistently too highbrow'. *Monday Night at Eight*, *Family Favourites*, *Any Questions*, *The Archers*, *Band Show*, and *Twenty Questions* were not enough, and there was need for more 'snappy' presentation. Luxembourg, 'the enemy across the Channel', was winning again on Sundays.<sup>1</sup>

Kenneth Adam as Controller, Light Programme, from December 1950, was well aware of such criticisms, and with his experience in journalism he certainly knew what made programmes 'popular'. *Any Questions*, for example, was popular because it employed 'experienced broadcasting protagonists' (with occasional new blood) and *The Archers* because 'so many of our listeners can identify with some or all of those taking part in the programme'. Adam put his trust in such programme staples, but he was always searching for a 'New Look'. Thus, at the end of 1950 (not for the last time) he was trying to persuade Janet Quigley, the able and imaginative new editor of *Woman's Hour*, to reduce the length of the programme from one hour to forty-five minutes.<sup>2</sup> Miss Quigley pointed out that all the evidence from listeners suggested that 'far from wanting less . . . they want more', and she won the battle. She introduced more short features into the programme, however, and substantially varied its layout.<sup>3</sup> *Woman's Hour* was usually praised by the Press. *The Star*, for example, called it 'excellent', and *The People* agreed that the changes Janet Quigley had made 'have all meant brighter, down-to-business programmes for housewives'.<sup>4</sup> The recipe of making listeners 'laugh, cry and think' in every programme was a very successful one.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the Light Programme's variety shows were immensely

<sup>1</sup> \*Kenneth Bird to Dunkerley, 23 Feb. 1955: 'Everywhere, of course, there was praise for *The Archers*.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Janet Quigley to Adam, 29 Jan. 1951. Miss Quigley had replaced Evelyn Gibbs as Editor in June 1950. Adam repeated the suggestion on 22 June 1951. There is an interesting article by Evelyn Gibbs on her experiences as Editor of *Woman's Hour* in *Everybody's*, 24 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Miss Quigley to Adam, 29 Jan. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *The Star*, 28 March 1950; *The People*, 7 Jan. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> See Joanna Scott-Moncrieff, *The Best of 'Woman's Hour': The Words Behind the Voices* (1953).

popular during this period. The letter feature *Dear Sir*, for example, had an audience of eleven millions, only one million fewer than *The Archers*, and *We Beg to Differ*, which pitted men against women (women as motorists, men as cooks, etc.), was an enormous success soon after its first broadcast on 23 September 1949. (Dr. Hill was one of those who took part.) In general, quizzes and variety programmes boomed—although there were inevitable flops—with *Take It From Here*, first broadcast on 19 March 1948, standing out in retrospect as ‘the first radio show to emerge from the post-war comedy explosion, when . . . all the physical and mental restraints of the years of trial and hardship culminated in a mad scramble to seek and parade laughter’.<sup>1</sup> With Jimmy Edwards, Dick Bentley, and Joy Nichols in its weekly cast and with a brilliant script by Frank Muir and Denis Norden, *Take It From Here* broke away from the pattern of war-time shows dealing with particular locations, like *Much Binding in the Marsh*, which was showing some signs of staleness during the late 1940s and was dropped from 1950 to 1953:<sup>2</sup> it introduced new and unforgettable characters like ‘the Glums’, in crude but compulsive family situations, and offered a new-style ‘mixture of sophistication and corn’. It was blasted by the critics at first, but very soon was welcomed by the millions—and by the few who performed in it. ‘The actors really enjoy it,’ Norden and Muir pointed out. ‘They make it sound as though they are not reading script. It is written tongue in cheek and they interpret it so faithfully they nearly puncture themselves.’<sup>3</sup>

The problem faced by *Much Binding in the Marsh* was well described by Eric Barker, an accomplished comedian with a very successful show of his own, when he said that ‘the step from being a successful show to the treacherous slippery peak of *the most* successful show [which *Much Binding* was in 1947], marks an enormous step forward so far as show business is concerned’.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. Nathan, *The Laughtermakers* (1971), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by T. W. Chalmers, 29 Aug. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Three Musketeers of the Air’ in *News Review*, 20 Oct. 1949. One of the pre-Coronation programmes catches the spirit of the dialogue. ‘Edwards: Are all the Coronation stands ready yet, Wal? Wallas Eaton: Oh, nearly. What a colossal undertaking, Jim. Months of thought and organisation, and the result a living example of British planning. Edwards: Oh, blimey, have they fallen down already?’

<sup>4</sup> E. Barker, *Steady Barker* (1956), p. 229.

The treachery derived from the fact that the script of such a programme could turn into a liturgy. Even 'perennial *ITMA*', 'a precious possession of the country as well as of the BBC',<sup>1</sup> had been running into problems before Tommy Handley's death in January 1949.<sup>2</sup> By then it was institutionalized to such an extent that it belonged indubitably to the Home Service, and when Handley died there were memorial services in St. Paul's and in Liverpool Cathedral. 'With his passing,' Francis Worsley wrote in the *New Statesman*, '... our little world, shared weekly by millions of ordinary people, has collapsed as completely as the Third Reich which indirectly brought it into being.'<sup>3</sup>

Handley was described in one obituary as the first of 'the exclusively non-visual comedians', succeeding Henry and Blossom, Stainless Stephen, and Arthur Askey, who was continuing to entertain the post-war millions with 'Hello, Playmates'.<sup>4</sup> Such talent has always been rare, and there was great concern inside the BBC when in 1950 it was reported that Kenneth Horne and Richard Murdoch, *Much Binding's* stars, had signed a contract with Luxembourg.<sup>5</sup> What would happen if 'others of the Corporation's few top-ranking variety stars went over to commercial radio stations?'<sup>6</sup> Inevitably and inexorably, therefore, there was an unremitting search for genuinely new styles. The result was *The Goons*, first billed on 28 May 1951 at the beginning of a series of servicemen's programmes as featuring 'Radio's Own Crazy People, "The Goons"'. The accompanying description—'the technique of the Marx Brothers and the Crazy Gang applied to radio'—did not do

<sup>1</sup> \*Wellington to Nicolls, 11 March 1948.

<sup>2</sup> In the fourth quarter of 1948 the audience figures for *ITMA* (26 per cent) were below those of *Up the Pole* (29 per cent), first broadcast on 27 Oct. 1947, as well as those of *Much Binding in the Marsh* (32 per cent). *Take It From Here* had overtaken *Much Binding* by the second quarter of 1949. Thereafter it maintained its place until 1952-3 when, in an age of television with growing audiences and new stars, it was overtaken by *Educating Archie* which was first broadcast on 6 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> F. Worsley, 'A World of Your Own' in the *New Statesman*, 15 Jan. 1949. Cf. *The Spectator*, 14 Jan. 1949: 'The end of *ITMA* comes as something like a national calamity.'

<sup>4</sup> Handley, it was said (*Glasgow Herald*, 10 Jan. 1949), had a talent which was 'an extension of their experience'. 'He altered the tempo of a type of programme in which the time given to funny speech, music and singing was exactly divided.' Askey's new *Hello Playmates* show was first broadcast on 31 May 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Home Broadcasting Committee, *Minutes*, 19 Sept. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \**Ibid.*, 26 Sept. 1950.

justice to the originality of this effervescent venture—few phrases ever do—and it was right and proper that from 1952 the programme was retitled *The Goon Show* and from 1955, when its popularity was at its height, just *The Goons*.<sup>1</sup>

The 'moonstruck' element in the programme was something that no other broadcasting organization in the world has been able to emulate, although one critic, at least, discerned the same element in the BBC's own intimate *Just Fancy* with Eric Barker.<sup>2</sup> The days of the obvious catchword in a comedy programme were waning in the mid-1950s—perhaps such catchwords were being left *pro tem.* to the advertisers with the zaniest ones being reserved for the Goons—and instead 'bright ideas' had to be improvised with plenty of salt, like Barker's idea of new Elizabethan speech for a new Elizabethan age.<sup>3</sup> The Goons had made fun of the Festival of Britain in a 'Salute to Britain', punctuated with 'Land of Hope and Glory',<sup>4</sup> and they continued through fun and fantasy to cut through the pomp and ceremony of Britain and the Commonwealth.<sup>5</sup> With Tony Hancock there were more local East Cheam themes. They belong to a later volume of this History, but his *Half Hour*, first broadcast on sound in November 1954, was to be the great television landmark. His young script writers, Ray Galton and Alan Simpson, who had met as patients in a sanatorium, had already produced *Calling All Forces* as their first show.

<sup>1</sup> R. Wilmut, *The Goon Show, A Goonography* (1975), gives an excellent account of the development of the programme and all the 'surrounds'.

<sup>2</sup> \*J. C. Trewin, 'A critical report on the Output of BBC Variety Programmes in May 1952', 30 June 1952.

<sup>3</sup> The element of improvisation is stressed by Wilmut, loc. cit. *The Goon Show* had its beginnings in the form of improvisations performed (entirely for private entertainment) round a tape-recorder by Spike Milligan, Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, and Michael Bentine. Dennis Main Wilson was the young BBC producer who got them on to the air after every kind of 'bureaucratic' entanglement.

<sup>4</sup> The Festival programme included an American voice, 'Yes, indeed, without doubt Britain *can* take it. Every dollar that we have sent to Britain Britain has taken.' A British announcer went on 'Food! Despite rationing a special effort is to be made in this Festival Year to make British restaurants attractive to visitors', to be followed by Harry Secombe stating what 'a famous French chef said after sampling one of our traditional meals—!!! Oooooooooooooh !!!'.

<sup>5</sup> See F. Hancock and D. Nathan, *Hancock* (1969). The show was to be first broadcast on television on 6 July 1956. Other first shows of the period included Ted Ray's *Ray's a Laugh* (4 April 1949), *Educating Archie* (with the dummy created by ventriloquist Peter Brough, 6 June 1950), *Bedtime with Braden* (19 Sept. 1950), *Life with the Lyons* (5 Nov. 1950), *The Trinder Box* (1 Oct. 1951), and the *Frankie Howard Show* (23 Nov. 1953).

Kenneth Adam as Controller of the Light Programme had to think not only of new ideas and new faces—even of new sounds—but of how to stop 'the drift to Luxembourg'. He was prepared, therefore, not only to introduce new Variety or new music but new-style News—in the form of short headline bulletins.<sup>1</sup> Within limits set by the system and with the help behind the scenes of genuinely resourceful people, like Norden and Muir, and behind the microphone star performers, some of them enjoying surprising successes, like the singer Donald Peers, he achieved a unique blend of 'old' and 'new'. This was what 'new Elizabethan' entertainment meant, whatever new Elizabethan speech might be. Vera Lynn, for example, was the first British 'top of the hit parade' winner in 1952 with 'Auf Wiedersehen', the year when EMI issued its first slow-speed, long-playing gramophone records, and Eddie Fisher, Johnnie Ray, and Frankie Laine were at the height of their popularity as 'crooners'. 'Rock and Roll' was just around the corner, New Sound after New Look, although no one knew it. Meanwhile singers like Dickie Valentine, David Whitfield, and Ronnie Hilton were already 'pop stars', and Jack Payne could write an article for the *Radio Times Annual* for 1955 called 'The Golden Age of the "Pop" Singer'.<sup>2</sup>

Radio Luxembourg undoubtedly scored against the BBC by broadcasting *Top of the Pops*, the first list of which was produced in Britain by the *New Musical Express*, but its great successes were restricted to peak hours. The Light Programme, however, was listened to all the time, and whereas in 1949-50 out of every hundred listeners thirty-six were listening to the Home Service and sixty-three to the Light Programme, by 1953-4 the figures were thirty-two and sixty-seven. The total number of listeners was falling, but whereas Home Service audiences had fallen during the four years by 38 per cent, those of the Light Programme had fallen only by 24 per cent.<sup>3</sup> All these 'trends' were described cautiously and inadequately in the *BBC Handbook, 1955*: The Light Programme 'has kept abreast of the variations in public taste; indeed it has not merely kept pace

<sup>1</sup> \*Adam to Wellington, 15 July 1954. It was not until 1957, however, that news headlines were introduced at the half hour.

<sup>2</sup> *Radio Times Annual, 1955*, pp. 66-7. See below, pp. 759-60.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by R. J. E. Silvey, 'BBC Programmes and the Public: Some Recent Trends', Oct. 1954.

but has led the way to a more intelligent and enterprising use of broadcasting time in the popular field.<sup>1</sup>

If the proper degree of 'lightness' was one of the main issues raised by critics inside the BBC, another was the proper role of 'Regionalism'. How far should the BBC's Regions be free both to opt out of programmes and to generate programmes of their own? 'As the novelty factor in Sound Broadcasting becomes increasingly a thing of the past,' wrote Donald Stephenson, who had succeeded Coatman as the Controller of the North Region in 1949, 'and the counter-attraction of TV is an increasingly dominant factor, it seems to be more and more important to be able to discriminate between solidly good programmes and the kind of stunts that got a good hand in earlier days.'<sup>2</sup> Stephenson, a Manchester man himself, was a Regional Controller who had moved over from External Services in June 1949, and before that he had been Assistant Controller of General Overseas Programmes. He was able to see in perspective, therefore, some of the problems which those who had been working for years in the Regions could not perhaps see so easily. 'Any lingering theory that producers of secondary calibre are adequate to handle Regional productions would be disastrous as it is utterly illogical. This Region has had to assimilate an undue proportion of entirely raw material, and the limited size of our various departments—as compared with the equivalent output departments in London—has not permitted anything like the desirable non-productive period for proper training.'

In 1950 Stephenson assessed the work of each of his departments one by one—drama, features, talks, news ('the standards of selection and editing compare favourably with those of the most reputable provincial journals'), variety ('an exasperation'), music, children's hour, religion, outside broadcasts, and recorded programmes. His assessment, frank and uninhibited, led him to the conclusion that 'in any given field as between the Region and London, when all the straw is scratched away, the residuary criteria seem absolutely common to both. A good programme demands the combination of a good idea, a good script, a good producer and good performers. Given the four

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Handbook, 1955*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report to Haley, Dec. 1950.

requirements, there is no reason why the finished product should be either better or worse in one centre than in the other. For obvious reasons, it is less easy for the Region to achieve the combination than . . . London.'<sup>1</sup>

The Home Service—with its Regional variants—was always thought of after 1945 as a 'carefully balanced' service designed to appeal to all classes, and 'paying attention to culture at a level where the ordinary listener can appreciate it'.<sup>2</sup> If it could take *ITMA*, or *We Beg to Differ*, it could also take the Proms. It was, indeed, a 'catholic programme designed to nourish the whole man'.<sup>3</sup> 'Whatever degree of success it may have achieved otherwise,' Haley told the Governors in June 1951, 'it can be said that [the Home Service] has been true to its task. It has not allowed its range or scope to be limited by the fact that the Light Programme on the one hand and the Third Programme on the other have become better known as the vehicles for certain specific kinds of entertainment. The Home Service has not deserted Variety because that has been one of the strengths of the Light Programme. It has not abandoned Opera even though the Third Programme did 55 complete operas last year.' It had not found a successor to *ITMA* by 1951, but it was 'stronger in "Features"' than it had ever been. 'And its music was good.'

Haley stressed, like Jacob after him, that in a changing society the Home Service remained 'the main instrument for carrying out the BBC's obligations in the more formal public service broadcasting'. This was its national role, although the proportion of listeners was falling and the spread of television was to narrow the span of possibilities. Already by June 1951, the year when the number of Sound-only licences began slightly to fall, anxieties were being expressed that its appeal was being maintained at an increasing price—'the disappearance of talks given just for the joy of hearing the speaker'; a certain weakness 'in up-to-the-minute topicality'; 'a certain sameness . . . in the

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Stephenson, 'North Region—August 1950'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 'The Home Programme Policy of the BBC', 4 July 1946. It was discussed again by the Board of Governors in 1951 (*Minutes*, 5 June 1951). See above, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of a Meeting between Regional Programme Heads and Home Service Representatives, 29 Sept. 1949.

programmes'; 'a growing urge to escapism on the part of the listener'.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Home Service also had its Regional side, 'six different Home Services often went on after the six o'clock News'. Regional Controllers could opt out of the 'basic' Home Service at any time. Many programmes in the 'basic' Home Service, therefore, were not heard by Regional listeners outside the London area. Complaints about this mixed pattern of Regional and national continued. They came from the public, from special interest groups, and even from MPs.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in July 1954, Labour MPs from the North were pressing Stephenson to have more Northern news and Northern feature programmes, political and non-political.<sup>3</sup>

It was not difficult for Stephenson, who was in charge of a huge Region, which included one-third of the population of the country, to prove that the creative output of the North Region was rich and distinctive, a point which had been made extremely effectively in a BBC booklet, *This is the North of England*, produced in 1948.<sup>4</sup> And there was ample diversity too. In 1954, starting with *Children's Hour*, listeners could hear 'a brilliant and never-ending series of Northern programmes': *The Lives of Famous Northerners*, a Northern *Children's Newsreel*, 'Guides' programmes with Wilfred Pickles and Romany, documentary features on Northern careers, concerts performed by Northern children. *Ideas for Export*, *Medical Science in the North*, and *North-countryman* were 'regulars', as was the *Fifty-One Society*, a memorable broadcasting venture, which started in October 1951 at the Grand Hotel, Manchester. It might have been called 'the Grassington Society', and there certainly could have been no more 'Northern' place than Grassington, a village at the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, where the idea of the *Fifty-One Society* first took shape. The *Fifty-One Society* tackled every kind of current issue, political or otherwise, sometimes, not surprisingly,

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 'Home Programme Policy: Five Years After', 27 June 1951.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 98-101.

<sup>3</sup> \*Stephenson to Wellington, 29 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> For an immediate comment, see the *News Chronicle*, 17 Dec. 1948. The booklet included a provocative piece about the North by Sir Thomas Beecham which referred to the 'poor relations of the bloated plutocrat of Portland Place'. 'The great industrial North . . . should not be content to take its light, leading and instruction from the arrogant south.'



getting into difficulties with London. So, too, on a different front and with no formalities, did Denis Mitchell's *People Talking* which included programmes in 1953 on 'The English Sunday' and on 'Flying Saucers' and in 1955 on 'Unusual Beliefs', 'Night in the City', and 'On Tour' (which dealt with the decline of Music Hall). Mitchell was not only an explorer of the North: he was an explorer of all the arts and techniques of sound broadcasting.

Each Regional Service had its own pioneers. Each, too, had its own favourite personalities and its own devotees, and each contributed items to the Home and Light Programmes heard throughout the country. Indeed, during the late 1940s the Regions together were contributing approximately two hours a week to the BBC's External Services, for which no charge was made on grant-in-aid. In the autumn of 1954 Jacob could claim—with Beveridge now relegated to the distant background—that 'the Regional content of the Home Service has been increased over the years and is now at as high a level as can be usefully maintained'.<sup>1</sup>

Arguments continued, however, about which Regional programmes should be heard nationally, and there was a touch of metropolitan condescension in such ideas as that of each Region contributing a *Woman's Hour* programme once a year on the grounds that 'a great many . . . listeners to *Woman's Hour* lived in the regions'.<sup>2</sup> When it was suggested that there might be 'Regional contributions' to the Third Programme, a high-ranking Third Programme official wrote patronizingly, 'The most important point to make clear to these people [*sic*] is that no producer is going to get much into the Third Programme unless he fairly regularly listens to it and sympathises with the self-discipline it tries to exact from contributors.'<sup>3</sup>

The Third Programme, condescending or creative, had had more stalwart friends and more hostile critics (whether or not they could actually receive it in their homes) than any other BBC service. Despite all the vicissitudes, perhaps because of them, the Governors were told on the eve of its fifth birthday, in September 1951, that the devotion to the Third Programme

<sup>1</sup> \*'Home Programme Policy', Oct. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 27 Sept. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 28 Jan. 1953.

on the part of its adherents had deepened with the years. The hostile critics objected to spending 'large sums of public money on what is not to the taste of the majority': the 'strong force of partisans' drank 'copiously and a little uncritically from its cultural springs'.<sup>1</sup> For Cassandra in the *Daily Mirror* it was 'an ineffectual freak, influencing those who organise it, those who perform on it, and precious few else'.<sup>2</sup> For 'Four Winds' in *Time and Tide*, 'the amount of sheer pleasure it gives . . . is simply not to be measured in terms of Listener Research and all that'.<sup>3</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* criticized those people who judged in terms of 'mass appeal' alone, but agreed that the Programme was not always entirely free from 'eccentricity'. And *The Times* generalized boldly that there is 'a streak of cowardice among some individuals who belong to a minority in a democracy that leads them to apologize for and even to feel ashamed of their true interests'. The Third Programme was not only 'a main enemy of philistine democracy' but 'the logical end-product of all the activities of the BBC'.<sup>4</sup>

Even most of its admirers were not prepared to go quite so far. Friendly highbrow listeners might be prepared to listen to a Brecht play, to a Bartok quartet, or to Matisse or Le Corbusier talking on anything (whether they understood what was being said or not), but they were not prepared to pay the same attention to 'Professor X' on 'Metabolism and Metaphysics'.<sup>5</sup> The rhetoric about the Programme, too, could be disturbing. Lord Samuel was on firm ground when he praised the Programme for 'levelling' upwards. 'It brings to the whole people enjoyments that used to be limited, in the main, to those who had the advantages of education up to the age of eighteen, or still longer at the universities: to those who had easy access, whenever they chose, to theatres, concerts, operas.' Yet when at this point his words took wing, he was not carrying most of his audience with him. 'Anyone at the cost of three-farthings

<sup>1</sup> *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28 Sept. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 17 May 1951. Although Cassandra began somewhat patronizingly by saying that when the Third Programme was launched in 1946 it had been 'a brave and praiseworthy experiment', this was not the view of the *Daily Mirror* at the time. See above, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Time and Tide*, 29 Sept. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 9 Oct. 1950; *The Times*, 29 Sept. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28 Sept. 1951.

a day . . . by turning a little knob may have brought to him the finest thoughts of the human mind: he may suddenly fill his room with the radiance of genius.<sup>1</sup>

One year later John Morris, Head of the BBC's Far Eastern Service, succeeded Harman Grisewood as Third Programme Controller on the latter's transfer to the post of Director of the Spoken Word,<sup>2</sup> and by 1955 only two of the original staff of the Programme remained.<sup>3</sup> 'The radiance of genius' was still transmitted, more frequently perhaps than 'the finest thoughts of the human mind', but there was usually a healthy balance between the established and the experimental. Thus, while Britten's new opera *The Turn of the Screw* was a first performance of 1954 (as was Lennox Berkeley's *Nelson*, relayed on its first night on the Home Service), listeners with established musical tastes could hear *Fidelio* from the rebuilt Vienna State Opera House in 1955 and *The Magic Flute* from the rebuilt Hamburg State Opera House during the same year. They could also hear a Vienna recording of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* with the 1953 cast, and a year later the bill of fare included Anouilh, Zuckmayer, and Martínez Sierra. In 1954 listeners could even compare how Dryden, Molière, and Giraudoux had treated the Amphitryon theme.

There was a different approach to literature in the many 'adaptations' of other writers' work, some daring, some superb, some inevitable flops.<sup>4</sup> The list included such contrasts as Ivy Compton-Burnett, three of whose novels were 'adapted' in 1952 and in successive years, and Anita Loos, whose *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was another event of 1952. William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) was the very latest adaptation in 1955. Alongside such adaptations should be set Henry Reed's satire on the

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 21 Sept. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 445. For Grisewood's thoughts on leaving the programme, see his article on this subject in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VIII, no. 1, Spring 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*There is a useful brief history, 'The First Ten Years of the Third Programme', April 1956. Two Third Programme announcers, Alvar Lidell and Marjorie Anderson, were transferred to other programmes (and wider fame) in 1951, when Peter Fettes and Richard Baker took their places. Baker left in 1954.

<sup>4</sup> For a criticism of the many 'adaptations', see the interesting article by Paul Ferris, 'Look Back in Sadness' in *The Observer*, 30 Sept. 1956, on the Tenth Anniversary of the Third Programme. 'Adaptors on Home and Light have to be very sparing with their narration: on the Third they can get away with murder.' See also below, pp. 703-4.

pretensions, clichés, and absurdities of radio *avant-garde* (including the Third Programme itself), as well as music and literature, in a series beginning with *A Very Great Man Indeed* (1953), a somewhat different appraisal of 'the radiance of genius'.<sup>1</sup>

The very latest programmes could sometimes be as impressive as the oldest. Thus, *The Face of Violence* by J. Bronowski, ex-*Brains Trust* star and one of the most accomplished and versatile broadcasters ever employed by the BBC, was a remarkable achievement of 1950 which shared the Italia Prize. Produced by Douglas Cleverdon, it identified themes of violence, different from those of war, which were only just beginning to be talked about in 1950. Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, often repeated, also won the Italia Prize—in 1954—by which time the Italians had been so impressed by such achievements that they had launched their own Third Programme.<sup>2</sup>

It included fewer 'talks' than the BBC's Third Programme, which revelled as much in its contrasts between speakers (and their accents) as in its contrasts between themes. Thus, Professor Herbert Butterfield, broadcasting in 1949 in three-quarter-of-an-hour lectures (to an invited audience in the Council Chamber of Broadcasting House) on *Christianity and History*, could be described as a descendant of 'the preachers who held forth at St. Paul's Cross, or in the crowded fields where the early methodists held their meetings, or in the great Tabernacle built by Charles Haddon Spurgeon'.<sup>3</sup> This was certainly not the style of W. H. Auden, who gave three lectures on 'The Nature and Functions of Poetry' in 1955, or of William Empson, who spoke on William Cowper's poem 'The Cast-away', or even of Butterfield's fellow Yorkshireman, Fred Hoyle, who discussed *The Nature of the Universe* in 1950 and almost at once became a radio discovery.

<sup>1</sup> *A Very Great Man Indeed* was followed by *The Private Life of Hilda Tablet* (1954), *Emily Butler* (1954), and *The Patient of Henry Shewin* (1955). Donald Swann wrote the 'operatic music' for the third of these.

<sup>2</sup> See C. Lupo, 'The Italian Third Programme' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VIII, no. 4, Winter 1953/4. The Programme started in October 1950.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1950*, p. 81. In singling out Butterfield as one of the 'radio personalities' of 1949, the author did not hesitate to compare him with Wilfred Pickles. This was not because both were obviously Yorkshiremen, but because both had developed the same 'close-knit relationship' with two audiences, one visible and one unseen.

Controversy was never avoided, and the controversial themes multiplied in range. Thus, Marshal of the RAF Sir John Slessor spoke on 'The Revolution in Strategy' in 1954, and in 1955 Professor Leonard Palmer, Professor of Comparative Philology, broadcast his equally controversial inaugural lecture at Oxford in which he discussed the script of 'Linear B'. Whatever might be thought of A. J. P. Taylor as a commentator on the news or as a robust supporter of commercial radio—or whatever he might think, on his side, of the BBC—at the end of the period preparations were already going ahead for him to do a broadcast version of his prestigious Ford Lectures in Oxford on *The Other Foreign Policy*.

A survey of Third Programme audiences, completed in 1953, Coronation year, showed—on the basis of data collected a few months earlier—that some 1,600,000 people in the country listened to the Third Programme at least once a week, that a further 4,300,000 people occasionally listened to it, and that 23,400,000 people never listened to it at all.<sup>1</sup> There remained a close degree of association between the level of higher education of listeners and their frequency of listening. Yet no less than three-quarters of the people who said that they listened to the Programme at least once a month had not reached School Certificate standard when at school. Those with the 'highest education', as the rebel voice from Oxford showed, were not necessarily the most enthusiastic: indeed, Peter Laslett, a stalwart defender of the Programme then and later, explained in an interesting article written in the *BBC Quarterly* in 1950, that people with 'an opinion on broadcasting' were rare in university society and even they would read what had been broadcast rather than listen to it. Those who had an opinion inside the universities included actual opponents of the Third Programme, who thought it 'too highbrow' and that it was appealing to the 'internal university audience' rather than to 'the great body of anxious enquirers who attend Extension Lectures and WEA classes'. 'They seem to believe', Laslett remarked, 'that the BBC has never begun to tackle the problem of higher education and would obviously like to see a Fourth

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Listener Research Report, 'The Third Programme: the Size and Character of its Public', May 1953. Silvey summarized the conclusions in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VIII, no. 3, Autumn 1953, 'The Third Programme and its Market'.

Programme for this very purpose, an Improvement Programme.'<sup>1</sup>

To try to probe more deeply into motives for listening and tastes, Silvey identified an 'Interest Group A' in the community. All those who belonged to it were involved in all of five activities—attending lectures or discussion groups; reading books of one or more of the following types—history, biography, current affairs, plays, poetry, or classical fiction; listening to serious music; going to the opera; and visiting art galleries. Members of this group accounted for 13 per cent of the population, as against 74 per cent in 'Interest Group C' who were involved in none of them. The survey showed—and it deliberately included questions on topics other than the Third Programme—that about one-third of 'Interest Group A' listened to the Third Programme at least once a month—a surprisingly small proportion, given the five identifying factors—as against only 6 per cent in 'Interest Group C'. It was perhaps significant, however, that 'Third Programme patrons' on their own witness tended to be out in the evening more often than the non-patrons.

The 5,900,000 people who occasionally listened to the Third Programme included a slightly higher proportion of males than the non-listening group, but it is difficult to draw deductions from this figure about differences of cultural preference between the sexes during the 1950s. It is equally difficult, too, to draw deductions about the existence in 1953 of 'the problem of the two cultures', since science and technology did not figure on the scheduled list of 'interests' for any of the special groups. There was a tendency—not only in Broadcasting House—to believe that what most scientists and technologists wanted from broadcasting was 'escape'. Although a deliberate attempt was made to include programmes on science, there was no special section on science in the comprehensive list of programmes set out in the *BBC Handbook* for 1955.<sup>2</sup>

What was genuinely informative in the 1953 survey was the indication of a correlation which might have been expected—

<sup>1</sup> P. Laslett, 'Broadcasting and the Universities' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 1, Spring 1950. The topic was taken up *ibid.*, vol. VI, no. 2, Summer 1951, by Christopher Holme, the Third Programme Chief Assistant since 1948, in 'Education and a Third Programme'.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Handbook*, 1955, pp. 99–126.

that Third Programme and Home Service listening tended 'to march together'. The more the listening to the Third Programme, the more the listening to the Home Service and the less the listening to the Light Programme. Even so, nearly 25 per cent of frequent Third Programme listeners said that they listened more to the Light Programme than to the Home Service. This group probably included listeners who read both the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*, a much publicized alliance of the 1950s between 'the discerning' and 'the popular'. It may have included, too, some of the readers of the *News Chronicle*, who were always encouraged to reach for 'higher things'.<sup>1</sup>

One conclusion which might have been expected from the survey was that the most frequent listeners to the Third Programme were those most strongly in favour of its existence, and the expectation was corroborated. Nonetheless, a minority of regular listeners 'felt strongly that there should *not* be a Third Programme', while among those who never listened to it not many more than 20 per cent disapproved of its existence. The words *élitist* and *élitism* had not by then become catch-phrases, and in trying to find words to describe the first of these more surprising reactions Silvey could only compare it to that of rich people who were 'egalitarians'. Significantly there was a very big 'indifferent' vote among non-listeners.<sup>2</sup>

John Morris often insisted, as Haley had done, that the Third Programme was 'not in competition with the Home Service and the Light Programme'. 'It is an alternative to them, and as such an integral part of the whole pattern of sound broadcasting.' He felt it necessary to insist even inside the walls of the BBC that Home, Light, and Third really were three in one because of 'the apparent lack of understanding of our motives by those who, by virtue of working in the Corporation, ought to know better'.<sup>3</sup> If they did not know better, it was certainly not the fault of the Directors-General, for both Haley and Jacob consistently respected the message, and there was to be no change in the pattern of sound broadcasting until 1957.

<sup>1</sup> See H. Cudlipp, *Publish and be Damned* (1954), p. 278, and P. Sissons and R. French (eds.), *The Age of Austerity* (1962), pp. 317ff., where Michael Frayn identifies the 'spirit' of the Festival of Britain.

<sup>2</sup> \* 'The Third Programme: The Size and Character of its Public'.

<sup>3</sup> J. Morris, 'Ten Years of the Third Programme' in *Ariel*, Sept. 1956.

Even then, the 'most important factor calling for a review' was not problems arising within sound broadcasting itself but 'the growth of the television audience'.<sup>1</sup>

During the autumn of 1954, when Jacob prepared a paper on 'Home Programme Policy' for the General Advisory Council, he still took as his starting point Haley's address to the same body in October 1947.<sup>2</sup> It was 'noteworthy', he rightly said, that there was no mention of television in that address. Yet as a result of the growth of television, which he already identified explicitly as 'the most important factor' changing the position, 'the quantity of evening listening' had fallen by 30 per cent. According to Silvey, the estimated average weekly number of hours of evening listening to all three Programmes per head of the adult population had followed a steadily downward course from the time that the figures had been available:<sup>3</sup>

#### EVENING LISTENING

<i>July to June</i>	<i>35 hours available</i>	<i>Index</i>
1949/50	8.1	100
1950/51	7.7	94
1951/52	7.0	87
1952/53	6.6	81
1953/54	5.7	70

Whereas in mid-1948 less than one per cent of the number of wireless licences taken out were for sound and television, by mid-1954 the proportion had risen to one in four.

Within the pattern of listening as distinct from viewing, there was also a continuing drift towards 'lightness'. The audience for 'serious talks and discussions', like those following the nine o'clock News, and for the Monday night play, had shown the biggest losses, contracting by as much as two-thirds. At the same time, the audiences for the nine o'clock News itself, *Saturday Night Theatre* and most (although not all) Variety shows had been less than halved. The six o'clock News, which had no televised competitor, had not suffered at all.

<sup>1</sup> BBC Press Statement on the Future of Sound Broadcasting, 8 April 1957, setting out the various changes, including the introduction of Network III.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> R. J. E. Silvey, 'BBC Programmes and the Public, Some Recent Trends', Oct. 1954.



## *How do you listen?*



16. 'Fifty-seven per cent of listeners do something else.' *Daily Herald*, 13 January 1951

Jacob had asked the General Advisory Council in October 1954 whether the members felt that it was time for a thorough review. Should there be any change in the general policy which had been followed in recent years and was still in force? Was the current 'lay-out of programmes' the most practicable way of carrying out the general policy? Had the Council any specific criticisms to make of particular types or forms of output? He did not, however, present to the General Advisory Council a detailed breakdown of programme constituents over the years, which (treated with caution and qualifications) reveals the essential balances within the system.

The first speaker in the General Advisory Council's discussion, Denis Browne, FRCS, bluntly described what had happened as 'a record of failure'. 'The BBC had tried to bring listeners to move up the cultural scale and the evidence was that they were steadily moving down it.' No one else was quite so blunt, but there were several speakers in the same vein. Lord Elgin 'expressed doubts as to the reliability of the figures', but

PROGRAMME CONSTITUENTS—ONE WEEK IN NOVEMBER 1945 1950 1955

	1945			1950			1955			1955		
	Home	Light	Home	Light	Home	Light	Home	Light	Third	Third	Third	
	121 hrs	105 hrs	114 hrs 46 m	106 hrs	116 hrs 1 m	106 hrs	116 hrs 1 m	106 hrs	41 hrs 10 m	39 hrs 20 m	39 hrs 20 m	
Classical Music	9.9	4.0	12.7	6.4	8.9	6.3	8.9	6.3	52.8	46.8	46.8	
Light Music	15.2	28.0	15.5	31.0	14.3	28.2	14.3	28.2	nil	nil	nil	
Dance Music	4.9	13.2	2.1	7.4	2.6	10.9	2.6	8.8	nil	nil	nil	
Gramophone Records	15.7	12.9	7.1	8.2	7.7	8.8	7.7	8.8	2.2	4.3	4.3	
Drama	5.6	5.1	6.9	6.4	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	3.6	10.6	10.6	
Features	1.9	3.3	3.6	2.8	2.2	0.3	2.2	0.3	16.0	7.6	7.6	
Light Entertainment	9.5	15.1	10.2	14.6	7.8	8.8	7.8	8.8	nil	nil	nil	
News & Weather	6.4	6.0	8.3	6.0	9.6	6.7	9.6	6.7	nil	nil	nil	
Spoken Word:												
Talks/Discussions	8.0	6.7	9.2	9.1	15.3	11.8	15.3	11.8	19.4	23.7	23.7	
Readings	0.9	1.4	nil	2.3	0.3	2.4	0.3	2.4	4.8	5.5	5.5	
Appeals	0.1	nil	0.1	nil	0.1	nil	0.1	nil	nil	nil	nil	
TOTAL (Spoken Word)	9.0	8.1	9.3	11.4	15.7	14.2	15.7	14.2	24.2	29.2	29.2	
School Broadcasts/ Children's Hour	14.0	nil	16.8	1.2	16.4	1.4	16.4	1.4	nil	nil	nil	
Sport	0.6	1.8	0.6	2.7	0.9	4.1	0.9	4.1	nil	nil	nil	
Religion	4.2	1.2	4.2	1.4	4.6	3.0	4.6	3.0	nil	nil	nil	
Miscellaneous (Announcements, Interludes)	3.1*	1.3*	2.7	0.5	2.0†	nil	2.0†	nil	1.2	1.5	1.5	

\* Includes one Outside Broadcast.

† Includes two Outside Broadcasts.

only Sir George Gater said that the figures had come as a shock and surprise to him. Most speakers agreed that there was a change in tastes and some pointed out with equal force that there was a change in the composition of the listening audience. Two experienced broadcasters pointed to tendencies outside broadcasting. Mary Stocks said that 'the generation . . . growing up' assumed that 'nobody must ever be bored' and 'nobody must engage in any sort of entertainment or activity that required an effort of mental concentration'—a dubious generalization—but Norman Fisher noted that other indicators, including figures of public library use, did not suggest 'a decline in public taste'. 'There was the possibility that, although the appreciation index remained high, the BBC was not developing new formulae to maintain the interest of the sort of people who were serious listeners a few years ago. . . . Although six different Home Service programmes might be going out at the same time, there were, of course, at most three alternatives in sound open to the individual listener with a good set in a favoured part of the country. It might be worth considering whether these alternatives might not be a Light Programme, a National Programme—broadcast from London and incorporating a good deal of what was now given in the Third, and Regional Programmes. With VHF it might be possible to make these three alternatives available to everybody.'<sup>1</sup>

Fisher's reference to VHF was perhaps the most important signpost to the future, although its increasing use was eventually to lead to the development of local rather than of regional broadcasting, a theme outside the time span of this volume. While many speakers in the discussion mentioned the challenge of television itself, Fisher was the only person to mention the changing technology of Sound. The social and cultural assumptions behind the spectrum of Home, Light, and Third might be beginning to be re-examined, but there could have been no fundamental change in broadcasting patterns had it not been possible to use the very high frequency band.

The decision to carry out tests with VHF had taken place just before the end of the war,<sup>2</sup> but it was not until May 1950 that VHF test transmissions began from a newly acquired BBC

<sup>1</sup> \*General Advisory Council, *Minutes*, 20 Oct. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), p. 337.

station at Wrotham in Kent. One of the two transmitters at Wrotham also used frequency modulation which offered listeners the possibilities of immunity from all kinds of 'interference'.<sup>1</sup> The Beveridge Committee had realized some of the possibilities of VHF,<sup>2</sup> and the way was open to a new future for sound broadcasting when a phased national plan for VHF coverage was produced in 1954.<sup>3</sup> Wrotham began to broadcast VHF/FM regularly from 2 May 1955 as the first landmark in the implementation of the plan. By the end of the year two other stations were in operation—Pontop Pike and Penmon.

Wrotham and Pontop Pike carried the Home, Light, and Third Programmes, but Penmon the Welsh Home Service only. It was Penmon which was the real portent. FM might improve beyond all previous experience the reception of music on the Third Programme, but the future role of VHF was to reintroduce low-power local programming for very specific audiences, a return in an age of television to the first broadcasting patterns of 1922.

The 'Region' was soon to seem too big a unit for all kinds of broadcasting to non-national audiences, although this was still not the orthodox viewpoint in 1955. Indeed, it was changing conceptions of time coverage as well as changing attitudes towards space coverage which were to modify the broadcasting pattern—the desire to make the most at once of the on-the-spot news of the day, even to anticipate it. Already in 1948 the North Region had been stressing the need to introduce 'fresh or topical matter',<sup>4</sup> and the scope of news was already widened and deepened long before 1955. For good or ill, however, there was still far to go.

To understand how sound was responding to such pressures and to the pressures of television, it is useful to turn in more detail to different, if overlapping, kinds of broadcasting output—'the multiplicity of individual programmes' of which both Haley and Jacob were so proud. The chapter which follows abandons narrative for analysis, or rather, refers back again to

<sup>1</sup> See H. L. Kirke, 'Frequency Modulation' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 2, July 1946.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 388.

<sup>3</sup> There had been a European Regional Conference in Stockholm in May and June 1952 to discuss VHF.

<sup>4</sup> See *Manchester Guardian*, 22 Sept. 1949.

the whole period after 1945 in relation to selected clusters of different BBC activities. And in the light of this survey the last chapter assesses the BBC's position on the eve of the break-up of the monopoly—before and after the Television Act of 1954.



## VI

### SOUNDS, WORDS, AND PICTURES

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The radio is the source from which many homes draw their religion and their entertainment and to hear from the same organ violent political wrangling is to them a form of sacrilege.

'VORTEX' in the *Blackpool Gazette and Herald*, 16 June 1943

The BBC is not a political instrument. It is a cultural agency, a medium for entertainment, a means of worship, a forum for discussion and a disseminator of news.

Note by ARTHUR GREENWOOD, 4 September 1945

We cannot escape the fact that we live in a visual world. Nature on the one hand and man-made objects on the other all impinge second by second on our vivid consciousness. . . . Unfortunately, this country does not possess a tradition of visual appreciation which is in any way comparable to its recognition of the value of literature and music.

NAOMI CAPON in the *BBC Quarterly*, Spring 1951

Into this feverish world of atomic bombs, balanced so perilously between peace and war, has come a new menace—the menace of television, Jekyll and Hyde of the atom. Television has brought us a new factor of civilization—a new industry rich in the promise of jobs and financial rewards, irresistible in its beckoning horizons, a force capable of bringing a revolution to culture and entertainment, yet at the same time repulsive in its inherent evil, its latent power to destroy.

DEREK HORTON, *Television's Story and Challenge* (1951)





## I. News, Views, and Perspectives

'IT IS no part of the BBC's function', Haley told the Radio Industries Club in 1944, doubtless with his particular audience in mind, 'to become another newspaper. News is only a small fraction of the BBC's activities and output. The spoken word can supplement the written word: it cannot supplant the written word.'<sup>1</sup>

Such a statement could not have been made with so much assurance during the early years of post-war television, even when the medium was regarded as 'young, fluid and unpredictable' and when news figured little as an item in daily output.<sup>2</sup> Soon, indeed, as the 'philosophers of television' took over, they were to display their greatest assurance when they advanced the quite different proposition that the newspaper would be supplanted, or, if not supplanted, at least transformed, by television. 'Millions will eventually be able to see the events of the world as they are happening, whether it be a fire in Houston, a riot in Caracas, or a ball in Paris. Then, sightless news will have lost its appeal.'<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the philosophers might say—and they became vocal only during the late 1950s—there was no sudden transformation of BBC policies before 1955. BBC news bulletins had 'the largest regular audiences of anything broadcast by the BBC' and were listened to 'by many who tune in seldom to any programme'.<sup>4</sup> Yet News remained a small fraction of the BBC's activities and output, in television as in sound. Nor by then had the quest for topicality shattered old BBC perspectives. The Quarter still mattered more than the Day, not only as a planning unit but as a unit of understanding. This was the age of the *BBC Quarterly*, first published in 1946 less as a medium of publicity than as a serious journal for world distribution.<sup>5</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> W. J. Haley, Address to the Radio Industries Club, 28 Nov. 1944.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 218. The description of the medium in 1949 comes from Oscar Katz, then Director of Research of CBS, and is quoted in C. A. Siepmann, *Radio, Television and Society* (1950), p. 317.

<sup>3</sup> Marya Mannes, 'News Heard, News Seen' in *The Reporter*, 7 July 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116 (1951), para. 494, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> \*General Liaison Meeting, 23 Nov. 1945.

was Haley's idea, and it implied that time for reflection about the role of the medium itself was always necessary and available. It was a portent, therefore, that the *Quarterly* ceased publication in 1954, as significant as the waning of influence and ultimate disappearance of the great nineteenth-century *Quarterlies* had been, *Quarterlies* which Disraeli had once compared with stage coaches surviving into a railway age.

So long as it lasted, the *BBC Quarterly* was a reminder that 'the problems of broadcasting' were 'worth thinking and writing about',<sup>1</sup> not just commenting upon. The media might be ephemeral by nature, but they were to be given as much permanence as possible by policy. Talks policy, therefore, was not just Current Affairs policy, and beyond the Quarter there was always the Year. The Reith Lectures, introduced in 1947, were thought of as annual radio versions of the Gifford Lectures,<sup>2</sup> authoritative contributions to knowledge, the product of research as well as of originality of mind, and lecturers of the calibre of Bertrand Russell were invited to speak. Russell chose as his 1948 theme 'Authority and the Individual', and was followed among others by J. Z. Young on 'Doubt and Certainty in Science' (1950), Lord Radcliffe on 'The Problem of Power' (1951), and J. Robert Oppenheimer on 'Science and the Common Understanding' (1954).<sup>3</sup> Press publicity was felt to be one of the few disadvantages of the Reith Lectures: while no one remembered who gave the Gifford or Romanes Lectures 'in bad years', any 'failure' in the content or appeal of the Reith Lectures during any particular year 'was news'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Alan Thomas, Editor of the *BBC Quarterly*, to Grisewood, 8 Feb. 1954. Thomas was also Editor of *The Listener*.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 Oct. 1946, when Barbara Ward, who first mooted the idea, referred to the Gifford Lectures. She also referred to them, however, as 'prestige lectures', a term taken up in subsequent *Minutes* (e.g. 12 June 1947). The conception of 'prestige' items in radio and television was to survive the end of the BBC's monopoly.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 12 June 1947; Haley to Seebohm Rowntree, Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders, Sir Henry Clay, Professor D. H. Robertson and Lord Beveridge, setting out the idea, 5 Dec. 1947: 'We are also anxious to make the dominant note of originality and research.' The list of Haley's chosen correspondents is a revealing one. He also wrote to the President of the British Academy, the Warden of All Souls, and the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Barnes, 8 May 1952. For the reactions of one of the distinguished broadcasters to the BBC as a medium, see R. W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (1975), pp. 536-8.

The spirit of this age, which was to be shattered by the advent of competitive television, is well expressed in the title of an article in the *BBC Quarterly* in 1952, 'Television and the Grand Style'.<sup>1</sup> There was always, indeed, a close association between the spoken and the written word so long as the 'script' was normally insisted upon, and given that talks were reprinted in *The Listener* and the Reith Lectures were published in book form. Yet even before 1955 there were signs of change. More programmes were unscripted—the development of recording facilitated this; *The Listener* reached its peak circulation (151,350) in 1949; and in 1952 it was decided to discontinue publication of the *BBC Year Book* which had been losing money since 1947.<sup>2</sup> Although it was decided in 1954 to reinstate an annual publication—to be called a *Handbook*—the new publication was less ambitious.<sup>3</sup> So, too, was the profusely illustrated *Radio Times Annual* which presented not a set of arguments but a cavalcade of BBC personalities and programmes. The *Radio Times* itself always was a 'majority organ', and its circulation was still rising in 1954 and in 1955 after a slight fall from a previous post-war peak in 1950:

## CIRCULATION FIGURES

	<i>Radio Times</i>	<i>The Listener</i>
1945	4,058,650	129,368
1946	5,202,937	137,834
1947	6,237,926	142,236
1948	7,092,280	150,730
1949	7,765,361	151,350
1950	8,108,431	148,217
1951	7,880,718	137,910
1952	7,717,501	130,093
1953	7,903,969	133,105
1954	8,223,612	137,826
1955	8,800,715	133,601

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VII, no. 2, Summer 1952. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. II, no. 3, Oct. 1947, where Donald Boyd, then Chief Producer in the Talks Department, argued that while broadcasting included its 'topicalities' and its 'chatter, luminous but not condensed', 'other broadcasting, however, and much of it, ought to be conceived on the level of Butler and Lawrence'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 4 Feb. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 18 March 1954.

The *BBC Quarterly* first appeared in April 1946, with Haley as the first contributor. His article on 'Some Problems in Broadcasting Administration' stressed that BBC organization was being 'unfrozen'. Yet the tailpiece on television was cautious—'the policy of using all the BBC's resources freely to develop both arts [sound and television] without hampering either will govern all executive arrangements'—and the supply and presentation of News were very minor themes in his survey. There were no references, for example, to the disbanding of the War Reporting Unit, which with reporters like Richard Dimbleby, Chester Wilmot, Stanley Maxted, Frank Gillard and Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, had introduced a new liveliness and sense of immediacy into news reporting. Indeed, Haley drew no lessons in his article from war experience, but he promised that at some date in the future 'all the BBC's news services' would 'eventually flow from one Central News Division'.<sup>1</sup>

Such a News Division, however, even when it was in full operation, would have no responsibility for commentaries or interpretations of news or discussions of current affairs. Objectivity was to be insisted upon, as it had been before the war. 'It involves', the *BBC Year Book* for 1946 put it, 'the most rigid and absolute avoidance of expressions of editorial opinion, combined with an equally rigid refusal to omit or bowdlerise any news that is of sober public interest.'<sup>2</sup> The style, therefore, of news bulletins was not to change. Nor was their object, which was, as the Beveridge Committee was told, 'to state the news of the day accurately, fairly, soberly and impersonally'. 'If in doubt, leave out.' There was certainly to be no anticipation of what was going to happen in the bulletins of the Next Day or the Next Week. To a distinguished American student of British broadcasting, there was a shortage in BBC news not only of colour but of 'analysis', even of 'stories', and he felt that an exclamation mark was necessary in his version of the objective. 'One turns to BBC news programmes for news and nothing else!'<sup>3</sup>

Some of the early contributors to the *BBC Quarterly* amplified

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1946, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1946, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> B. Paulu, *British Broadcasting: Radio and Television in the United Kingdom* (1956), p. 159. For a recent critical British verdict, see J. Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby, a Biography* (1975), chs. 9, 11.

Haley's preoccupation with maintaining the right balance between news and views. Thus in 1946 Douglas Woodruff, the editor of *The Tablet*, urged the BBC to avoid 'the sloppiness of popular journalism' and go on insisting all the time that 'certain subjects which uneducated people like to flatter themselves they can discuss or follow, require much preliminary study, as well as a scrupulous interest in truth and exactitude, before they can be usefully talked about at all'. Snap answers, 'to be measured by minutes, if not by seconds', should never be given 'to questions which should neither be asked nor answered'. Even the rhythms of the spoken word had to be directly related to the rhythms of the written word. 'He who wants to read while he runs must expect to have his reading matter limited to the trivial and must expect to leave high themes alone.'<sup>1</sup>

This was near to the 'orthodoxy' of 1946 and 1947. Yet the orthodoxy was never left unchallenged in the News Division itself, working on a twenty-four-hour shift, or even in the *BBC Quarterly*. Tom Winter, the first editor of *Today in Parliament*, a new programme in 1949, had to keep to difficult and precise deadlines. E. R. Thompson still pictures him 'sitting with a couple of subs and a typist in a corner of the general pandemonium, twisting his forelock and picking his way, with minutes to go, through the Division and the adjournment debate'.<sup>2</sup> In the *BBC Quarterly*, in an adjacent article to that by Woodruff, A. P. Ryan, who had done much during the war to press both for more and for better BBC news (and also to change the BBC's pre-war restrictive Sunday policy),<sup>3</sup> stated flatly that, while the profit motive did not impel Broadcasting House, 'the factor on which profits depend, that is, mass popular support, is as fundamental to Broadcasting House as to Fleet Street'.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Kenneth Adam suggested, as neither Reith nor Haley would have conceded, that 'the popular editors who twenty years ago were afraid of the BBC were wise in their

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 3, Oct. 1946, p. 87. Cf. a very different writer, V. S. Pritchett, *ibid.*, vol. II, no. 2, July 1947, p. 77, where he attacked broadcasters who were mere 'knowledge spreaders'. 'The art of listening is itself in a rudimentary state,' he went on, 'and needs to be imparted.'

<sup>2</sup> Note to the author, 22 July 1976.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 48-9, 195-6, 308, 543-6.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 3, Oct. 1946, p. 91.

generation'. Reith and Haley never considered the BBC as a rival of the Press or the news bulletin as a rival of the newspaper. Yet R. D. Blumenfeld, Lord Beaverbrook's friend, had been alarmed that, as news broadcasts increased in 'number and ubiquity', the newspaper would become a 'viewspaper'; and Adam, who shared some of Blumenfeld's values, felt in the post-war world that he might live to see his prophecy fulfilled. Radio, Adam argued, had 'lowered the *value*' for the Press 'of news as news', and every time Frank Phillips, the announcer, opened his mouth he reduced the possibility of a newspaper scoop.<sup>1</sup> The argument had point even though the BBC itself was completely uninterested in 'scoops' as such and the furthest it would go—and then very rarely—was to break into scheduled programmes with special 'news flashes'. In 1956 Tom Driberg was to argue that the main role of the BBC had been 'to teach people to stop believing newspapers—newspapers at any rate of the more garish sort'.<sup>2</sup>

The exceptionally high newspaper circulation of the immediate post-war years proved that although this was an age of continuing paper rationing, which did not end until 1956, the newspaper, small though it might be in size, was still treated by the British public as the main source of news.<sup>3</sup> The war had justified the pre-war Ullswater Committee's very cautious judgement that 'it is possible that at some future date news bulletins may be wanted at times when they are now not given'.<sup>4</sup> As late as 1955, however, the seven-, ten- or fifteen-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, no. 2, July 1947, p. 73. See also T. Driberg, *Beaverbrook, A Study of Power and Frustration* (1956), p. 215: 'When the full history of techniques of communication in the twentieth century is written, it may be judged that popular newspaper proprietors were right in feeling acute alarm when the BBC first came into existence and began to broadcast news and comment. They were wrong in supposing that its rivalry would cause people to stop buying newspapers. It was more subtly and fundamentally dangerous than that; by seeking steadily to maintain certain standards of impartiality, it has gradually over the years, helped to teach people to stop *believing* newspapers.'

<sup>2</sup> T. Driberg, *Beaverbrook*, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> See the PEP *Report on the Press* (1948) and R. Williams, *Communications* (1956), ch. 2. Taking national newspaper circulation in 1946 as 100, the peak circulation (116) was reached in 1950. The Sunday newspaper peak (125) was reached in 1950 and 1954. The peak figure for 'general interest' weeklies (185) was reached in 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 5091 (1936), para. 84. The Committee included the word 'information' in the list of purposes of the broadcasting services, along with 'entertainment' and 'education'. This word had been missing from the first Charter of 1926.

minute news bulletins which were broadcast each day on the Home and Light Programmes—they depended mainly, as before the war, on news from the News Agencies, coming in at the rate of a million words every twenty-four hours—did not deviate markedly from the pattern which had been established during the war, except that the announcers became anonymous again. There were also items from the BBC's staff correspondents, a growing band at home and abroad. Bernard Moore covered the United Nations, for example, and Thomas Barman, given the title of Diplomatic Correspondent, the post-war Foreign Ministers' Conferences; while George Darling, who worked as Industrial Correspondent, covered the Party Conferences along with E. R. Thompson, the BBC's first Parliamentary Correspondent. If 'scoops' were not sought, there were moments of drama, like Thompson's picking up of a question by John Hay, a Young Conservative, to Churchill at the Conservative Conference of October 1946, 'What's your policy?' or, most dramatic of all, Robert Stimson's actuality report of the assassination of Gandhi, including the sound of the shot that killed him.

It took time to build up the team of BBC correspondents, for Haley set high standards and was not helped by Foreign Office suggestions that their salaries and expenses should all be 'graded'. By 1948, however, Patrick Smith was sending brilliant despatches covering the Communist *coup d'état* in Prague and Thomas Cadett was analysing with great skill from Paris the confused politics of post-war France. Christopher Serpell in Italy and Leonard Miall in America always caught the immediacy of great moments, as did Thompson the immediacy of the great and not so great moments in Parliament. By 1955 there were permanent BBC correspondents attached to the United Nations, in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the Balkans, the Middle East, India and Pakistan, South-East Asia, and South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

The possibility of fully utilizing the BBC's own staff was not always clearly recognized, and when Haley himself wished 'to break down the supremacy of the 9 o'clock News', he was not

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Barker became Diplomatic Correspondent for the European Service in 1949; Charles Gardner was Air Correspondent (1946); and Godfrey Talbot, the BBC's Chief Reporter, was accredited to Buckingham Palace in 1948.

entirely successful.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the New Zealander, Tahu Hole, who had taken over responsibility for a more unified News Division in 1948. There were critical voices when he tried in 1950 to broadcast a new type of nine o'clock News consisting of a headlined main-story bulletin, dealing with four or five stories only (with inserts, occasionally live, more often recorded), and providing a brief summary of the rest of the news.<sup>2</sup> It was *Radio Newsreel*, first broadcast in the General Overseas Service during the war and in the Light Programme from November 1947 onwards as a responsibility of the News Division, which showed what could be done. It soon won a large share, 15 per cent, of the Light Programme audience, and until the advent of commercial television, and in its various editions, won 'a world popularity'. Its editor, S. W. Rumsam, Head of News Talks, was 'Hole's man', and he applied Hole's standards. His staff included Brian Bliss, Edwin Hinchcliffe and T. F. Maltby, and among the scriptwriters were Kenneth Monkman, Andrew Boyle and Matthew Norgate.

The decision to create a single News Pool, from which 'all News Bulletins (including those in foreign languages)' would 'emanate',<sup>3</sup> had been taken during the war, and a Haley directive on the subject of July 1945 was merely a promulgation of defined policy.<sup>4</sup> It was not, however, an easy decision to implement. The instrument of implementation, the News Division, at first under the direction of A. P. Ryan, could not be quickly centralized. Thus, the European Services were explicitly excluded from the new arrangements, if only, it was hoped, temporarily. Ryan hoped to accommodate all the members of his Division on the fourth and fifth floors of Broadcasting House, and later, when the space in Broadcasting House proved too small, in a new building just opposite, Egton House. Yet Egton House took a long time to prepare—it was not occupied until June 1948—and meanwhile different units went their own way, with Bush House and Oxford Street remaining as separate

<sup>1</sup> \*Nicolls to Barnes, 17 Dec. 1948. Cf. Haley, who referred in 1948 to 'the accident that war-time planning led to the 9 p.m. News Bulletin becoming the highlight of the whole day' ('The Policy and Purpose of BBC Talks', 26 Feb. 1948).

<sup>2</sup> \*Hole to Barnes, 4 May 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Directive of 24 July 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Jacob and Barnes, 24 Feb. 1948; see above, p. 148.



centres.<sup>1</sup> It was a sign of the scarcity of accommodation in London that so many premises were occupied. Moreover, even within the initial Egton House set-up, editorial control was divided and there were separate output desks.<sup>2</sup>

Ryan left the BBC for *The Times* on 18 October 1947, before Egton House was ready, but the difficulties in relation to Home and Overseas news persisted after Hole became Editor, News, in May 1948,<sup>3</sup> and they were sharpened later when the question of common control of sound and television news emerged. By his initial terms of reference, both Europe and Latin America were excluded from Hole's control.<sup>4</sup> Barnes, as Director of the Spoken Word, argued the case for 'a single Editor in charge of all News', 'a professional journalist responsible directly to D.G.',<sup>5</sup> but Jacob, from his position of great strength in Overseas broadcasting, insisted that key decisions about the selection and presentation of news in Overseas bulletins should continue to be taken in Bush House. 'We have got to hold our audience,' he wrote—he meant 'audiences'—'and we have got to make a positive impact. Except for British audiences overseas, we are not trying to provide a "Home Service" . . . Nothing should figure in our output which is not consciously planned as being there for an object. Only by applying this rigorous list shall we achieve our purpose.' The news supplied to different audiences overseas was 'the kernel of Overseas broadcasting'.<sup>6</sup>

This important memorandum was to provide the basis of a separation, even a dichotomy, in attitudes and styles in News organization and delivery in the Home and External Services,

<sup>1</sup> \*A Memorandum of 11 Oct. 1946 by A. P. Ryan, Editor (News), set out the main difficulties. In the original promulgation Haley had noted that 'the last of the changes'—the transfer of the Talks and News activities of the Overseas Service to Central Supply Division (News and Talks)—'may await a substantially later date'. On 21 Aug. 1946 Ryan contemplated the continuation of a small Latin American News unit at Aldenham even after the removal to Egton House of all News Division staff from Broadcasting House and 200 Oxford Street.

<sup>2</sup> \*Circular by Ryan, 21 Aug. 1946; Note of a Meeting between Haley, Ryan, Jacob and J. B. Clark, 30 Oct. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> J. C. S. Macgregor had been Acting Editor since Ryan left, and in October 1948 he became Head of Staff Training.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Clark and Jacob, 25 Nov. 1947. The Overseas Services broadcasting in English were to be 'fed' from Egton House and the Latin American, Eastern and Far Eastern Services, broadcasting in foreign languages, from Bush House.

<sup>5</sup> \*Barnes to Jacob, 1 Oct. 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Jacob, 'The Task of the Overseas Services of the BBC', 4 Oct. 1948; see also Cmd. 6852 (1946), p. 18.

and the separation or dichotomy was to last long after 1955. Jacob was the first to recognize its importance. Indeed, he had the memorandum retyped in 1952 after he had become Director-General. Yet he was primarily concerned with an issue of principle—independence *vis-à-vis* the government of the day—rather than with News organization. ‘The BBC has no view of its own on current affairs,’ he emphasized, ‘it seeks to reflect British views.’ Contact with the Foreign Office should be ‘close and constant’, but ‘in dealing with domestic affairs, conflicting opinions which have a serious backing in this country should be allowed expression in proportion to the weight of this backing’. ‘Apparent contradictions that may arise from presenting these views helps to demonstrate’, he went on, ‘the tolerance which is a cardinal feature of British democracy. In matters of international controversy a fair statement of the issues involved must always be given, though the audience must be left in no doubt what the British view is.’ News was not to be thought of as a weapon, for the best weapon was the truth.

Jacob stuck very firmly to his view that overseas audiences had distinctive requirements when Barnes seemed to be pressing in 1948 for ‘some absolute news values’ to shape all BBC News output<sup>1</sup> and when two years later Haley was arguing that Home and Overseas News should be amalgamated on economy grounds, even though there might be ‘differences in principle’ between them.<sup>2</sup> Barnes’s ‘absolute news values’ were certainly not those of the professional journalist concerned with speed, flair, and impact, although talk of these other values was very soon to be heard in all sections of the BBC and was eventually to reshape Home News.<sup>3</sup> And as for ‘economy of administration’, Jacob was never convinced. He was willing then and later to spend far more money on news gathering and on news presentation than any previous Director-General.<sup>4</sup>

A full concentration of all Overseas News Services, including Bulletins and Talks, in Bush House was not achieved until after

<sup>1</sup> Barnes to Jacob, 1 Oct. 1948; Jacob to Barnes, 5 Oct. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Haley to Jacob, 13 Jan. 1950, pressing for savings ‘to help the Overseas Service face a fall in grant-in-aid and to assist Home economies’. Haley took up the case for amalgamation again on 26 July 1950 and in April 1951.

<sup>3</sup> See W. Hardcastle, ‘One o’clock and All’s Well’ in *The Listener*, 2 Oct. 1975.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 155.

1955.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Home News, directed by Hole, followed a familiar pattern broken only by *Radio Newsreel*, the success of which was obvious, particularly when it brought in the BBC's own overseas correspondents or when it covered brilliantly domestic events like the great East Coast floods of 1953. In general it was 'brighter and less demanding' than the news bulletin and included live and recorded insets. There was always a feeling, however, among the austere, that it included an element of 'entertainment'.

There was no news at all on the Third Programme, except for the controversial series *The Soviet View*, first broadcast in July 1946, and the excellent *From Our Own Correspondent* talks, later transferred to the Home Service; and although the six Regional Services broadcast news bulletins of their own each day—usually after the six o'clock News—there was stout opposition from the Newspaper Proprietors' Association to any extension of Regional coverage.<sup>2</sup> The 'theory' behind all BBC News—in the Regions as in Egton House and in Bush House—was that 'in all versions the basic facts must be the same'.<sup>3</sup>

Hole was a controversial Editor, News, but the controversy as far as sound broadcasting was concerned centred more on administration than on policy. He had risen rapidly within the BBC hierarchy from News commentator in the old Empire News in 1942 to Overseas Talks Manager in 1944 and Assistant Editor, News, in 1946. He was to remain Editor, News, until August 1958 when he became Director of Administration. He believed strongly not only in 'objectivity' but in consistency: the BBC's news services must not speak with different voices. But there was a certain stifling of enterprise.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the period News policy remained highly restrictive, and all the

<sup>1</sup> \*Responsibility for News Analyses was transferred on 1 Nov. 1954 and News Bulletins in April 1956. The case had been argued cogently by Jacob in 'Possible Transfer of Responsibility', 31 March 1950. Overseas *Radio Newsreels* were not transferred until 1970.

<sup>2</sup> \*'BBC News Services', A Memorandum for the General Advisory Council, March 1949. A *Punch* comment on the Third Programme was quoted in the BBC *Scrapbook for 1947*, broadcast on 17 March 1957. 'The Third Programme always cheers me up. This is understandable: it has no news bulletins.'

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117 (1951), p. 555.

<sup>4</sup> For a retrospective glance at his policies, see T. Hole, 'Here is the News', in *Daily Telegraph*, 30 Dec. 1976, and a letter from Guy Hadley, who was reporting from Athens in 1948, *ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1977.

administrative issues were sharpened as television began to stake its own claims, not only through *Newsreel* but through the *Foreign Correspondent* series.

Restrictions on news broadcasting, self-imposed or the result of outside pressures, were as much a sign of the times as the introduction of the *BBC Quarterly*. So, too, was reluctance to admit them or to complain about them. Thus, at a General Advisory Council meeting of March 1949 the following comment was minuted as the conclusion of a very brief summary of a very brief discussion: 'Sir George Gater said he had tried to collect criticisms of the News service but had failed to find any.'<sup>1</sup> Equally illuminating and memorable was a comment on Regional News in the background paper offered to the General Advisory Council. 'A point often made is that, on the whole, Regional News Bulletins tend to have a stimulating or reassuring effect on listeners, especially in times of acute international stress, when the content of the general News Bulletins may tend to disturb or depress.'<sup>2</sup>

It was the function of 'Talks', *inter alia*, to stimulate and to reassure, and it took a long time for a place to be left in Talks policy also for provocation or shock. Most of the provocation and shock, indeed, arose not at the fireside but inside the Corporation, where there were many signs of strain and disturbance (along with ill health) among Talks producers and administrators during the ten years after the war. On 3 September 1945 the old Home Division had become known as the Talks Division,<sup>3</sup> and intermittently throughout the whole period covered in this volume there was uncertainty in the Division and its successors not only about 'direction' or the allotment of duties between different categories of people but about the basic 'aims and purposes' affecting the duties of each.<sup>4</sup>

Attempts to unify the supply of all Talks, including talks to

<sup>1</sup> \*General Advisory Council, Summary of Discussion, 2 March 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*'BBC News Services', A Memorandum for the General Advisory Council, March 1949.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> \*N. Luker, 'Approach to a Man-Power Budget', 17 June 1946; Note on a Meeting by Nicolls, 12 May 1948; R. A. Rendall, 'Reflections on Incentives for Talks Producers, other than Financial', 18 Nov. 1949; Mary Somerville to Rendall, 29 Nov. 1949.

overseas listeners, were for good reasons resisted,<sup>1</sup> and from time to time different measures of specialization or decentralization were drafted or tried out—for example, in relation to *Woman's Hour*. From 1951 Third Programme Talks had its own Organizer, Ronald Lewin—appointed from 1 January—but there was no Talks Organizer for the Home and Light Programmes until May 1953, when Miss E. M. C. Rowley took over the post. On at least one occasion, the first post-war head of the Talks Division, R. A. Rendall, complained of lack of *esprit de corps* among his thirty producers and organizers,<sup>2</sup> while on another occasion—after the setting up of a Talks Division Board in October 1950—it was the turn of the producers to complain that ‘the feeling of corporate work’ was breaking down and that there was ‘too much isolation’.<sup>3</sup> Harman Grisewood, when he was Rendall’s Assistant, had found the atmosphere in the Division ‘gossipy’ and the squabbles there rather like ‘rows in a Women’s Institute’.<sup>4</sup> There was often a serious shortage of staff in particular sections, but in other sections there were ‘securely established elderly ladies and gentlemen disgruntled by lack of opportunity to do what they really feel they should be doing’.<sup>5</sup> The frustration was never easy to remove. ‘Head of Talks Department’, Mary Somerville, Rendall’s successor, wrote feelingly in 1953, has ‘so many programme matters to hold in his head, so many savage breasts to soothe, that more virtue is drained out of him day by day than any man [she might have added woman] can sustain.’<sup>6</sup>

The public was often more stimulated or reassured than the motley band of producers and administrators, who included a number of people of outstanding ability, like Ronald Lewin and

<sup>1</sup> \*Sir Richard Maconachie had proposed such a reorganization before he retired, but his paper, ‘Sir Richard Maconachie’s Last Thoughts on Talks Division’, has unfortunately disappeared. A memorandum by Haley, 24 February 1949, sets out the history of the attempts at unification. There is also an important Note by Barnes, 25 May 1948, soon after he had taken over his duties as Director of the Spoken Word (see above, p. 135).

<sup>2</sup> \*Rendall to Barnes, 29 Nov. 1949. Rendall was ill at this time and left the Corporation on 1 Jan. 1950. Mary Somerville became Controller (Talks) on 1 July 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*J. C. Thornton, ‘Talks Supply Reorganisation’, Round Robin by a Group of Producers, 10 Aug. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (1968), pp. 157–8.

<sup>5</sup> \*Miss Somerville to Grisewood, 9 Sept. 1953.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid.

Charles Curran, the latter a future Director-General. Yet there were always worries in Broadcasting House about the likely or proven reactions of the public. Even before television provided a competitor, 'the shift of listener allegiance from Home to Light' caused concern among 'traditionalists' in the Talks Department.<sup>1</sup> There were, of course, divisions of outlook as well as differences of personality. Tangye Lean, writing from Bush House with European listeners in mind, extolled 'the virtue in the individual Talk which other means cannot quite attain' and claimed that 'the deep expression of the individual in a good talk' was 'something essential in the Western tradition'.<sup>2</sup> Collins, however, when he was in charge of the Light Programme, did not approve of handing over fifteen-minute Talks spaces to producers who would fill them up 'according to their fancy'. He conceived of Talks far more practically in terms of two simple objects—'to convey information or to be entertaining or, better still, to combine the elements of both'.<sup>3</sup> So, too, did Kenneth Adam, when he was in charge of the Light Programme. Listeners, he believed, should never be pushed 'too hard or too fast'.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, there was a touch of mystique in Tangye Lean. 'It is no accident', he exclaimed, 'that Moscow Radio muffs its talks and prefers to read from *Pravda*.'<sup>5</sup>

The reference to *Pravda* switches attention to another of the main themes in the argument about Talks after 1945—the proper relationship between 'topical' talks and those talks designed to focus on 'more abiding themes'.<sup>6</sup> Douglas Woodruff had demanded 'high themes' in the *BBC Quarterly*.<sup>7</sup> By 1950, however, Lindsay Wellington, then the Controller of the Home Service, could write, 'The whole world around us is in a state of revolution, and our first priority should be to interest the top half of the Home Service audience in what is happening, and also to increase their intelligent curiosity in, and understanding of, the contemporary world.'<sup>8</sup> And there was an

<sup>1</sup> 'The Audience for Talks', Note by Grisewood, 8 April 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Tangye Lean to Jacob (undated, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> Collins to Rendall, 16 June 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Adam to Haley, 11 July 1951.

<sup>5</sup> Lean, loc. cit., 1948.

<sup>6</sup> A Paper by Barnes for the General Advisory Council on 'Talks', 6 May 1948, included this sentence: 'Writing on Greek Literature in 1892, S. H. Butcher gave an excellent definition of the broadcast talk: "It does not quite speak like a book . . . it is thinking aloud".'

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 571.

<sup>8</sup> Wellington to Miss Somerville, 6 April 1950.

important corollary. 'Apt and compelling subjects' were of even greater importance than 'really good talkers'. If there were signs of a decline of interest in news and current affairs just when 'the whole world around us was in a state of revolution', studying the audience and its needs was of paramount importance.<sup>1</sup> This range of concerns, which would have fascinated Ryan, supplied the agenda for a Working Party in 1950 headed by John Green. No better person could have been chosen than Green, a former President of the Cambridge Union, who had built his BBC reputation on 'farming and gardening talks' and who, to use farming metaphors, was at the same time both down-to-earth and cultivated.<sup>2</sup>

Few immediate results followed the setting up of the Working Party, but in September 1953 Grisewood, now promoted to the post of Director of the Spoken Word, was asking Green to prepare 'dummy programmes' for twice-weekly Home Service programmes on current affairs, and Andrew Stewart, the Controller of the Home Service, was 'considering two-weekly half-hour magazine periods in place of three fixed fifteen-minute talks, which would give greater flexibility and dispense with the tyranny of *Radio Times* billings'.<sup>3</sup> These moves were quite deliberate, for as Grisewood, one of the makers of the Third Programme, put it, 'the Light Programme, which was deliberately designed for easy listening, represented the kind of broadcasting which the majority of the public most wanted to hear'.<sup>4</sup>

Grisewood noted the shift, too, from formal presentation of Talks to informal and unscripted discussion, itself the subject

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by J. Trenaman, 12 May 1950, in which he pointed out the differences in the audiences for two Brains Trusts:

PROPORTIONS LISTENING

	<i>Upper Middle Class</i>	<i>Lower Middle Class</i>	<i>Working Class</i>
1945	40	31	19
1949	20	15	7

<sup>2</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words*, p. 39. Green's new role in 1950 was outlined in 'Talks Supply Reorganisation', 12 Oct. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Spoken Word Meeting, *Minutes*, 21 May 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*H. Grisewood, 'The Audience for Talks', 8 April 1953.

of an illuminating article by Lionel Hale in the *BBC Quarterly*.<sup>1</sup> The new styles suggested 'conversation' rather than 'lecture'; and if the development of sound recording was an important technical factor facilitating the shift in styles, it was certainly not the only one. 'The microphone has become enfranchised,' Hale wrote, deliberately choosing a term which had more to do with 'democracy' than with technology. Grisewood, too, sought social and cultural explanations: the war-time role of the BBC as 'a voice of authority' had gradually become more and more unpopular with the public, and there was a growing demand for spontaneous chat and sharp dissent. Television, Grisewood believed—and this was before the advent of commercial television—would complete the process.

He might have added that with fewer formal scripts and more tape recordings, the tempo of broadcasting was changing too and would change still more. Six EMI midget tape-recorders were delivered to the BBC in 1952, and agile producers with the help of recording tape could 'eliminate boredom'.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, anything broadcast could, by choice, be not only 'up-to-date' but 'up to the minute'. *Newsreel* was not the only way to catch the present. Five-minute *News Talks* following the six o'clock News pointed the way to *Topic for Tonight*, first broadcast in February 1949, a programme which stands out in retrospect as the progenitor of hundreds of a.m. and p.m. programmes dedicated to the Day and the events thereof. It had reached its thousandth edition by 24 January 1955, and the series was to continue until 1957.<sup>3</sup> By its very nature, *Topic for Tonight* lacked the kind of perspective that characterized every article in the *BBC Quarterly*. Nor did it make any claims to 'high style'. High style, indeed, was anathema to those who planned and produced it. The idea behind it was to present topical issues 'in terms which will interest and seem relevant to the experience of the average Light Programme listener, who

<sup>1</sup> L. Hale, 'The Extempore Programme' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VI, no. 1 Spring 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972*, pp. 389-91; J. W. Godfrey, 'The History of BBC Sound Recording' in *Journal of the British Sound Recording Association*, vol. 6, May 1959.

<sup>3</sup> It started with two broadcasts a week, and early broadcasters included Mark Abrams, Honor Balfour, Bernard Braine, William Clark, Geoffrey Cox, Graham Hutton, Cyril Ray, Andrew Shonfield and Chester Wilmot (\*BBC Press Release, June 1949).



perhaps left school at fourteen or fifteen and whose ideas on economics and politics are nebulous and parochial'.<sup>1</sup>

There were restraints which were to disappear later. Haley asked for mastery of subject as well as 'lucidity', Talks and not News was placed 'in charge',<sup>2</sup> and speakers were chosen from a rota long before they actually broadcast (a day ahead was the shortest). At the same time, it was significant that Stephen Bonarjee, the first producer, was a journalist, one of the first journalists to be appointed to the BBC outside 'a News context'. As a journalist, Bonarjee felt from the start that the best subjects for *Topic for Tonight* were 'those which demonstrably have some direct bearings on the ordinary listener's life and interests and which we can illustrate with vivid, human material pertinent to the experience of ordinary people'.<sup>3</sup>

Bonarjee was to be a central figure in the drive towards greater topicality. So, too, was Green. Part of the object of current affairs broadcasting, as Green saw it, was 'to make the microphone sought after as the forum for the man of affairs' and to enable the BBC to draw upon his experience. Part also, however—and an equally important part—was to appeal to the experience of members of the audience. What was required was not 'talking at' or even 'talking to' but communication.

Green was sensible in trying to keep a balance on the air between Talks programmes on the one hand and magazine and discussion programmes on the other. 'There is an undoubted portentousness about the 15-minutes Talk that may be out-moded, but it remains a challenge to originality of thought and makes a demand on art,' he maintained, whereas there was 'a tendency for Magazine talks to lack moral responsibility'. This,

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 3 Sept. 1948; Haley to Barnes, 15 Oct. 1948: Haley stated explicitly that he did not want the 'elucidators' to copy 'Overseas News analysers'.

<sup>2</sup> The title *Topic for Tonight* was designed to prevent the talk being tied too closely to the actual news. In the first ten months the average proportion of audience listening was 7.9 per cent, as against 18.5 per cent listening to the 10 p.m. News Bulletin and 8.1 per cent to the next programme.

<sup>3</sup> \*S. Bonarjee to Miss Somerville, 16 Aug. 1950. An inquiry into the 'intelligibility' of the programmes was carried out by W. A. Belson and the results set out in July 1952. J. A. Scupham, Head of School Broadcasting, wrote an interesting comment on Belson's Report (8 Aug. 1952) and Belson replied to these and other comments (11 May 1953) which were further considered by Scupham, 26 May 1953. For intelligibility tests in general, see below, pp. 813-14 and R. Silvey, *Who's Listening?* (1974), pp. 140-3. Talks Editorial Board considered the analysis on 1 Jan. 1953.

he suggested, was partly because 'the sense of occasion' was lessened and partly because 'the tone' was set by the programme rather than by the individual contribution. 'With a magazine topics tend to assume equal validity, and any judgment upon them becomes engulfed in . . . the presentation.' An important question arose, therefore: 'What form of presentation can be trusted to create an atmosphere congenial to men of affairs and which will give value to their utterance?'<sup>1</sup>

For all the innovation in policy, the language in which this statement was couched was calculated to appeal to the *BBC Quarterly*, the editor of which was finding it easier to attract intelligent articles about such issues in broadcasting from people inside than from people outside the BBC.<sup>2</sup> It was not, however, the only kind of language and argument to be heard in 1953. Jacob, looking at BBC affairs from the top, spoke crisply and directly, demanding 'more and better current affairs'. He also wanted more co-ordination in Talks 'to swing back the pendulum from the extreme of diffused authority towards a rather more unified direction'.<sup>3</sup> Current affairs broadcasting, he believed, could not be carried out successfully without fully appreciating the political context in which the broadcasts took place, and given this context, 'continuous supervising control' was essential 'at a well-informed central point'.

During the second quarter of 1953 Current Affairs talks items had numbered 86 in the Home Service, 58 in the Light Programme, 25 in the Third Programme, and 19 in *Woman's Hour*. Yet the 'total picture', Jacob suggested, had been put together 'only after the event',<sup>4</sup> not at the planning stage. Two specific criticisms of Talks policy had been raised from outside—about particular items—by Lord Salisbury, as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, on the grounds that the

<sup>1</sup> \*Green, Memorandum of 29 May 1953. Cf. Mary Somerville, who urged that current affairs magazines should 'maintain the character and quality of talks programmes, in letting the public hear authoritative views and experience, and should not be merely News Magazines in which subject took first place' (Note on a Meeting, 17 Oct. 1953).

<sup>2</sup> \*Thomas to Grisewood, 8 Feb. 1954. He added, however, that 'professional broadcasters' were usually 'preoccupied with their own particular problems and difficulties'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum of 19 June 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of 8 Oct. 1953, introducing a paper by Grisewood on 'Current Affairs Output'.

topic of the Central African Federation had been handled with 'a pronounced bias against the scheme', and by the Labour politician, Woodrow Wyatt, on the grounds that the BBC had turned 'Bevanism into a much greater political force than it might have been'. These charges, each of which had wide ramifications and each of which was sharpened in the light of television experience, had been 'disposed of', Jacob and Grisewood felt, yet misgivings remained. It would be useful, they thought, to set up 'a topical unit' inside the Talks Division to service all topical talks, including *Topic for Tonight* and similar programmes. 'There is a large and eager appetite for the topical, and we should not stay content with our present inability to satisfy it.'<sup>1</sup>

This was an important declaration, and it was followed in December 1953 by the setting up of such a unit of twelve specialists in Current Affairs—with Green in charge of it. Some of the twelve were to be experts providing 'background knowledge'; others were to supply the output for which Bonarjee as Topical Talks Organizer was responsible. Meanwhile, the post of Assistant Controller (Talks) was revived to provide assistance for Mary Somerville, and J. C. Thornton, the Division's Administrative Officer, who was very familiar with the preoccupations of Jacob and Grisewood, was moved over to fill it.<sup>2</sup>

An early product of the new policy was *At Home and Abroad*, which first went on the air on 12 January 1954. 'The essence of Current Affairs broadcasting,' readers of the *Radio Times* were then told, 'is to bring to the microphone the *right* contribution on the *right* subject at the *right* time.'<sup>3</sup> A few wide-eyed producers might well have asked how, but there was great interest inside the BBC in making the venture a success. Broadcasters in the first year included Nehru, Mrs. Pandit, Chou En-Lai, Christian Dior and the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as Andrew Shonfield, Robert McKenzie, and William Clark. The interview with Chou En-Lai was staged in Geneva on the final evening of the Geneva Conference, and the tapes arrived in London just in time to go on the air in the programme and for Chou En-Lai to hear himself speaking from London just before the concluding session of the Conference began.

'The greatly increased topicality' was prized by the

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.    <sup>2</sup> \*Note for Circulation, 7 Dec. 1953.    <sup>3</sup> *Radio Times*, 8 Jan. 1954.

producers.<sup>1</sup> They took pride, for example, in the fact—and it was an impressive fact—that the fall of Dien Bien Phu was the subject of an *At Home and Abroad* programme even though the news had only been received three hours before. The challenge of ‘immediacy’ was already proving exhilarating to the ‘professionals’ involved. Nor was it only ‘the topicality’ which was felt to count. The ‘professionals’ believed that there had to be ‘bite’ also. They were not disturbed, for instance, when Churchill protested about the inclusion in the programme of an interview with Archbishop Makarios.<sup>2</sup> One of their disappointments was that Dr. Adenauer, the visiting German Chancellor, when staying in a London hotel, could not get out of a summit meeting in time to broadcast.

Such a programme soon generated others like it. ‘Topical programmes are an expanding sphere of broadcasting,’ Bonarjee wrote in January 1955, ‘and as *At Home and Abroad* celebrates its first birthday it is joined in the Home Service by a new venture that is part of its offspring. January 8 sees the launching on Saturdays of *The World this Week*.’<sup>3</sup> The speeding-up of tempo had begun.

By then the *BBC Quarterly* was dead. Its imminent demise in 1954 was not mentioned in the very last number, which included a fascinating article by Canon V. A. Demant, the kind of item which certainly would not have made its way into *At Home and Abroad*. Demant passed beyond questions of ‘topicality’ in Sound to the likely influences of the speeding-up process in Television too. He had been concerned in an earlier article published six years before with ‘the unintentional influences of the wireless’: now he turned to ‘the unintentional influences of television’. Viewing, like listening, he pointed out, was a private or domestic activity, yet the individual or family were constantly invaded ‘by public happenings’. Television might be redressing ‘the highly cerebral activity of perpetual listening’, accompanied by possible ‘lack of respect for what is communicated to you’—this was a point soon to be lost—but there was a danger in perpetual viewing, ‘a habit sustained for some other reason than the satisfactions it directly gives’. It might

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Statement on the Fiftieth Programme Anniversary, July 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Churchill to Cadogan, 22 Oct. 1954; Cadogan to Churchill, 26 Oct. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*S. Bonarjee, ‘*At Home and Abroad* Celebrates its First Birthday’, Jan. 1955.

even foster 'a cult of violence in many of the young and not so young' and, however much 'topical' broadcasting might be extended, 'a growing indifference to politics and other aspects of the ordering of public life'. Mixtures of 'fiction and remote fact' could become the staple diet of a 'shadow world'.

Looking far ahead beyond the programmes of the Day, the Week, the Month and the Quarter, Demant fell back again on the Written Word—on a quotation of quotation—in order to encompass the unintentional influences both of wireless and television. 'Such is the constraint of noise and images that everything sounds and shows itself without being heard and seen; the superficial excitation of our attention creates habits and reflexes without our inner being having any part in them. The worst of modern inventions is the technique of continuous repetition, the suppression of silence.'<sup>1</sup>

The last number of the *BBC Quarterly* was twice as big as the first.<sup>2</sup> It concluded, as if *en passant*, with the sentence (at the end of an article on the Royal Tour of the Commonwealth), 'next time there should be television too'.<sup>3</sup> Demant had urged in his articles that 'we badly need a "philosophy" for the best use of technical achievement',<sup>4</sup> yet all that was left of the *Quarterly* idea in 1954 was 'a scheme for producing Engineering monographs'.<sup>5</sup> The Governors decided 'with regret' in April of that year to discontinue publication—at a meeting when they were also considering the legal implications of the progress of the Government's Television Bill through Parliament.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IX, no. 3, Autumn 1954. The earlier article was *ibid.*, vol. III, no. 3, Oct. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> The first issue had 32 pages, the last 63. The increase in size had been standard since Oct. 1946. The price of the *BBC Quarterly* was 5s. until July 1949, when it was reduced to 2s. 6d. Paper rationing for periodicals had disappeared in 1950-1.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IX, no. 3, Autumn 1954, p. 174. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> E. L. E. Pawley to G. Strode, General Manager Publications, 12 Nov. 1954. There had been an engineering article in each issue, even though the Editor had wished to exclude them on the grounds that most of them were 'unintelligible' to the general reader (Thomas to Grisewood, 8 Feb. 1954).

<sup>6</sup> Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 8 April 1954. Reviewing the position earlier in 1951, the Governors had decided then to continue the *Quarterly*, the main reason being given that it was 'a valuable means of publicity for the BBC' (Board of Management, *Minutes*, 10 Dec. 1951). In 1954 the Editor (Note to Grisewood, 8 Feb.) noted that even in the 1951 decision 'the emphasis appears to have shifted from "service" to "publicity"'. In a Memorandum circulated by Grisewood (22 March 1954) before the 1954 meeting, the *Quarterly* was described as a 'worked out vein'.

publication was then costing the BBC £3,000 a year and had a sale of nearly 3,000 copies for each issue, too small to cover costs, yet more than three times the figure for 1946.<sup>1</sup>

Just before leaving the BBC, Haley made it clear that he did not believe that the *Quarterly* should be used 'for articles against sponsoring':<sup>2</sup> he never conceived of the role of the *Quarterly* in terms of immediate BBC purposes. Yet by 1954 those immediate BBC purposes carried with them such an unprecedented sense of urgency for the Governors and the Director-General that they had little time to consider Demant's long-term perspectives. And insofar as they had time, they were turning to new methods of investigation. Instead of articles by Demant they were considering during the summer of 1954 the launching of a highly organized research inquiry, led by Professor Rex Knight, into the psychological effects of television.<sup>3</sup>

The public impact of televised News programmes did not yet figure prominently on the agenda of the social psychologists—despite Demant's forecast of some of the future problems. Yet the development of television News, particularly after 1955, changed almost all the terms of the earlier debate. Indeed, as Michael Balkwill had already put it eloquently in the pages of the *BBC Quarterly* in 1951, 'a newspaper reading family after the First World War would have naturally expected a visual rather than a spoken presentation of the News if that had been available through the development of broadcasting in the 1920s. . . . But as it was, the young Ariel only became able to see at all as he grew up.'<sup>4</sup>

The first television news, in fact, was a sound adjunct only, 'piped' from Broadcasting House to Alexandra Palace.<sup>5</sup> Viewers saw a clock on the screen—and nothing more—as a

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Strode, 5 Feb. 1954. Costs per issue had increased from £1,528 to £4,115, and £1,000 was being spent on publicity, four times as much as in 1950/1, the year when such publicity expenditure had first been incurred (Board of Management, *Minutes*, 10 Dec. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note to Grisewood, 2 July 1952. He added that any attempt at normal editorial control would be 'pilloried as BBC "censorship" and the BBC rigging its own case'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 27 May, 22 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VI, no. 2, Summer 1951, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 205. The pre-war Television Service had always ended with a recording of the 9 o'clock News Bulletin.

news summary was being read by a radio newsreader. For Haley this was as far as things should go. 'The fact that the text of a bulletin would have to be received some hours in advance of the transmission time shows the necessity that would arise to subordinate the primary functions of news to the needs of visual presentation. Any such subordination would prejudice all sorts of values on which the BBC's great reputation for news has been founded.'<sup>1</sup>

There were all kinds of problems for Television Management, therefore, including the deletion of already obsolete news references from the Sound News if it had been broadcast some time before.<sup>2</sup> Collins introduced improvements, like an experimental set of 'News at a Glance' headlines,<sup>3</sup> but no major development took place even after Balkwill, then an Assistant to the Head of News Output in the News Division, was 'lent' to Television to advise on News policy following the 1950 election.<sup>4</sup> There were occasional 'experiments',<sup>5</sup> but it was not until 29 March 1953 that a *live* News Bulletin was actually read at the close of the evening's programme.

If part of the reason for the slowness of development was lack of resources and part was lack of technical know-how, the main part was related to the whole organizational pattern of the BBC. For Television News to realize its 'visual' potential—a huge potential, particularly if the visual were to be immediate—it was essential that completely new forms of treatment should be devised—and these could never be 'delegated' from Egton House. A. P. Ryan himself had argued in 1946 that 'illustrated treatment' (a rather crabbed but then characteristic way of putting it) was a challenge which could not then be met adequately from existing resources. 'When we really get down

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Wyndham Goldie, *Facing the Nation*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> \*Co-ordinating Committee, *Minutes*, 19 March 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*The experiment lasted from 20 November to 11 December. Haley to Collins, 7 Dec. 1949, suggested 'a try-out of the idea of the announcer telling people the news', but when Collins 'explained the reason why news *reading* was impossible, i.e. no news readers', Haley 'appreciated the point'.

<sup>4</sup> For his part in the general election of 1951, see below, p. 666 n.6.

<sup>5</sup> Thus on 20 Nov. 1949 viewers *saw* that Princess Elizabeth had just arrived in Malta, but all they saw on the screen was a message spelt out by a teletype machine. This approach, familiar now to cable viewers, was thought to be a 'blind alley' (Balkwill, *BBC Quarterly*, loc. cit.).

to providing a Bulletin for television we shall have to make a quite distinct job of it.<sup>1</sup>

The initial outcome of the early interest in 'illustrated treatment' was not a news bulletin but Television *Newsreel*, an idea of Gorham and Dorté, which was first transmitted on 5 January 1948 and which had nothing to do with the News Division.<sup>2</sup> From the start, the idea was to increase output by 'logical steps' from one *Reel* a week to two *Reels*, then three, and so on to six or seven *Reels*. It was recognized that some of the material would have to come from overseas, and it was hoped that the new programme would be 'devoid of the brand of humour which is the stock-in-trade of the cinema *Newsreel* commentary writer'.<sup>3</sup> This last hope, it should be added, did not stop Haley from firmly distinguishing between a newsreel and a news bulletin. The *Newsreel* was 'in essence an entertainment': the News Bulletin was 'a vital public service'. Moreover, Haley believed in 1946 that there were many more urgent developments in television which should have priority.<sup>4</sup>

At first, many of the items in *Newsreel* were 'shot silent' and commentary was added later,<sup>5</sup> but changes took place as more and more material came in from overseas—for example, from the Korean War. There was American experience to consider also. In 1951 Dorté and McGivern visited the United States and rightly came to the conclusion that in the light of that experience the 'news' element in the *Newsreel* should be substantially increased.<sup>6</sup> This was agreed with Hole in July 1951,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Ryan to Macgregor, 9 July 1946. He had received a proposed idea from one of Gorham's staff (Gorham to Ryan, 7 June 1946). Cf. Haley, Aug. 1946, 'I doubt whether the implications of a completely visual news *bulletin* have still been fully comprehended' (quoted in Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, p. 41).

<sup>2</sup> See P. Dorté, 'The BBC Television Newsreel' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. III, no. 4, Jan. 1949. He also read a paper on the subject to the British Kinematograph Society, 26 Nov. 1952. \*Gorham had put the idea of 'a television newsreel, using the word in its BBC sense' to Haley on 22 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Dorté in the *BBC Quarterly*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to Gorham, 16 Aug. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Gorham to Ryan, 10 July 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*McGivern to Barnes, 6 Oct. 1951. For the American story, see E. Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty* (1976), pp. 101-3, 108-9, 146-8. The American *Today* series began partly as Newscast, partly as Variety. Haley noted as early as 1949 on one of his American visits that all the networks were experimenting with the treatment of news on television, one of 'the most stimulating problems' (Note of July 1949).

<sup>7</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 23 July 1951, when Barnes, then Director of Television, was also present.



when it was agreed also that in future the BBC's News Division should be solely responsible for the news content in the programme. This was an important—but, in the long run, awkward—concession, and it rested on assumptions about the relationship between Sound and Vision which would have to be modified.<sup>1</sup> 'The Film Unit should stand in relation to the News team as a supply unit, in the same way that Foreign Correspondents and Home Reporters stand in relation to those in News Talks Department who produce daily the half-dozen Sound *Newsreels*.'<sup>2</sup>

At the time, Dorté recognized the awkwardness of this solution and countered Hole's criticism of the BBC Film Department's lack of news expertise with a counter-criticism of the News Division's lack of 'film expertise'. Yet what even Dorté could not fully foresee was that in the future the techniques of Television News were to go far beyond those of the filmmakers.<sup>3</sup> Far-sighted people could already recognize that whatever television might do to the cinema it would 'eliminate the present form of cinema newsreel'. The home viewer was not in a mood for the 'quick fire entertainment' so beloved of the makers of film newsreels, and he was prepared at home 'to accept a lot of information that in the cinema would merely make the newsreel appear to be going on for ever'.<sup>4</sup>

There was further argument between Dorté and Hole in 1951 and 1952 with the issues going far beyond those of a normal demarcation dispute—but the number of *Newsreels* was nevertheless increased and a special 'weekly edition' was planned with scripts by Richard Cawston, Paul Fox and others, and with Richard Dimbleby as the compère. There were also more television documentaries, like those presented by Christopher Mayhew on Korea. Later recruits to commentating of this

<sup>1</sup> \*The change should have taken effect from 14 Sept. 1951, but there were arguments about the implications of the 'concession'. McGivern insisted, for example, that 'it is not the intention of the Television Service to give up or hand over *Newsreel*. *Newsreel* is a valuable property of the Television Service and remains under the direction of D.Tel.' (Note by McGivern, 6 Oct. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 23 July 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Dorté to McGivern, 8 Aug. 1951, commenting on a memorandum by McGivern, 31 July 1951.

<sup>4</sup> D. Horton, *Television's Story and Challenge* (1951), p. 132.

genre included Aidan Crawley, Woodrow Wyatt, and John Freeman.<sup>1</sup>

Dimbleby revealed his great skill in establishing, as always, an immediate *rapprochement* with viewers—even if they did not like him—but there were still many difficulties in the way of presenting ‘hard’ news in day-by-day programmes. McGivern was very bitter, too, about the fact that the ‘hard news’ in *Newsreel* had been ‘handed over’ to the News Division, and that he had not been consulted about the hand-over beforehand. The consequences were equally contentious. When Tom Hopkinson, the distinguished ex-editor of *Picture Post*, a pioneer of visual presentation of news and views, was invited to prepare a report on the *Newsreels* transmitted between 1 December 1952 and mid-January 1953, he emphasized that although *Newsreel* was ‘the favourite programme of television audiences’, there was room for drastic changes in news presentation. ‘The time to make improvements is before a decline begins. . . . A success dependent on public support has to be won afresh with every issue of a newsreel, magazine or newspaper.’<sup>2</sup>

Hopkinson began his Report, as a journalist might have been expected to do, by singling out the main items of news at home and abroad during the period he had been viewing and going on to consider how *Newsreel* had dealt with them. His assessment was stark. ‘It is clear that under present techniques a number of subjects of great public interest are never covered on Television *Newsreel* at all. These tend to be the most exciting and dramatic events, also the most complex—arrest of Nazis, purges in Russia—therefore those on which the public needs most guidance.’ He made other fundamental criticisms, too. The ‘wording of commentaries’ was ‘stale and second hand’, and not enough imagination, ‘probably therefore not enough time and not enough guidance’, was being applied to ‘the photography’.

Dorté pointed out fairly and correctly that Hopkinson’s criticisms could be overcome only if Television’s *Newsreel* Unit trebled in size, as he had already recommended.<sup>3</sup> By then,

<sup>1</sup> See the fascinating account of this development in Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, esp. ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup> \*T. Hopkinson, ‘Report on Television Newsreels’, Jan. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Dorté to Barnes, 24 Feb. 1953.

however, there had been a change in policy and an increase in the scale of resources; and the talk was now less of an addition to the *Newsreel* staff than of the provision of 'a service of news-in-vision'. Jacob, newly installed as Director-General, asked for the start of such a news-in-vision service by October 1953, including initially, as part of a comprehensive plan, a daily News summary of about five minutes and five *Newsreels* each week.<sup>1</sup> The date was postponed to January 1954 and further postponed (with secret trials and many recriminations) until July,<sup>2</sup> but as the preparations went ahead there was a full transfer of responsibilities for staffing and organization to the News Division as Hole recommended.<sup>3</sup> In consequence, a number of people connected with the old *Newsreel*, including Paul Fox and Richard Cawston, refused to be transferred to Alexandra Palace, where the new service was housed, and found employment elsewhere in the Television Service.<sup>4</sup>

'We are still experimenting,' Hole wrote to a Canadian colleague on 30 June, a few days before the extended service began. 'We have no intention of putting this [news] period into a firm mould from Monday. We shall seek to keep a high degree of flexibility.'<sup>5</sup> Yet when the new service, given the name *News and Newsreel*, began on 5 July, it did not have a good audience reaction: four out of ten of the Viewers' Television Panel felt that it was a poor exchange for *Newsreel*.<sup>6</sup> Nor, despite the

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Meeting by Jacob, 22 April 1953; Jacob to McGivern, 27 April 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Some of the problems leading to the postponement were set out in a note by Hole, 16 Sept. 1953. They were restated at a meeting on 8 Feb. 1954. Jacob complained of the delay in a letter to Barnes, Bishop and Grisewood, 9 Feb 1954: 'I know that the introduction of a new and unexplored element into an existing service is a difficult and complicated task, but I cannot help feeling that in this instance there has not been enough determination displayed by those who had to work on the problem.' McGivern was unhappy about this comment, but agreed that 'the matter of live news in television is the sorriest mess I have seen in the service' (McGivern to Barnes, 16 Feb. 1954). Grace Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, p. 193, has compared 'the long-drawn war' between the News Division and the Film Department as 'a battle between a school of whales and a herd of elephants'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Hole, 12 June 1953. The proposals were accepted at a meeting on 22 June and reported the same day to the Board of Management.

<sup>4</sup> \*At first it had been decided to transmit the News from Lime Grove, but this would have strained resources and the scheme was transferred to Alexandra Palace (Jacob to Barnes, 12 March 1954); L. Miall to K. Adam. Note on Television News, 16 Dec. 1960.

<sup>5</sup> \*Hole to W. H. Hogg, 30 June 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*Audience Research Report, 23 July 1954.

congratulation of the Governors,<sup>1</sup> did it have a good Press. Maurice Wiggin described it as 'an uneasy compromise between a sound-radio bulletin and an illustrated newspaper',<sup>2</sup> while Gerald Barry, who judged, perhaps a little harshly, that even in 'its own style' it was 'raw', thought that it must have sent Norman Collins and his friends off to the cellar to bring up a bottle of champagne.<sup>3</sup>

Fear of competitive television had undoubtedly played its part in the timing of the new programme,<sup>4</sup> but most of the commentators were unanimous that *News and Newsreel* would generate no new fears in the Press. 'Certainly no newspaper which had to succeed or close down would have dared to offer such a mixture of the dull, trivial and ineffectual.'<sup>5</sup> 'The present programme is about as impressive visually', wrote *The Star*, 'as the fat stock prices.' It singled out as 'the only significant thing about the whole business' the fact that Sound had got 'one foot in up-and-coming TV's door',<sup>6</sup> but in so doing it was, of course, unwisely complacent about its own future. After all, both the BBC television and sound News services were long to survive *The Star*.

There was, indeed, far too little intelligent critical discussion in 1954 and 1955 of the Press and its role; and at a time when it was already impossible inside the BBC to avoid asking a number of fundamental questions about Sound and/or Vision in news presentation, people concerned directly with the Press were not asking any fundamental questions at all. The new medium inevitably raised such questions, whatever the quality of the answers, and they were questions relating to 'news values' as well as to news presentation. Should Sound and Television follow the same pattern? Was 'absolute impersonality' possible on the television screen? Television weather forecasts had already been 'personalized'. Would not News

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 8 July 1954. See also *Radio Times*, 2 July 1954, for an introduction to *News and Newsreel* and, for a later verdict, Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, p. 196: 'If the television newsreel had failed to be news it was at least competently presented. *News and Newsreel* was neither competent nor an effective piece of television communication.'

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times*, 11 July 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 11 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*This was apparent in a paper prepared for the Board of Governors by Barnes and Grisewood on 11 Aug. 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Black in the *Daily Mail*, 12 July 1954.

<sup>6</sup> *The Star*, 13 July 1954.

Bulletins have to be personalized too? (John Snagge said no; many newsreaders, like Robert Dougall, said yes).<sup>1</sup> Should not television focus on action? What was duller than galleries of real-life characters imprisoned in stills? Could television 'investigate' in depth?

The Americans had already faced up to some of these problems, and they were conspicuously more friendly to *News and Newsreel* than the British critics.<sup>2</sup> Romney Wheeler, London Director of NBC, found it 'strikingly consistent in its excellence', and Leonard Hole, another visiting NBC Director, referred to its 'maturity in newsmanship' and the fact that it was already '*strikingly more international* than most TV news programmes in the United States'.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the difficulties, including 'divided loyalties', the television producer Ian Atkins, too, found the atmosphere at Alexandra Palace in September 1954 to be 'one of complete co-operation and enthusiasm'.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the new service started, Tahu Hole visited the United States, where he met members of the staff of NBC (which had had an early exchange with the BBC in relation to *Newsreel*) and CBS.<sup>5</sup> His comments, however, were mainly organizational and did not touch on the technical and visual issues preoccupying his colleagues at Lime Grove and Alexandra Palace. He noted the success of such programmes as NBC's *Today*—a break from the tele-magazine format—but

<sup>1</sup> \*J. Snagge, 'Newsreaders in Vision', 1 Dec. 1954: 'I do not believe that any real value will be added to News and Newsreel by showing the announcer in picture. It will, I know, satisfy the curiosity of a great many people who will be able to attach a face to a voice.' Yet 'to me it is of paramount importance that no distraction from the news as such shall be conveyed to the listener by way of satisfying curiosity or by stunts'. Cf. R. Dougall, *In and Out of the Box* (1973), p. 2:5: 'The impersonal, objective style of writing used for BBC radio bulletins at that time and the anonymity of the Sound Newsreaders simply would not do. In television one must talk *to* people not *at* them.' Sig Mickelson, Vice-President of CBS, who was consulted by Peter Dimmock on 31 March 1955, said that Americans 'were firmly wedded to building the broadcast around the personality'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Romney Wheeler to Jacob, 10 Sept. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*L. Hole to Jacob, 28 Oct. 1954. Robert Sarnoff said the same (letter to Jacob, 20 Sept. 1954).

<sup>4</sup> \*I. Atkins to McGivern, 24 Sept. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Hole, 12 June 1953. The arrangement ended in May 1953, but was renewed in July 1954. The BBC claimed in the spring of 1954 (Hole to Bottomley, 29 April) that it could not afford 'a dollar subscription' for first-class coverage of the American scene.

attributed it to the fact that the American companies allocated the complete responsibility for News and Special News Events to one official dealing with both Sound and Television, the Vice-President in charge. Hole deduced from this that in Britain such a Vice-President would have to have charge of all Outside Broadcasts and of programmes like *Sportsview* as well as of News Bulletins. He added, *inter alia*, that the Americans respected 'the sustained high standard of the BBC's General Overseas News'.<sup>1</sup> He was convinced that news could not properly be told in pictures and concerned, even when senior BBC officials like Harman Grisewood tried to persuade him to the contrary, lest the use of television would impair the authority of the BBC in news broadcasting.

As the advent of commercial television approached, there was growing tension between Barnes and Hole, with the latter continuing to be backed by Jacob. Barnes, representing his colleagues at Lime Grove, stated that the quality of *News and Newsreel* did not justify the resources and effort being put into it. He also claimed that Hole was far less interested in *visual* news than he was. Hole, however, wished to manage all News—in Sound and Television—on his own terms as a single enterprise. Barnes tried to improve the relationship in February 1955, telling him that 'you and I have got to bring this about before competition starts'.<sup>2</sup> 'The real cause of division', he went on—and Hole disputed it—was that there had been 'no combined thinking on what news in Television should (and can) do. The thought has all gone into the operation. Your Division has acquired in Sound Broadcasting a reputation for accuracy, impartiality and integrity, and its subject matter is restricted in certain directions, e.g. crime reporting. Given the same requirements and restrictions how would you devise a News Service for the viewer? . . . Mine', he concluded, 'would not be anything like the present nor, I suspect, would yours. Should we start at that point?'

Hole did not rise to the bait. All the time, he said, 'deep thought' was being given at Egton House and Alexandra Palace to News in Television. After all, there were two editorial—

<sup>1</sup> \*Report on a Visit, 24 Nov. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Hole, 2 Feb. 1955; Jacob also wrote to Barnes on the same subject on 24 Feb. 1955.

production meetings a day.<sup>1</sup> All he would agree about completely was that the right question was, 'how can the presentation of News be bettered?' At this point there was something of an impasse, yet it was doubtless out of further 'deep thought'—expressed in a battery of memoranda, to which Grisewood was contributing as Director of the Spoken Word—that it was decided later in 1955 to introduce a regular Television News Bulletin. Jacob announced this on 14 June 1955. News Division was to have control of it—and the Division in future was to have its own Television News Department. Any other broadcasts which included a news element, and what were 'to some extent "programme" items', could in future be handled either by News Division or by some other department or by both jointly, 'the decision on this resting with the Director in whose output the broadcast appeared'.<sup>2</sup> The Head of the Television News Department was to be responsible to Hole for News policy and standards, but 'for all other purposes' he was to work as a member of the Television Service.

This reorganization, which not surprisingly encouraged considerable differences of interpretation, came into effect on 1 July.<sup>3</sup> It was part, indeed, of a bigger reorganization whereby the post of Director of the Spoken Word was abolished and Grisewood now became Chief Assistant to the Director-General. Following the reorganization, Jacob addressed the

<sup>1</sup> \*Hole to Barnes, 7 Feb. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by the Director-General, 'News Broadcasting', 14 June 1955. The distinction had been drawn in the autumn of 1954 by Bottomley: 'The same authority should be applied to what the viewer sees and to the way in which he sees it. We felt however that a distinction should be drawn between News output which should be under the control of News Division and other material of a topical or magazine character which would continue to be originated wholly by the Television Service' (Memorandum of 5 Nov. 1954). The announcement of June 1955 attracted little interest in the Press. The *Daily Sketch* (17 June) and the *Evening News* (17 June) were the only newspapers to report the change. The latter criticized the appointment as Head of Television News of W. J. Breething, who had eighteen months to go before retirement.

<sup>3</sup> \*It seemed to leave open the question of who was in charge of *Newsreel*. There was a sharp note from Breething to McGivern, seeking to define blurred responsibilities (2 Sept. 1955): 'D.G.'s statement of June last did not mean that the responsibilities of News Division in the Television Service were to be reduced as you now suggest.' McGivern wrote in red chalk on the letter, 'Discussed with D.G. on Friday, Sept. 2 who informed H. Tel.N. that the TV Service is responsible for Newsreel.'

whole of the News Division on 22 June. Many of them felt, he believed, that because they were 'news people' they were 'unpopular' with some of their colleagues inside the BBC,<sup>1</sup> and he was anxious to raise their morale. He was equally anxious to explain that the BBC had a 'News policy'.<sup>2</sup> 'You provide a central service,' he told them, like the engineers, and it was this 'special quality' of News as a 'central service' which led to the placing of News Division 'directly under the Director-General'. The immediate opportunity in 1955 was 'to exploit to the full the resources of news in all its forms'. A real 'New Deal' was necessary, whereby the News Division could contribute not only to bulletins but to 'all other programmes in which News may figure'. Such programmes would gain in importance. 'A programme item, originating from a point in the news, that has been developed as a special feature by the addition of views and comment, must be presented in a manner that will so convey the full meaning of the content that it will arouse and hold the interest of the audience.'<sup>3</sup>

In an earlier memorandum Jacob had stated that 'Programme Controllers should be encouraged to take the initiative in calling upon News Division for special reports, newsreels of various types, and other sorts of news programmes',<sup>4</sup> while Grisewood and Barnes had discussed a wide range of such programmes, including *Sportsview* and *Science Review*, 'chosen not only on news value'.<sup>5</sup> 'The BBC', Grisewood insisted, like Jacob, 'should satisfy and exploit the public appetite for news.'<sup>6</sup> Independent Television News, a common service after 1955 under the new Independent Television Authority, was to provide a necessary challenge, though its first Editor-in-Chief, Aidan Crawley, arrived from the BBC and was assisted by

<sup>1</sup> \*H. Grisewood, 'Notes about News', 5 April 1955, where he referred to a reciprocal dislike or resentment. 'Iron Curtain and Cold War analogies are applicable.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Grisewood, loc. cit., had stated bluntly that 'it is hardly true to say that the BBC possesses a News policy. There are various canons variously understood, but there is little that can be disengaged as a firm policy from a mass of tradition—folklore or myth it may be called—that has grown up round news and the BBC's handling of news.'

<sup>3</sup> \*Director-General's Talk to News Division, 22 June 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \*'News Broadcasting', Note of 14 June 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \*Notes of Telephone Discussion, 15 March 1955.

<sup>6</sup> \*'News Broadcasting, Principles and Procedure', 16 April 1955.



Philip Dorté. How the challenge was made and met, however, belongs to another volume.

Meanwhile, by 1955 there was a growing public appetite for the televising not only of news but of views, however controversial or explosive the views expressed might be. *International Commentary* made regular use of Mayhew, and the subsequent *Viewfinder* series, depth reports which owed much to the example and advice of Ed Murrow in the United States, was the BBC programme which introduced Crawley to the viewers. Both were sometimes in difficulties with 'the authorities', Mayhew on Central Africa, for example, and Crawley on India. The former had a programme withheld from the public in January 1953; the latter resisted (with full BBC help) an attempt to have his programme *India's Challenge* vetted by the British High Commission in New Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

The series which caused most controversy, *In the News*, raised every kind of political issue, even though it was first conceived of during the summer of 1950 as 'an entertainment programme' with a 'team'.<sup>2</sup> Again there was an American model,<sup>3</sup> and Collins welcomed the first programme on 26 May 1950 as 'outstandingly successful'. 'It crowns the efforts of the Controller,' he went on, 'who for two and a half years has been asking for precisely this.'<sup>4</sup> In the mid-autumn of the year it was praised by McGivern as 'one of our main and most popular programmes'.<sup>5</sup>

The story deserves to be told in some detail. The first chairman—chosen at the eleventh hour after a difficult search—was Donald McLachlan, the first producer John Irwin, the first

<sup>1</sup> Wyndham Goldie, op. cit., pp. 156 ff.

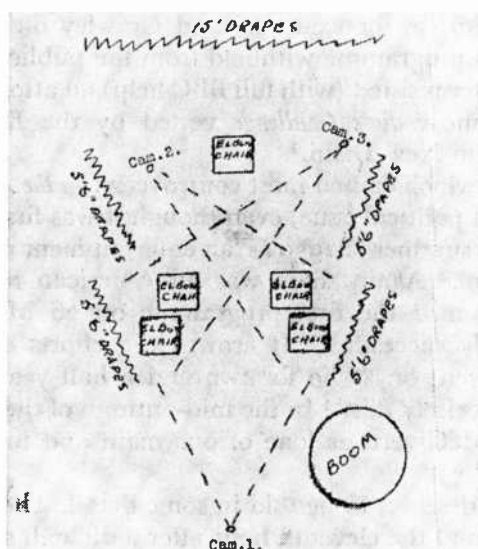
<sup>2</sup> \*A Note by Barnes, 'In the News', 25 Sept. 1953, summing up the history. The purpose, he went on, was 'to stimulate discussion . . . rather than to elucidate and to inform'. This phrase was incorporated in a note by the Director-General, 11 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*N. Luker, then North American Representative, to Collins, 7 Feb. 1950: 'There are many programmes on American television, which are just conversation with a camera stuck in front of the participants, and with no maps, visual aids, film inserts and what have you. Quite contrary to all predictions the best of these programmes are fascinating.' Marsland Gander wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* (6 Nov. 1950) that after a visit to the United States British debate on television seemed 'soporific'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 30 May 1950. Haley called the discussion 'very good' (Haley to Collins, 30 May 1950).

<sup>5</sup> \*McGivern to Barnes, 22 Nov. 1950.

editor Edgar Lustgarten, and the first participants W. J. Brown, ex-Independent MP, and Robert Boothby and Michael Foot, Conservative and Labour MPs. McLachlan was soon dropped as Chairman, and A. J. P. Taylor, the final member of the Big Four, joined what really was beginning to be a 'team' on 25 August 1950. Dingle Foot appeared frequently also, sometimes in the chair, sometimes alongside his brother, and the first two women participants were Lady Astor and Barbara Castle.



N.B. Plan not to scale. Lime Grove staff have full measurements and details.

#### 17. 'In the News' seating plan

Politics crept in from the start. Irwin, who was working as a free-lance, and Lustgarten, a former news analyst and a very successful broadcaster, were operating outside the BBC's departmental structure, and they were not easily 'accountable for', therefore, if they overlooked any of the BBC's 'rules' about political balance. Boothby and Foot were brilliant performers, but neither belonged to the mainstream of his party. Foot was particularly challengeable since the Labour Government had

a fragile majority between the general election of 1950 and that of 1951, and as a member of the 'Bevanite' minority he was expressing views which many members of his own party found distasteful. In such circumstances the BBC, nervous about its own future, felt itself vulnerable to political pressure.<sup>1</sup> The question of the political opinions of the speakers—and their 'representativeness'—arose soon enough for Barnes to feel that he had to insist (as early as October 1950) on regular changes in the team and that his office had to be informed each week of what topics were to be discussed. 'The BBC's trust of impartiality in politics requires not only that the main parties should be balanced but that there should not be a single representative of each party over a long period of time.'<sup>2</sup> By February 1951 Barnes was asking for lists of speakers and that there should be an occasional 'straight Conservative' among them, while at the highest level the Governors were receiving complaints from inside the Labour Party that Foot's regular appearances were making backbench Labour MPs feel that 'the solid core of the party' had been 'overshadowed'.<sup>3</sup> Even when the list was extended there could still be problems. Few effective speakers were complete party conformists, and Tom Driberg and Barbara Castle as well as Foot were supporters of Bevan. It was urged strongly, therefore, that there should never be two of them in any programme at the same time.<sup>4</sup> There was obviously a conflict of attitudes between Lustgarten who wanted 'personalities' and Barnes who demanded 'balance' and was even prepared to consult the Parties to secure it. The Governors approved of steps taken to put right the party balance, but added that they hoped 'it would not be done at the expense of liveliness'. They insisted, too, that 'in no circumstances did they think that the

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 642 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to McGivern, 30 Oct. 1950. He congratulated McGivern on 20 Nov. 1950 on 'an excellent programme', but again asked for the changing of the two 'principal Right and Left Wing speakers'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Barnes to Balkwill, 7 Feb. 1951; Reports to the Board of Governors, 21 Feb., 18 July 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Barnes to Balkwill, 27 April 1951. It would also be impossible, he added, to have one of them in every programme. *Time and Tide*, 27 Sept. 1952, condemned the BBC for entering into any kind of agreement with political parties: 'no discussion with Party representatives on such a matter should ever have been held'. For discussions with parties and their role, see below, pp. 616 ff. The problem in 1951, as Barnes saw it, was that 'a broad impartiality within each party was as necessary as a broad impartiality between them' (Note to Balkwill, 22 May 1951).

choice of speakers should pass from the BBC to the Parties by means of lists approved by the Whips or any other means'.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes the Governors felt that they had to watch what was being said about the BBC itself in *In the News*. Thus, the Spoken Word Committee decided in December 1950 that if there were to be any discussion of the Beveridge Report the *In the News* team, like the *Any Questions* team, would have to be 'of such a composition that the subject could be fairly dealt with'.<sup>2</sup> The full implications of the simple idea of 'a weekly discussion on that week's news by five people who are concerned in it or with it' were by then fully apparent.<sup>3</sup>

At a time when the BBC's attitudes towards political broadcasting were still very cautious and when they were circumscribed by the political parties, all charges of 'unfairness' were taken very seriously,<sup>4</sup> and there is an ominous sound to a note by Simon in March 1951: 'The PMG was very interested in *In the News* and in the MPs who were used.'<sup>5</sup> Yet in an election year the BBC did not drop the programme and sought only to ensure that when it restarted after a summer break there would be a greater measure of control. 'Importance recognised', ran a note of August 1951, when the new series was being planned, 'of building up a good debater who will appear more often than Foot or Taylor and at the same time of training new speakers to take over when dilution of the original team is made greater in January/March.'<sup>6</sup> Appearances of the 'regulars' were to be rationed from that date, with one appearance in every two programmes for Brown and Boothby and three appearances in every four programmes between them for Foot and Taylor.<sup>7</sup>

Taylor objected strongly both to the policy of 'dilution' and to the attempt by the Parties to 'manipulate' the discussion, and in a dramatic moment during the course of a programme in November 1952 he announced that he would take no further part in it because the other three speakers, one of whom was

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 10 May 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Spoken Word Committee, *Minutes*, 14 Dec. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Mrs. Adams, 26 May 1950; Note of a Meeting, 21 June 1950.

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 639.

<sup>5</sup> \*Simon to Barnes, 1 March 1951.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 30 Aug. 1951. The programme was off the air from 25 May to 30 August.

<sup>7</sup> \*E. Lustgarten to Barnes, 1 Sept. 1951.

James Callaghan, were all talking (about the Rent Restriction Act) in rigid Party terms.<sup>1</sup> As the cameras picked up his protest, he half turned away from the table and from his fellow participants. What Irwin described as 'Taylor's expression of vehement emotion' provoked 254 letters, some criticizing Taylor, some the chairman, and some the other members of the team.<sup>2</sup> 'Let's find more Taylors. They must be there for the seeking—and certainly not in Westminster', urged the *Daily Express*,<sup>3</sup> but Taylor did not figure in the first schedules for 1953 and he refused an invitation to appear in the hundredth programme in April 1953 because Michael Foot was not included in what he had been told would be a return performance by the 'original team'. When he did return in October 1953 Taylor was as forthright as ever, and after remarks he made about Roman Catholics on 30 April 1954 as many as seventy letters of protest (out of two hundred received during the early 1954 sessions) criticized what he said; his views had been attacked at once on the programme by Derek Walker-Smith.<sup>4</sup> Taylor enjoyed his role as a catalyst if not as an irritant.

Viewers who were sounded by Audience Research believed that ministers and ex-ministers were 'more interesting to listen to than back-benchers',<sup>5</sup> and they had mixed feelings both about the 'independents', including Taylor, and about the team's concentration on politics.<sup>6</sup> These reactions were well expressed by Denis Morris, the Head of Midland Regional Programmes, in June 1952: the 'public taste' had gone 'a bit sour', he argued, on programmes like *In the News*, and he went

<sup>1</sup> \*Lustgarten to McGivern, 19 Nov. 1952; McGivern to J. Irwin, 18 Nov. 1952. There is a good account of the incident by Peter Black in the *Daily Mail*, 15 Nov. 1952, and a very critical comment in the same newspaper on 21 November by Collie Knox: 'This is, I pray, the end of *In the News*.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Irwin to Barnes, 15 Nov. 1952. The *Daily Mirror*, 15 Nov. 1952, reports Taylor as saying that '*In the News* should not be used for "party politics"' and Irwin remarking that 'Mr. Taylor was quite within his rights'.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 Dec. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of 1 June 1954; *Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1954. The BBC told viewers to write to Taylor, not to complain to the Corporation, since all contributors to *In the News* were free to express their own opinions.

<sup>5</sup> \*Viewer Research Report, 7 Nov. 1952.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid., 14 Oct. 1953, suggests, as many such reports did, that W. J. Brown was the 'best liked'. He had been very favourably received in the early months of the programme (*Daily Mail*, 11 Nov. 1950) and Boothby was hailed as a 'television natural' (*Daily Sketch*, 14 Nov. 1950).

on to quote a Gloucester listener who had written that 'the absence of politics' in a recent *Town Forum* programme had been 'noted thankfully'.<sup>1</sup> 'Let's have something in *In the News* besides political items,' said a viewer on the Research Panel in October 1953. Yet, although viewers were divided between those who liked 'bite' and those who objected to 'frayed tempers', the reaction index remained favourable until Taylor withdrew. The effect of his withdrawal was to diminish the appreciation index by five points, although the number of viewers remained fairly constant.

The tendency to look for 'big' names and to attach 'labels' certainly had the effect in 1953 and 1954 of greatly increasing the number of senior politicians taking part in television programmes. *In the News*, indeed, was often their initiation into television, for apart from *Press Conference*, introduced in 1952, it was the only regular political programme for viewers with political interests. Many of the names of the participants were names of the future. Grimond and Enoch Powell were newcomers in 1954-5, and Wedgwood Benn and George Wigg were suggested in January 1955, as was Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, 'young, under 30, very good-looking, a first at Oxford . . . a very bright girl'.<sup>2</sup> There had been several signs of strain, however, in the autumn of 1953, when the programme was scheduled each fortnight instead of each week, and a few months earlier when it was apparent that some issues were almost impossible to discuss if 'balance' was to be maintained. One of them was 'commercial' television. In March 1953 Lustgarten telephoned to say that it would be difficult to discuss the topic fairly since three out of the four participants in the programme were strongly in favour of it.<sup>3</sup> Political balance continued to worry Barnes, and before deciding to renew the programmes in the spring of 1954, he insisted that the free-lance editor and producer of what was by now television's main political programme should be directly responsible to Leonard Miall, the new Head of Television Talks. He asked Miall to review both 'audience and appreciation'. 'The Producer', he laid down, 'should be reminded that he is not to consult any

<sup>1</sup> \*Morris to Grisewood, 24 June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Message from Mark Chapman-Walker to Miall, 13 Jan. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of a telephone conversation, 20 March 1953.

speaker at all until the form of the programme has been settled.' Miall reassured him a month later that there would be non-MP chairmen in the projected new series and that the ratio of 'Bevanites' to 'orthodox Labour' participants would be kept at one to four.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the year Lustgarten and Irwin were making plans for a rival political discussion on ITV using most of the original BBC team. Their contracts were not renewed, and Miall himself then edited the programme and selected the speakers; Michael Peacock was the new producer. By then the novelty of *In the News* was over, as was the excitement of the very early days, when careful attention had had to be paid to staging—precise seating, for example, an octagonal table with 'cockfighting chairs', and careful camera placing.<sup>2</sup> Yet 'the reaction index' for 1955 to what critics called 'this ghost of TV argy-bargy' was still slightly higher than for TV Talks Department programmes as a whole.<sup>3</sup> By then Lustgarten had completed his plans for his new programme, *Free Speech*, on ITV.

The most dramatic clash in relation to the presentation of both news and views by the BBC came almost at the end of the period covered in this volume when independent television was on the eve of its launching. In July 1955 the Postmaster-General, Dr. Hill, with the support of leaders of both major parties, issued a regulation—some called it a *Diktat* or ukase—formally preventing the BBC from broadcasting any discussions on issues about to be debated in either House of Parliament for a period of a fortnight before such debates took place.

The so-called 'fourteen-day rule' was not a new one in 1955. It had its origins in the war-time past, and its history as a self-denying ordinance before 1955 will be discussed more fully in

<sup>1</sup> \*Barnes to McGivern, 20 May 1954; Miall to Barnes, 23 June 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*There were strong differences of opinion about a filmed opening sequence, with Barnes and the team agreeing that it was out of place (Barnes to McGivern, 5 Feb. 1951). The Board of Governors provided detailed comments from time to time (Irwin to Barnes, 1 Feb. 1952). At first Marsland Gander found the participants too 'camera conscious' (*Daily Telegraph*, 6 Nov. 1950).

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 7 Jan. 1955. \*D. Hutchinson to Miall, 27 Feb. 1956. In January 1955 Michael Foot and James Callaghan both refused to take part in *In the News* when they were told they could not discuss the railway situation (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 Jan. 1955). No MPs were included in a March programme.

the section of this chapter devoted specifically to politics.<sup>1</sup> What was new in 1955 was the furore. The BBC itself had been involved in the policies leading up to the introduction of the rule and its perpetuation after 1945, but the events, if not the reactions, of 1955 were already forecast early in 1953 when the Governors came to the conclusion that the 'rule', which had hitherto been included in the range of matters settled in discussions between the BBC and the political parties, was 'unnecessarily restrictive and very much criticised'. They asked, therefore, that it be withdrawn 'unless the parties put forward any views which might lead the Governors to modify that proposal'.<sup>2</sup> In effect, the BBC was claiming the right for the first time in its history to decide how to present current issues to the public without external constraint, for as the Governors then put it, 'the matter was the responsibility of the BBC, which had a duty to be impartial, and not of the Parties'.<sup>3</sup>

A protracted struggle began in 1953 which was to continue until 1956. It was conducted during its first stages behind closed doors, for the BBC's discussions with the political parties were not fully reported. The leaders of the main parties claimed and continued to claim that for the BBC to introduce discussion of issues which were then before Parliament would undermine Parliament's independence.<sup>4</sup> In Churchill's phrase, 'it would be shocking to have debates in this House forestalled, time after time, by expressions of opinion by persons who had not the status or responsibility of MPs'.<sup>5</sup> Fully supported by Attlee, Churchill was thus drawing a sharp distinction between what the Press could do and what the BBC could do—justifying the distinction, if pressed, by the argument that the former had 'small coverage and represented conflicting views'. His colleagues in 1953 reiterated firmly that it was the political parties and not the BBC which should decide on such matters and urged Cadogan to 'drop the suggestion'.

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 613–86; \*a full (undated) paper on the history of the subject was prepared by the Secretariat of the BBC, 'The Fortnight Rule', in 1955.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 632 ff.; \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 16 April 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Jacob, 10 April 1953, following a meeting between the BBC and the political parties, 24 March 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Sir Alexander Cadogan to H. F. C. Crookshank and H. Morrison, 22 April 1953; Crookshank to Cadogan, 27 April 1953; Morrison to Cadogan, 8 May 1953.

<sup>5</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 537, col. 1277, 23 Feb. 1955.



This did not end the matter, as it might once have done. The following spring the Governors, increasingly sensitive to public opinion, agreed to tell the two Parties that in future the BBC would not regard the fourteen-day rule as binding; and at a meeting with the Parties the Chairman emphasized that if the rule were to be followed in the future it would have to be embodied in the form of an unambiguously worded directive imposed on the BBC as a clause in its Licence.<sup>1</sup> The imminent advent of commercial television, Cadogan went on, made it essential to have a definite Government statement one way or the other. This was the origin of Dr. Hill's specific regulation in 1955.

Neither Crookshank nor Morrison had changed his opinion when Cadogan asked for a directive, and each of them knew that he had the full support of his leader, Churchill or Attlee, in objecting to the BBC freeing itself from a convention which had become a rule. Members of Parliament, they maintained, would be 'pressurized' as a result of broadcasts during the fourteen-day period, and 'non-representative speakers' might well be chosen by the BBC to discuss issues where Parliament alone had the right to decide.<sup>2</sup> Excluding MPs would certainly not cover this second objection. After 'further thought', therefore, the Government refused to meet Cadogan's request and to embody the fourteen-day rule in the Licence. The most it would do, the Postmaster-General said, would be to issue a statement in Parliament to the effect that the Parties had requested the BBC to continue to observe the rule and that the BBC had agreed.

Not surprisingly, Cadogan and Jacob replied that such a line of action would not save the BBC (on the eve of the introduction of a competitive service) from the criticism that it was submitting to the Parties rather than informing the nation on questions of immediate national concern.<sup>3</sup> The 'timidity' of the

<sup>1</sup> Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 4 March 1954. It was suggested that if there were to be an imposition, the rule should become part of Clause 15(4) of the Licence.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note on a Meeting (by Grisewood), 16 March 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 27 May, 10 June 1954; Note of a Meeting between Cadogan, Jacob and the Postmaster-General, 26 May 1954; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 31 May 1954, where it was reported that the Postmaster-General had said that he would consider changing the fortnight to a week (Cadogan to the Postmaster-General, 11 June 1954).

Corporation, which had been criticized by the Beveridge Committee, would once again be apparent to the world.<sup>1</sup> The BBC had never forgotten the oral questions which the Beveridge Committee (through Lady Megan Lloyd George and Ernest Davies) had put to Haley:

Is it not a fact that all the newspapers in the Kingdom are debating all these political issues while they are live issues? If one of the responsibilities of the BBC—in fact, it is your first duty, is it not?—is to inform the public, is it not absolutely vital that the information should be given when the public is being asked to make up its mind on these vital issues and not afterwards?<sup>2</sup>

Beveridge had not forgotten either. After Hill's regulation had been promulgated in July 1955, he wrote tartly that nothing could justify Parliament stifling discussion of public issues at the moment when such discussion was most important. 'My Committee of eleven differed on many things, including commercial television. But against the fortnight's ban they were unanimous—and they included members of all parties.'<sup>3</sup>

The year 1954 was one of impasse, when Sir Ben Barnett and Jacob were exchanging views about what form a draft notice of prescription might take,<sup>4</sup> and when the exchange became increasingly complicated by their mutual recognition that any new working agreement would have to apply to the Independent Television Authority as well as to the BBC. Yet as the discussions continued into 1955, the Governors continued to reaffirm that they would not be bound in future by 'the closed fortnight rule' unless the Government told the BBC that it had to follow it.<sup>5</sup>

There was one dramatic moment in February 1955 when the issue flared in an *In the News* programme. The chairman, Dingle Foot, protested against a ban on the members of the

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 387; Cmd. 8116, Recommendation 69.

<sup>2</sup> Extract from *Verbatim Report of Evidence*, Fourth and Fifth Meetings, 13 Oct. 1949.

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 19 Aug. 1955, 'This Gag is not Funny'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Barnett sent the first draft matter of a 'prescription' to Jacob on 19 Aug. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 July 1955; Cadogan to Hill, 14 July 1955, informing him that the Governors saw 'no reason why their normal responsibility for conducting political discussion should continue to be subjected to this arbitrary limitation'; BBC Press Release, setting out the sequence of events in 1955, 17 Aug. 1955.

panel discussing the hydrogen bomb because Parliament would be discussing the subject within the next fourteen days. All four members of his panel, all MPs—Hector McNeil, Geoffrey de Freitas, Enoch Powell, and Charles Fletcher-Cooke—said that they agreed with him when he described the rule as a ‘lunatic restriction’. ‘I defy anyone in any Party to say how the dignity of Parliament would be impaired in the slightest degree if we discussed it.’<sup>1</sup> There were many such people in the Conservative and Labour parties, however, for within a few weeks Captain Crookshank was explaining at a private meeting between the BBC and representatives both of Government and Opposition that the preparation of a formal notice by the Postmaster-General was nearly complete. A further meeting took place in July,<sup>2</sup> and when Hill issued his formal directive on 27 July it was clear that it was not his own idea but an instruction from senior ministers backed by Opposition leaders.

Press reaction was almost unanimous. The *News Chronicle* led the way in condemning the Postmaster-General’s ‘arbitrary, illogical, arrogant, unjustified warning’.<sup>3</sup> ‘Surely it is in the public interest’, wrote Cassandra, representatively for once, in the *Daily Mirror*, ‘that our affairs should be discussed as widely as possible?’ The BBC could always supply ‘redoubtable antagonists’ to present opposing points of view and ‘surely’ it was better to have open debate on Sound and Television than to bury debate in *Hansard*?<sup>4</sup>

It was just the ‘surely’, of course, which Churchill criticized in his jealous defence of MPs’ rights against ‘the mass and against the machine’.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as *The Scotsman* put it, ‘there is no

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Herald*, 19 Feb. 1955; \*M. Farquharson, ‘The Fortnight Rule, a Chronological Summary’, 12 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of a Meeting with Hill, 7 July 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 29 July 1955. Support for the ban came from the *Sunday Express*, 21 Aug. 1955, the *Evening Standard*, 16 Sept. 1955, and the *Yorkshire Post*, 6 Sept. 1955. The last of these included an article called ‘Our Statesmen as Political Entertainers’ by H. A. Taylor, and the *Evening Standard* ended a column with the opinion that if MPs did not believe that the House of Commons was the place to air their views they should leave it and join Equity. For a plea for ‘dignified reticence’, see a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 9 Aug. 1955, under the heading ‘Too Free Speech’.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 July 1955. His article was entitled ‘Free Speech in Chains’.

<sup>5</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 537, col. 1882, 1 March 1955. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, 30 July 1955, Jo Grimond stressed that Parliament had not been consulted about the regulation, and condemned the pressure of both the main parties

restriction of this kind on the Press and it seems illogical to refuse the BBC a similar freedom'.<sup>1</sup> 'Freedom of discussion is a valuable part of democracy' and 'if we want an educated democracy, we cannot have too much of it'. Broadcasting was 'the best way of reaching the mass of people who will make no personal effort to inform themselves on political issues'.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC's reluctant capitulation to the imposed rule did not save it from criticism in 1955. 'It is perhaps more dignified', wrote the *Daily Telegraph*, 'to be prevented from doing one's duty by Government order than by a curious pact with two bodies which have no constitutional existence. It is more dignified still to do one's duty.' The same point was made by the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*. 'If the BBC will not fight in its own battles for freedom, then other people must take up arms on its behalf.'<sup>3</sup> All the big four of *In the News* leapt into the fray. A. J. P. Taylor wrote of 'greater issues here than in the case of John Wilkes' and urged Cadogan and Sir Kenneth Clark, the Chairman of the new Independent Television Authority, to proclaim their intention to 'ignore' Hill's directive;<sup>4</sup> Boothby, as 'Knight Errant', said that he himself would 'flagrantly violate' the rule as soon as possible on the air, a rule which 'if it were not so ludicrous would be one of the most formidable menaces to freedom which our democracy has had to face in this century';<sup>5</sup> and Michael Foot, in *Tribune*, urged Jacob to follow Boothby's lead. 'Break this law, Sir Ian,' he thundered, going on to suggest that, if need be, Jacob should be willing to be 'despatched to the Tower'.<sup>6</sup>

What none of these critics knew about, however, was the difficult and at times acrimonious series of exchanges in August and September between the BBC and the Postmaster-General,

<sup>1</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 July 1955. Cf. *Daily Telegraph*, 29 July 1955, 'Are the BBC and the ITA alone to be muzzled?'; *The Spectator*, 5 Aug. 1955, 'The Government's Gag'; *Truth*, 5 Aug. 1955, 'We shall fight them on the Beaches.'

<sup>2</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 July 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 29 July 1955; *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 5 Aug. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *New Statesman*, 27 Aug. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> See his letter, *ibid.*, 13 Aug. 1955.

<sup>6</sup> *Tribune*, 5 Aug. 1955.

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to coalesce against 'any independent thought'. The then leader of the Liberal Party, Clement Davies, supported the ban at first but changed his mind later (*The Times*, 16 Sept. 1955). For other Liberal attacks, see *Manchester Guardian*, 7, 8 Sept. 1955.

exchanges which covered topics even more fundamental than the fourteen-day rule. The BBC pressed Hill in vain to explain the reasons for the ban to the public in a broadcast talk or interview,<sup>1</sup> encouraged a frank discussion of the issues in *In the News*, the kind of programme which irritated both Churchill and Attlee, and on 17 August included in both Sound and Television News Bulletins a statement explaining the BBC's own objections to the rule. The statement ended with the sentence, 'The BBC's view continues to be that the responsibility of the Corporation for broadcasting should be complete at all times.'<sup>2</sup>

It was this last action which provoked Hill into writing to Cadogan that his immediate impression was that the BBC was breaking rules in broadcasting its opinion on a matter of current affairs or public policy.<sup>3</sup> It was editorializing, and what was now disturbing, in his view, was not the political but 'the legal aspect' of the problem. Inside the BBC, Arthur Barker, the Deputy Editor, News, retaliated by suggesting that Hill's inquiry itself called into question 'what has been regarded as the right and duty of News Division to exercise a completely independent judgment in its selection of news for inclusion in the Bulletins. . . . News Division has always applied to the news about the BBC, including statements issued by the BBC,' he went on, 'the same standards of news value as to news of any other public body of commensurate importance in the life of the nation.'<sup>4</sup> Hill stuck to his line. 'It is not suggested that the BBC should be precluded in any way from giving their views on a subject quite freely to the Press. But the fact that on any particular occasion the Corporation's *views* on current affairs

<sup>1</sup> \*Jacob to Hill, 12 Aug. 1955; Hill to Jacob, 18 Aug. 1955: 'The subject seems to me to be one in which the point of view of members of all parties can most appropriately be put to Parliament when it reassembles.' It would be unfortunate if a BBC discussion were to encroach 'upon the position of Parliament as the supreme forum for the discussion of "public issues"'.  
<sup>2</sup> \*News Bulletin, 17 Aug. 1955.  
<sup>3</sup> \*Hill to Cadogan, 18 Aug. 1955.  
<sup>4</sup> \*A. E. Barker to Bottomley, 19 Aug. 1955. He gave examples of five such BBC statements which had been reported in News Bulletins—11 Oct. 1950, a statement by Simon on the banning of a repeat performance of *Party Manners*; 16 July 1951, a statement by the Governors on the Beveridge Report; 13 and 19 Feb. 1953, statements on negotiations with Mrs. Topham; and 23 June 1953, a statement by Jacob on the BBC's Ten Year Plan and the need to retain all licence money.

have been handed out to the Press does not justify the Corporation repeating them by broadcast.<sup>1</sup>

A meeting between Hill, Cadogan, and Jacob took place on 13 October, when Jacob 'made it clear that the News Service must retain the freedom to report impartially the news of the day';<sup>2</sup> but after much coming and going behind the scenes the *Any Questions* team was told in December 1955 not to discuss the autumn Budget, a subject which in previous years had not been subject to restraint. Boothby, who was taking part in the programme, openly and explicitly defied the rule and gave his views on the Budget in answer to a quite different question. It is said that he was afterwards thanked personally by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what he had said in *Any Questions*, if not about the iniquities of the rule at least about the virtues of the Budget.<sup>3</sup>

A Parliamentary debate on the subject took place at the end of November 1955, some weeks after the end of the period covered in this volume. It was a confused debate during which many MPs, including Attlee, accused the BBC of selecting people for broadcasting 'for their entertainment value'; and after the House had shown that a sizeable majority continued to favour limitation on broadcasting, a Select Committee was set up. This in turn was to be followed in 1956 by the revocation of the directive by the Postmaster-General.<sup>4</sup> By then, however, the BBC was no longer alone in dealing with the Postmaster-General, with the leaders of the political parties, and with 'jealous' MPs. With an ITA in existence as well as the BBC, there were to be new and more daring approaches both to the News and to political broadcasting in general.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hill to Cadogan, 5 Sept. 1955, replying to a letter from Cadogan, 22 Aug. 1955. Hill referred to a Memorandum of 28 May 1953 stating that the BBC must 'refrain at all times from sending any broadcast matter' and from expressing BBC views on current affairs or matters of public policy. The National Council for Civil Liberties congratulated the BBC on issuing the statement.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 13 Oct. 1955; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 13 Oct. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Undated Note on *Any Questions*.

<sup>4</sup> For the later history, see *BBC Handbook*, 1960, p. 162.

<sup>5</sup> On 17 Aug. 1955 Sir Kenneth Clark, Chairman of the Independent Television Authority, called on Cadogan to consider joint action. This was not then ruled out, and on 14 September both Jacob and Sir Robert Fraser, the Director-General of the ITA, met representatives of the political parties, including the Liberals. The Board of the BBC discussed the matter on 15 September 1955. Meanwhile, Associated-Rediffusion, one of the new commercial companies, said that it would

For other perspectives on the dramatic events of 1955, it is necessary to turn back to the whole evolution of political broadcasting during the previous ten years. What were the restraints on the BBC? How many of them were self-imposed? How did the position in 1955 compare with that in 1945 when, with Hitler's Reich in ruins, almost every politician argued that it was essential to preserve the independence of the BBC?

## 2. Politics

THE period from 1945 to 1955 began and ended with a general election. Both elections—the first exciting, the second ‘perhaps a humdrum affair’<sup>1</sup>—have been intensively studied, and in each case due attention has been paid to the role of the BBC by psephologists, as they came to call themselves after 1945.<sup>2</sup> Less attention has been paid, however, either by historians or political scientists, to politics during the periods between elections, when there was often sharp political confrontation both at Westminster and in the country. It was then that the switch from local politics, still often of an early twentieth-century variety, to national politics, influenced by a national communications system, was becoming increasingly apparent. Nor was it only at election times—1945, 1950, 1951, and 1955—that the electorate was faced with urgent issues of short-term national importance. Throughout the ten years after 1945, the word ‘crisis’ was used more often by politicians and journalists than ever before in British history.

Political feelings certainly could run high between elections.

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1955, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See R. B. McCallum and A. Readman, *The British General Election of 1945* (1947); H. G. Nicholas, *The British General Election of 1950* (1951); and D. Butler, *The British General Election of 1951* (1951) and *The British General Election of 1955* (1955).

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make the rule a mockery (*Manchester Guardian*, 19 Aug. 1955) and Aidan Crawley, the Editor-in-Chief of Independent Television News, stated publicly that Government and Opposition were ‘asserting a right to control of freedom of speech which has never been tolerated in this country since the days of the Stuarts’ (*Evening News*, 3 Aug. 1955).

Thus, a political survey carried out in July 1949 showed that substantial proportions of non-Conservative supporters believed that a Conservative victory at the next election would lead to serious labour disputes, mass unemployment, and the dismantlement of the recently constituted 'welfare state', while substantial proportions of Conservative supporters believed that a further Labour victory would lead to widespread nationalization, class-orientated legislation, and the neglect of the national economic interest. One-third of all Conservatives asserted that in its four years of power the Labour Government had done nothing which was worthy of approval.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, however, Winston Churchill, who, largely through his broadcasts, had been at the storm centre of the controversial election of 1945, was saying in a broadcast very different from the kind he had delivered then that 'the differences between parties in this island are not as great as the foreigner might think by listening to our abuse of one another. There are underlying unities . . . far greater than our differences.'<sup>2</sup>

Although issues like labour disputes, the maintenance of full employment, the making of the 'welfare state' and housing dominated the local and national politics of the time—through conflict or consensus—it is clear in retrospect, as it was to some politically sensitive people at the time, that changes in Britain's international role were just as significant, if not more significant, than any of these issues. Relations with Europe, the loss of overseas empire, partnership with the United States in a period of what was felt increasingly, particularly by the Americans, to be 'cold war'—all these were aspects of politics which required careful analysis before there could be any effective sense of electoral choice.<sup>3</sup>

Yet there were too few radio analysts of either national or international politics. Haley himself proposed in 1944 that that there should be 'a regular series of Talks on Foreign Affairs by a panel of speakers to start as soon as hostilities in Europe ceased',<sup>4</sup> but it was an ominous sign at the very beginning of the post-war period, when future links with

<sup>1</sup> M. Abrams, 'Social Trends and Educational Behaviour' in the *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. xiii (1962).

<sup>2</sup> \*Churchill broadcast of 22 Dec. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note on a Paper by G. Barnes, 'Broadcasting and Parliament', 15 June 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 Sept. 1944.



Europe were being discussed, that J. B. Clark had to tell Haley that 'it may be difficult for us to find from the relevant parties European-minded politicians who would be acceptable as Party spokesmen'.<sup>1</sup>

The BBC always made much of its 'educational' role in a democracy and of its responsibilities in 'public service broadcasting'.<sup>2</sup> In home affairs it held that it should set out 'impartially, objectively, with the most rigid standards of accuracy to ensure that the idea of the British nation as an informed democracy shall be not merely an ideal but a reality',<sup>3</sup> and in foreign affairs that it should 'provide the public with a service of information . . . so that the public should take an enlightened interest in, and form a balanced view of, current world events'.<sup>4</sup> Yet it was never anxious between 1945 and 1955 to get deeply entangled in daily politics as presenter of news or as organizer of a forum of argument, and although (with the Churchill of the 1930s in mind) it reserved the right in 1947 'to invite to the microphone a member of either House of outstanding national eminence who may have become detached from any party', it never invited Aneurin Bevan after his estrangement from the Labour Party's leadership in 1951.

It restricted its role to a limited number of programmes, among them *Any Questions* in Sound and *Foreign Correspondent*, *Press Conference*, *In the News* (and *Panorama*) in Television. News and current affairs were carefully separated, as we have seen, and no use was made of 'star commentators', like H. V. Kaltenborn or Eric Sevareid in the United States. Very quickly after the end of the war it got into difficulties about a controversial talk by a broadcasting star in the making, A. J. P. Taylor, a talk which was discussed at Board level;<sup>5</sup> and at the end of the period, as we have also seen, it was still in difficulties with Taylor about television. The one Governor who wished during the immediate post-war months to extend the BBC's range of

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Clark to Haley, 8 March 1945; Mann to Haley, 1 Jan. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> See F. Williams, 'Public Service Broadcasting' in the *BBC Year Book, 1949*, pp. 10-15. Williams, then a Governor of the BBC, had been Adviser on Public Relations to Attlee between 1945 and 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117 (1951); BBC Memorandum, 'General Survey of the Broadcasting Service', p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 Sept. 1944.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1945. The talk, 'Russia's Return as a Great Power', was printed in *The Listener*, 27 Sept. 1945.

news services—Arthur Mann, ex-editor of the *Yorkshire Post*—was always in a minority of one. Even at the height of the war, Haley told him, long news bulletins had been unpopular. ‘In clubs, in hotels, in homes, it was common to see people drifting away after the first few minutes.’<sup>1</sup> Why should they want long news bulletins now?

Before Mann could press to its conclusion his case that all the post-war evidence pointed to ‘a growing public interest in what is happening of importance at home and abroad’<sup>2</sup> and that ‘compared to Newspapers, Radio . . . can become a more, not less, elastic medium for the dissemination of news, etc.’,<sup>3</sup> he had ceased to be a Governor. And he had not helped his case by the fact that he had failed to attend Board meetings to put it clearly. Three years later, when the BBC’s evidence for the Beveridge Committee was being prepared, News was tucked away quietly under ‘other broadcasts’, and no separate memorandum on the subject—or on current affairs broadcasts in general—was submitted to the Committee.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the whole post-war decade, indeed, the atmosphere in broadcasting often seemed ‘rarefied’ both to journalists and to some at least of the politicians,<sup>5</sup> and the fear of generating controversy remained strong. The story of *In the News* by itself has brought out all these points.

Because political broadcasting was severely circumscribed between 1945 and 1955, it was not—and still is not—possible, therefore, directly to relate movements of public opinion, social trends, or electoral behaviour to the influence of the broadcasting media. Election broadcasts by party leaders were widely listened to and widely commented upon, but decisions about the content of the messages transmitted—and their number, range and distribution—were entirely a matter for the party leaders and managers. In effect, the BBC was lending the use of its transmitters and studios to the Parties; it was not considering itself a free agent.<sup>6</sup> It could even be argued that there had actually been a ‘regression’ since before the war. ‘The war-time

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 17 Jan. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 4 March 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Mann to Powell, 13 Feb. 1946. ‘To be charged with dullness’, he added, ‘tries my temper when I hear so much on the Home Programme that is dull and pretentious.’

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116 (1951), para. 37, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *The Scotsman*, 6 March 1947.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, loc. cit., p. 11.

habits of authority on the side of the Government and of subordination on the side of the BBC have been transmitted as acquired characteristics to their peace-time descendants, and though they may, perhaps, lie below the level of consciousness in those who act for the Government and the BBC, they are, in fact, nevertheless present and they influence action.<sup>1</sup>

John Coatman, the author of this statement, did not do justice to the desire of many of his senior colleagues during the war to get rid of any sense of 'subordination'. Indeed, it was through fear of broadcasting being used for propaganda purposes that some people inside the BBC wished to eschew domestic politics in the post-war world as much as possible. 'The question of the BBC being regarded as a mouthpiece of the government,' Maurice Farquharson wrote in 1944, 'will be of first-rank importance' after the war and there should be changes in the Charter to safeguard the BBC's independence.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the BBC's Director of the Legal Department, R. Jardine Brown, was insisting that 'the importance of the Corporation being free from the control of any one political party cannot be over-estimated'.<sup>3</sup> This feeling persisted during the post-war years and encouraged the BBC to arrange political programmes whenever possible through all three main Parties in agreement. It always meant agreement to regulate and restrict rather than to stimulate or to extend, and it certainly did not make for exciting political broadcasting.

A comprehensive BBC paper, 'Political Broadcasts at General Election time', prepared in October 1942, set the terms of inter-party agreement. After touching briefly on the general elections of 1924 and 1929, it dealt in detail with the arrangements made in 1935 between Captain Margesson, then the National Government's Chief Whip, the leaders of the Opposition parties, and the Deputy Director-General of the BBC. It mentioned Clement Attlee's doubts about Party ratios in 1935, when the quota of election broadcasts was being allocated; Lloyd George's pleas for special treatment for himself and his small group of independent Liberals; the complaints of what were called

<sup>1</sup> J. Coatman, 'The BBC, Government and Politics' in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Summer 1951, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> \*Farquharson to Ashbridge, 16 Feb. 1944.

<sup>3</sup> \*R. Jardine Brown, 'Comments on Joint D.G.s' Notes on Post-War Position', 5 April 1943.

'splinter groups' (the Communists were sometimes described misleadingly in this way); and Reith's dictum that the BBC could only 'give microphone facilities to defined political parties', the basic precept in all pre-war and most post-war broadcasting.

Coatman was wrong, therefore, in attributing political broadcasting restrictions entirely to the war. In 1935 and earlier the news agencies and the Newspaper Proprietors' Association had been additional restraining influences on the BBC's freedom of action, almost as strong as the political parties, and it was with Press interest in mind that the idea had been turned down in 1935 of arranging 'running commentaries' or 'typical scenes . . . with noises' when the results of a future election were announced.<sup>1</sup>

The Ullswater Committee had recommended in 1936 that during the general election campaign, the time available for political speakers should be allotted by agreement between the parties and that all political broadcasting should cease three days before the poll.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was not until the last pre-war winter in 1938-9 that the Parties actually reached agreement on their claims. In all, they suggested, twelve broadcasts should be set aside for party spokesmen—five from the Government side, five from the Labour Party, and two from the Liberal Opposition. No other talks of a political nature or with political implications were to be given during the whole election period, and outgoing Government speakers were to have the first and the last word. The claims of minority parties were to be considered only after nomination day, when parties with more than twenty candidates might be allowed short periods of broadcasting time during 'less important hours'. Three clear days would have to elapse between the last broadcast and polling day, Sunday not being counted as a day.<sup>3</sup>

The BBC paper of October 1942 reiterated the point that 'the allocation of the times available and the establishment of the

<sup>1</sup> \*'Political Broadcasts at General Election Times', Oct. 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 5091 (1936), *Report of the Broadcasting Committee*, paras. 93-4.

<sup>3</sup> \*F. W. Ogilvie to D. Margesson, 27 Jan. 1939; Margesson to Ogilvie, 3 Feb. 1939; Ogilvie to Sir Archibald Sinclair and C. R. Attlee, 3 Feb. 1939; Ogilvie to Margesson, 3 Feb. 1939; Attlee to Ogilvie, 6 Feb. 1939; Sinclair to Ogilvie, 15 Feb. 1939; Ogilvie to Sinclair, 16 Feb. 1939; Ogilvie to Margesson, 17 April 1939. Attlee and Greenwood had approached the BBC in 1938 to discuss election arrangements outside the 'rush and hurry' of a dissolution period.

rota of speakers' should be a matter of arrangement between the main political parties and not an affair of the Corporation.' With war-time experiences in mind, however—the election to Parliament of a number of independent MPs at by-elections—it was recognized that 'an appreciable number of Members no longer respond to Party Whips', and it was felt also that more 'independents' might stand at the next general election. The paper also acknowledged without qualification the importance of broadcasting as a factor at election times, as most informed opinion did, throughout the ten years between 1935 and 1945. A newspaper report of 1935 was quoted which claimed that the 'wireless is unquestionably the most important factor in the elections',<sup>1</sup> even if the inference that 'the whole country' was thereby being brought 'more together' was thought to have been going 'a little far'. Attlee was quoted also: he had talked in 1938 of the 'very potent influence' of broadcasting on the minds of the electorate.<sup>2</sup> Finally the pre-war *Manchester Guardian*: broadcasting was identifying the emergence of 'an electorate which listens to all sides'.<sup>3</sup>

There was intermittent argument throughout the war about 'controversial' broadcasting between elections, with Churchill, in particular, always questioning the need for it in war-time.<sup>4</sup> It was Churchill, nonetheless, who stated in October 1944, a few months after the BBC's Governors had decided to encourage radio discussion of controversial issues, that in the event of an election 'every facility, possible and practicable . . . should be given . . . to the troops to understand what are the issues for which the opposing candidates stand'.<sup>5</sup> Three months later, when the Labour Party was hurriedly endorsing most of its future candidates and preparing to set up a party election campaign committee, Haley raised the whole question of the relationship between pre-election political broadcasting and broadcasting during the election campaign itself, asking what, 'if anything', the BBC should do between then and the 'close period' (which

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Referee*, 17 Nov. 1935.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of Interview between Attlee, Greenwood, Ogilvie and Graves, 31 Dec. 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Nov. 1935.

<sup>4</sup> For Churchill's attitude to controversial broadcasting in war-time, see A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 701 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 403, col. 742, 3 Oct. 1944.

he took for granted) preceding polling day. Should it not provide opportunities for listeners to hear 'what the main political parties stood for' and their attitude to the topics likely to be issues at the election?<sup>1</sup>

There were several signs at this time that the different political parties were watching the BBC's activities very warily, and Harold Nicolson warned his fellow Governors in January 1945 that 'an organized protest' was imminent. (Nicolson, who was not always a reliable judge, was at this time citing Guy Burgess as 'the ideal parliamentary correspondent' and asking why he had been snatched away from the BBC by the Foreign Office.)<sup>2</sup> During the same month the Chairman received a Labour Party deputation, when the main topic on the agenda was the 'reporting of Labour speakers and important meetings arranged by the Party'. This time there was no protest, and after the meeting 'gratification' was expressed by the Administrative Committee of the Labour Party 'at the manner in which the BBC had dealt with the deputation's points'.<sup>3</sup>

The Governors decided to defer discussion of the basic election issue until later in February 1945, when in order to speed up progress Lady Violet Bonham Carter, well known as a Liberal politician, proposed a motion, which was seconded by Nicolson, that between then and the 'close period' the BBC should 'enlighten the listeners' on the attitude of the 'main political Parties' to questions which were likely to be issues at the election.<sup>4</sup> 'I am not suggesting', Lady Violet told her fellow Governors, 'that we should engage on behalf of all, or any, of the political parties in a "raging, tearing propaganda" nor that we should attempt, directly or vicariously, to exhort or to persuade.' What was needed rather, she felt, was 'a cool, factual, objective statement defining the policies of the various parties'. The BBC was in 'a unique position to provide this opportunity of enlightenment to the electorate' and would be 'failing in its

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 8 Feb. 1945; Programme Policy Meeting, *Minutes*, 19 June 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1945; Nicolson to Powell, 26 Jan. 1945. Yet Barnes claimed that Burgess was admitted into the Foreign Office on Nicolson's recommendation.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1945. Powell to Nicolson, 31 Jan. 1945, sets out details of the meeting and the satisfaction of the delegates.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 22 Feb. 1945.

duty if through timidity, or any other inhibition, it refrains from doing so'.

Not all the Governors responded to this clarion call, which was never to be repeated inside the Board until after the period covered in this volume; and when the matter was debated in the Board, Sir Ian Fraser, who, like Nicolson, was a Member of Parliament, proposed an amendment emphasizing the need to concentrate on increasing the number and length of 'reports of Parliamentary debates' and to initiate 'discussions with the parties, with a view to arranging organized programmes of party statements for broadcasting after the German War is concluded'.

A spirited debate followed, during the course of which Lady Violet agreed to delete the word 'main' before 'political parties' and Sir Ian agreed to delete the word 'increasing' before 'reports of Parliamentary debates'. The amendment, supported by Powell and C. H. G. Millis, the Vice-Chairman, was carried by four votes to two, with J. J. Mallon abstaining, but eventually the Governors settled for a cautious Mallon motion stating simply that 'the Director-General be authorized to initiate forthwith discussions with the parties, with a view to arranging organized programmes of party statements for broadcasting after the German War is concluded'.

These talks took place at a time when no one knew when the war against Germany would end and when it seemed likely that the war with Japan would continue for some years. Meanwhile, however, the draft Home Talks Schedule for April to June 1945 included as 'topics under consideration' a debate between Beveridge and a Labour Party spokesman on 'Can we get full employment without Socialism?' and discussions on the topics 'Do pensions stifle enterprise?' 'Does a planned society kill efficiency?' and 'Should we go short to feed Europe?' There was also to be a Friday discussion on international relations by the 'What to do with Germany team'—Lord Vansittart, A. J. P. Taylor, Kingsley Martin, and Barbara Ward. Some of these discussions were obviously intended to move well outside party grooves.

Long before the general election of 1945 there had been protracted discussion also about the position of 'splinter parties', including the ILP as well as the Communists and the Welsh

and Scottish Nationalists.<sup>1</sup> To the BBC, at least, 'the precedents were detailed and definite'.<sup>2</sup> The main political parties were consulted in March, and a round-table conference took place on 13 April to discuss pre-election campaign broadcasts. During these last months of the war the BBC restricted its role to that of a broker; and the idea of educating the public by putting a list of issues ('twelve points') to the different parties for their answers (the BBC went so far as to produce the list) had to be abandoned, even though Haley had specifically recognized that the BBC itself must steer clear of politics and that 'the only people who could define the position of the parties were the parties themselves'.<sup>3</sup> The very limited role of the BBC in post-war politics was thus being determined before the war ended.

Churchill announced the imminent dissolution of Parliament on 23 May 1945, and during the close period the content of all programmes broadcast was rigorously controlled, as it was to be at later general elections.<sup>4</sup> The keynote was set in a note on *Radio Newsreel* when it was stressed that it had 'a particularly difficult problem' and that it was 'important that it should not become a sort of forum for political discussion'.<sup>5</sup> Norman Collins was to call the close period 'a fallow period when political jokes were taboo',<sup>6</sup> and political references in sermons were forbidden also. Thus, the well-known religious broadcaster, Canon F. A. Cockin, later Bishop of Bristol and Chairman of the Central

<sup>1</sup> \*Unsigned Note of 10 Jan. 1945; Memorandum by R. A. Rendall, 9 Feb. 1945, with appended note by Haley.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of a Telephone Conversation between Sir Richard Maconachie and Alan Hodge, Bracken's Secretary at the Ministry of Information, 15 March 1945. The Executive Board of the Ministry had discussed the matter of election broadcasts on 7 March 1945. Ashbridge represented the BBC and Admiral Carpendale was among those present. Programme Policy Meeting, *Minutes*, 27 Feb. 1945; Ralph Assheton to Haley, 28 March 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*The idea of a list of questions was first set out on paper in an unsigned note of 10 Jan. 1945, long before talk of an imminent general election had crystallized. It was pursued in Programme Policy Meetings and at the meeting with the political parties on 13 April. There was a full note on the proposal, 16 April 1945, which stated explicitly that the BBC's responsibility would begin and end with 'the provision of the technical facilities and in offering professional advice'. The rejection of the idea was noted in the *Evening Standard*, 23 May 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*The matter had been discussed at the Programme Policy Meeting (*Minutes*, 10 April 1945), when the Director-General strongly advocated the idea of the 'close period' lasting for 38 days.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Bernard Moore, 24 May 1945.

<sup>6</sup> \*Collins to J. B. Clark, 23 May 1945.



Religious Advisory Committee, had to be careful about a sermon of his in which he spoke of 'the Christian obligation to vote', and his text was very carefully scrutinized.<sup>1</sup>

Given such a policy, such obviously controversial subjects as nationalization, 'the pros and cons of a referendum', and 'the meaning of *laissez faire*, etc.' all had to be set firmly on one side,<sup>2</sup> but Haley made it clear also that care would have to be taken 'with the lightest of entertainment programmes'. This was because a 'Variety crack' at one of the parties—particularly if it was a good crack—might become quite 'a valuable asset' to the others. Listeners might be 'influenced'. 'Whatever we do, we may, of course, expect plenty of criticism,' Haley went on, adding a little too complacently, 'and this need not worry us.'<sup>3</sup>

Election plans had figured regularly on the Governors' agenda in April and May 1945 as preparations went ahead for twenty-four party political broadcasts. It was Sir Ian Fraser who proposed on 31 May that since these broadcasts were to be arranged directly by the political parties themselves—and with full responsibility both for their contents and their presentation—'Governors should be at liberty to accept invitations to participate in these broadcasts if approached by the parties to do so'. The Governors agreed, and Lady Violet was subsequently invited to be one of the Liberal Party speakers. They added, however, that this dispensation should not apply to the BBC's own staff. In fact, a number of well-known BBC personalities stood for Parliament at the election, including Noel Newsome, the vigorous war-time Director of European Broadcasts, and when Lady Violet decided to stand herself, she resigned from her Governorship. Her absence from the Board was not protracted. Like Newsome, she did not win a seat for the Liberals, and she was immediately reappointed a Governor after the Labour victory in June 1945. She therefore missed only one Governors' meeting.

It was the BBC, not the political parties, which sent a stock letter to each speaker (except to the Prime Minister) reminding him or her of the duration of the broadcast, requesting an exact copy of the script, asking him or her to relieve the BBC of the

<sup>1</sup> \*Welch to Wellington, 15 June 1945, with Note by Wellington.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to J. B. Clark, 23 May 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Haley, 23 May 1945.

responsibility for compliance with security regulations, and explaining the necessity to remain on BBC premises until reports of a successful recording had been received. Careful instructions were also issued that no BBC assistance should be given in the preparation, production, or delivery of the electioneering speeches except for one run-through in each case.<sup>1</sup> Thus, when Lord Woolton, already an experienced broadcaster, sensibly asked for assistance in production, his request was quickly turned down. There were difficulties of a different kind with some of the other speakers. Most of the Conservatives wished to be described as 'National' rather than 'Conservative', and Anthony Eden, who was ill and broadcast from his house in Chichester, went further and refused to be described either as a 'Conservative' or 'National': inconsistently, therefore, since there was no House of Commons then in existence, he was introduced at his own suggestion as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the House of Commons. On the Labour side, A. V. Alexander, the ex-First Lord of the Admiralty, wanted to be called 'Labour and Co-operative', and only after reference to Morgan Phillips, the secretary of the Labour Party, agreed to drop the adjective 'Co-operative'; while Lord Samuel sought in vain to be called not only 'Leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Lords', but 'formerly Leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons'.<sup>2</sup>

There had been greater difficulties in dealing with the smaller parties, including the Co-operative Party. The party agreement was vigorously enforced that a 'minority party' was 'entitled' to have an electioneering broadcast only if it had at least twenty candidates in the constituencies.<sup>3</sup> By the terms of this agreement the Communist Party and the Commonwealth Party were both granted ten-minute speeches after the six o'clock news.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*The arrangements are well described in a paper by Maconachie dated 25 July 1945 and summing up what had happened; cf. Note of Meeting of 1 June 1945. 'There is to be no "production" and Talks are having nothing to do with the speakers.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Paper by Maconachie, 25 July 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of Meeting between Haley and Wellington, 31 May 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Press Release, 25 May 1945. The speakers were Harry Pollitt and Sir Richard Acland. C. J. Jones, the Communist candidate for Hornsey, asked for the loan of Pollitt's speech in order to make and distribute copies. Approval was granted. A thousand copies of Sir John Anderson's broadcast were printed for election purposes.

Amongst the critics of the inter-party agreement the *Daily Mirror* was prominent. 'What is freedom of speech?' it asked in June 1945 in an article headed 'Radio Soap Box'. 'It used to mean the privilege of holding forth on a soap box at the corner of the street. Today, and specially at election time, there is not complete freedom of speech unless all parties are allowed to go "on the air". . . . Why not let them all have their say, and so give freedom of speech all round?'<sup>1</sup>

The general election of 1945 was to wipe out minorities and bring to power, to the surprise of many people at home and overseas, a Labour Government with a huge majority which set the framework of politics during the first post-war years. Yet the *BBC Year Book* dealing with 1945 commented simply that 'in June came the Election period, when the BBC put into operation the arrangements made in previous years, which guide its procedure at elections'.<sup>2</sup> The drama was left out, for despite the limitations inherited from the past, sound broadcasts were generally felt to be a main factor in political communication during the general election of 1945, the first for ten years. Indeed, R. B. McCallum, the Oxford don who coined the term 'psephology', and Alison Readman, in their study of the election, the first in a line of Nuffield College election studies, went so far as to attribute the new mood of the election largely to the existence of broadcasting:

The chief explanation for the quietness of the election and the comparatively thin attendance at meetings was undoubtedly the influence of the broadcasts. They were listened to by a surprisingly large part of the population. . . . This is a complete answer to the question why attendance at meetings tended to be small since it gives an alibi to one out of every two adult members of the population. . . . Where the greater part of the electors are dispersed and segregated in their own homes beside their wirelesses, there is a minimal scope for 'incident'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 June 1945. Cf. a provincial newspaper, the *Blackpool Gazette and Herald*, 16 June 1945, for a diametrically opposed point of view: 'This type of radio electioneering is detrimental to us as a nation. . . . The dignity of British broadcasting is also challenged. Better that it should retain that high moral tone and stand sublimely aloof from Party strife, instead of pouring out a babel of voices which must definitely disturb, harrow and frustrate the sanctity of many peaceful homes.'

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1946, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> McCallum and Readman, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

Significantly McCallum and Readman went beyond attribution and explanation to the beginnings of a kind of analysis. Long before political commentators began to focus their attention on the influence of television on electoral behaviour, McCallum and Readman, speaking solely of sound broadcasting, argued that while it roused 'the element of mass emotion, which is always liable to arise and sweep through large concentrations of people', at the same time it increased the sense of non-involvement. 'The role of the elector becomes more passive. If the broadcast speech supplements the local meeting to any large extent, much that is picturesque and more that is valuable will pass out of British politics, in particular, in that sense of constituency which is the foundation of the British representative system of Parliamentary government.'<sup>1</sup>

There had been and were to be many influences other than broadcasting which diminished the sense of constituency during and after 1945. Yet it is remarkable how much attention was paid to radio and its national influence in 1945 itself. The editor of *The Times*, R. M. Barrington-Ward, wished that 'he had tackled Winston before his first broadcast' to warn him of its dangers; he wondered, too, what Stanley Baldwin would have made of it.<sup>2</sup> Later Churchill himself believed that his broadcasts might have been in the wrong key and even that the election result might have been different had he 'done' them differently.<sup>3</sup> There were other surprises too. Governor or not, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, according to one listener, 'provided the best example of good matter ruined by an inept

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102. Election 'quietness' had been attributed to broadcasting in 1935: see *The Times*, 12 Nov. 1935. *The Observer* took up the same theme in 1945 (17 June), and a letter written to the *Essex County Standard*, 29 June, asked 'Is local campaigning doomed?'

<sup>2</sup> Diary, 11 July 1945 (\*H. Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters* (1974), p. 649).

<sup>3</sup> Churchill to Barrington-Ward, quoted in D. McLachlan, *In the Chair* (1971), p. 209. Churchill was the only speaker to ask the BBC to confirm that he had used particular words in a 'contentious passage' on 30 June. A message subsequently arrived in Broadcasting House from Downing Street, and the telediphone record was checked (\*Note by Maconachie, 25 July 1945). There was one Labour protest. Herbert Morrison complained to Sir Allan Powell in a letter of 4 June that 'in news stories of hitherto secret matters connected with the war, Ministers (including the Prime Minister), but not former Labour Ministers, are being featured'. Powell replied on 7 June that 'we would not think of discriminating against any Minister. You will be interested to know that we had precisely the same criticism as you make on this particular point from the other side.'

radio personality'.<sup>1</sup> For *Picture Post* this was 'the BBC election'—and the B, B and C did not stand for Bracken, Beaverbrook and Churchill.<sup>2</sup>

In the words of Sir Richard Maconachie, who as Controller (Home) had had much to do with the BBC's election arrangements, listening to the electioneering broadcasts had been 'surprisingly keen' throughout. The broadcasting tactics of the Labour and Conservative parties had been different, with the former choosing its speakers first, running a team of ten and spreading their time as widely as possible among them, and with the latter relying—as they did in their other propaganda—mainly on Churchill himself, who spoke four times.<sup>3</sup> The average audience for the broadcasts (ten of which, at Churchill's insistence, ran for thirty minutes) was 44.8 per cent,<sup>4</sup> and although Churchill's average was 49 per cent, his star appeal certainly did him no good at the polls. Analysts of the Labour victory supported Barrington-Ward's view that his broadcasts had backfired, like Lord Beaverbrook's campaign on his behalf in the Press. The nation, they argued, was in 'a rather serious mood' and liked neither what Churchill was saying nor the way that he said it. Only his last broadcast on 30 June seemed to strike the right note, and this was listened to by the smallest share of the audience which he attracted in the series—46.1 per cent. His highest was 59.2 per cent, and the only other speaker who passed the 50 per cent mark was Lord Woolton. The Labour peak was 48.3 per cent for Ernest Bevin. William Beveridge, for the Liberals, was the only speaker who seriously overran his allotted time—by over two minutes—and his audience rating was 45.6 per cent.

Great attention was paid from the start to ensuring that the electioneering broadcasts reached British troops still scattered throughout the world.<sup>5</sup> Every broadcast recorded on the Home

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin and Scots Pictorial*, 2 July 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Picture Post*, 7 July 1945.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Richard Maconachie, 'Notes on the General Election of 1945', 25 July 1945.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* The BBC had wanted a time limit of twenty minutes. This had been agreed upon in 1939 (Haley to Assheton, 30 May 1945), and even twenty minutes was thought to be too long for troops listening in canteens (Note by Rendall, 3 Aug. 1945). Churchill himself pressed for the thirty minutes, although his own last speech ran for only 21½.

<sup>5</sup> R. A. Rendall (9 Feb. 1945) had suggested that *all* parties should be able to broadcast to troops, but Haley's view (Note of 9 Feb. 1945) was that 'the same policy considerations must govern Home and G.F.P. services'.

Service was broadcast, therefore, at four separate times the following day on the General Overseas/General Forces Programme. On 29 May a special meeting of the Inter-Services Advisory Committee had been called to discuss plans, and letters of explanation or cables had subsequently been sent to all parts of the world.<sup>1</sup> 'As you realise,' wrote Maurice Gorham as director of the Forces Programme, 'the A.E.F. programme is the only means of reaching by radio the Voters in the B.L.A. and we have, therefore, agreed with the War Office to carry all the political speeches that are to be broadcast in this country.'<sup>2</sup>

There is also some evidence, patchy in character, about the extent of foreign interest in listening to British political speeches and to other election programmes. The latter ranged more broadly than any programmes for the British electorate, for it had been agreed that the restrictions applied in Britain during the 'close period' did not apply to services designed for foreign audiences.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there was an obvious desire to reveal to the world just how 'democratic' Britain was and how its way of holding an election set an example to countries which might still be tempted either to defer or, worse still, to rig, their own general elections.<sup>4</sup>

The 1945 British general election, however, was not typical in at least one respect. Because of the scattering of the electorate, there was an exceptionally long delay between polling day on 5 July and counting day, 25 July. It was on 26 July, therefore, that the BBC really came into its own when it announced the results, and this time it could not keep the drama out. The sheer excitement of the unfolding story was sufficient to guarantee that this was one of the most remarkable days in broadcasting history, and the emotionless voices of the announcers actually added an extra dimension to the drama. The very first result to be announced shortly after ten o'clock in the morning—South Salford—was a Labour gain, and there were three more Labour gains among the next four results to go on the air. The announcement of the name of the first Cabinet Minister to fall,

<sup>1</sup> Inter-Services Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 24 May 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Gorham to Lt.-Col. David Niven, 26 May 1945. Gorham also stated, however, that he did not want the timing of the broadcasts 'to wreck the evening' entertainment of the troops (Gorham to J. B. Clark, 22 April 1945).

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Rendall, 3 Aug. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> *The Listener*, 5 July 1945.

Harold Macmillan, was made during the first half hour, as was that of Brendan Bracken, with whom the BBC had had so many dealings during the war, and during the next half hour it was clear that Birmingham was going Labour. Long before the one o'clock News Bulletin, it was beyond doubt that there would be an overwhelming Labour victory, although listeners had to wait until the nine o'clock News Bulletin that evening before they could hear how Churchill had already tendered his resignation and Attlee had kissed hands on his appointment as Prime Minister.

Details of the BBC's election procedures were very carefully preserved for the next occasion.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, there was no reason, it seemed, in July 1945, why the BBC should not be able to work effectively in political and other matters with the new Labour Government, which had a majority in Parliament of 146 over all other parties and groups. Yet when in August 1945 Attlee reaffirmed the procedures with regard to ministerial broadcasts which had been laid down by the Coalition Government,<sup>2</sup> Haley replied correctly that while the procedures would be maintained, 'conditions have been completely changed by the return to Party government and by the coming of peace'.<sup>3</sup> There is a report of a conversation between Haley and the Prime Minister's Private Secretary during the same month in which Haley raised all the main points not only about future ministerial broadcasting but about political broadcasting in general. 'Now that there is no National Government,' he emphasized, 'the BBC must recognise the Political Parties, and must maintain absolute impartiality between them.'<sup>4</sup> Confronted with a huge Labour majority in Parliament, Haley was obviously afraid of the BBC becoming too closely identified with the government of the day. He was also afraid of Conservative reactions.

The Conservative reactions came soon. Before BBC officials met members of the new Government, Quintin Hogg asked a parliamentary question about the status of a broadcast to the

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by R. T. B. Wynn, 5 July 1945: 'previous to the present election, C(H) [Sir Richard Maconachie] had to spend hours searching into 1935 files to discover what happened then.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Bamford to Haley, 18 Aug. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Bamford, 21 Aug. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of a telephone conversation between Haley and T. L. Rowan, 21 Aug. 1945.

United States by the President of the Board of Trade and in a supplementary raised the question of domestic ministerial broadcasting. 'The matter of broadcasts in time of peace,' Attlee replied, 'must be considered by all concerned, including, of course, the Opposition parties.'<sup>1</sup> Soon afterwards, Arthur Greenwood went much further and penned a number of 'principles' which he felt should regulate future political broadcasting. He still linked the future, however, to the past. After a slow and cautious start, he maintained, political broadcasting had now become 'established and generally accepted'. Yet the BBC was 'not a political instrument'. There were bound to be difficulties, and current 'problems' arose concerning '(a) political news (b) discussions of political issues by non-parliamentarians (c) the *Week in Westminster* (d) broadcasts of occasions when the Prime Minister or other Minister of high rank made a statement, e.g., Lord Mayor's Banquet (e) provision of opportunities for the clash of political argument between "back bench" MPs (f) provision of opportunities for leading members of the Government and of the chief Opposition to come to grips either consecutively or on separate but fairly close dates (g) pre-election broadcasts by party leaders (h) broadcasts by party representatives during election campaigns and (i) responses to invitations from overseas for public personalities to broadcast abroad'.

Greenwood stated his own feelings about each of the 'problems' in his comprehensive list. Political news should be 'objective'. Parliamentarians should be allowed to have 'a hammer and tongs debate on violently controversial issues'. It would be 'good for the politically conscious to listen to a good parliamentary rough and tumble'. Election broadcasts were now 'part and parcel of a general election campaign'.

Haley wrote two interesting comments in ink in the margin of Greenwood's draft. Against Greenwood's suggestion that 'on high occasions, the air ought to be free to a national spokesman without any rejoinder by an Opposition broadcaster' he added the qualification, 'provided the national spokesman uses the opportunity to speak with a sense of high occasion'; and against Greenwood's suggestion that if the Opposition were offered a reply to the broadcast of a 'high-ranking Minister'

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 413, col. 606, 22 Aug. 1945.



there should be the opportunity of 'a *short* rejoinder', Haley wrote, 'This principle has been agreed in the Budget broadcasts—and there are occasions when it would obviously be right, but it should not be an invariable custom.'<sup>1</sup>

Greenwood admitted that the first of his two suggestions was 'not in accordance with Party policy', and in a supplementary note Rendall, then Controller (Talks), pointed out that it was also not in accordance with Attlee's observations at the time of the Ullswater Report; Attlee had argued then that it was difficult to distinguish between a national emergency and a Government emergency. Rendall noted also that Greenwood had come down against setting aside 'an inordinate amount of time for political broadcasting'.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Greenwood had stated that in his opinion fifteen minutes was the optimum time for a political broadcast and that this optimum should be treated as a maximum. He also wanted total hours to be restricted. 'As one who does not "listen in" to these things,' he concluded convincingly, he would agree with those who resisted too many political broadcasts.

There was a further important point in Greenwood's notes which Haley considered 'vital'. 'Whichever Government is in office, it must play fair by the official Opposition and not neglect the claims of other minorities and even single personalities.'

With these notes already penned, the first meeting after the general election between the BBC and members of the new Labour Government took place on 5 September. It was an 'informal' and 'exploratory' discussion between leading BBC officials and the Lord Privy Seal, Arthur Greenwood, the Minister of Information, E. J. Williams, and the Labour Chief Whip, William Whiteley.<sup>3</sup> As a result, Haley submitted a draft paper on future procedures to the Board of Governors—and later to the political parties.<sup>4</sup> All ministerial broadcasts, he suggested, should be channelled through 'whatever Government Department the Prime Minister prescribes for dealing with such matters': there should not be pressure from all sides.

<sup>1</sup> \*Notes by Arthur Greenwood, 4 Sept. 1945. He appended the sentence, 'I hope they may begin some fruitful discussions.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Rendall to Ashbridge, 13 Sept. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 6 Sept. 1945; Note by Haley, 2 Oct. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*He made use of notes prepared by Maconachie before he left the BBC (Ashbridge to Haley, 19 Sept. 1945).

The BBC would 'be at liberty to express its unwillingness to arrange any such broadcast', although it could be overruled by the Government, of course, according to Article 4 of the Charter. After such ministerial broadcasts had been transmitted, the BBC would be free also to invite broadcasts of Opposition views. The distinction between ministerial broadcasts, which had been arranged so often in war-time, and other political broadcasts was fundamental.

Haley pressed also for the perpetuation of the restrictive 'no-broadcast rule' which had been introduced the year before and which, as we have seen, greatly handicapped news and current affairs broadcasting.<sup>1</sup> He had feared in war-time that with an immensely powerful all-party government in office—and with all the war-time distaste for 'controversy'—any BBC broadcasts during the fourteen days would inevitably strengthen government still further. There had been no recent experience in 1944 either of fierce inter-party conflict or of governments dependent on slender majorities; and after 1945 Haley saw no reason to change his perspectives. He included the 'rule', therefore, as the fifth point in an important memorandum sent to Greenwood on 2 October 1945.<sup>2</sup> The memorandum, or '*aide-mémoire*', included two addenda: 'Arrangements which may be privately come to between the political parties in regard to broadcasting on political matters should not override this agreement' and 'Nothing in this Agreement is to be taken as overriding any of the provisions of the BBC Charter and Licence'.<sup>3</sup>

Powell, Haley and Ashbridge had lunch with Greenwood on 2 November in the House of Commons, when they discussed a possible final draft of an '*Aide-Mémoire*' (this time with capital letters) based on Haley's memorandum.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 23 January 1946, however, that the Government informed the BBC—again through Arthur Greenwood—that it did not consider it desirable to reduce to written rules the principles that should govern the BBC in relation to political broadcasting. An *aide-mémoire* might be useful, but the principles to be adopted

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 605; \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 15 June 1944, 4 Oct. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Arrangements for 'Broadcasts by Persons of All Ministerial Ranks'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley asked the Minister of Information to put this last point to the Cabinet on 15 October 1945 (Note of an Interview).

<sup>4</sup> \*Programme Policy Meeting, *Minutes*, 20 Nov. 1945.

should depend on 'good sense and goodwill'. 'It is as impossible to formulate exhaustive principles on paper,' Greenwood added in strictly traditional language, 'as it is, for instance, impossible to define what conduct is unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.'<sup>1</sup> Haley could do little for the moment but concur.<sup>2</sup> He would be satisfied to see an *aide-mémoire* rather than a code guiding future relationships.

On Haley's fifth point—the 'fourteen-day rule'—there is evidence that Greenwood did not wish to instruct the BBC as forcibly as Haley himself had suggested. Nor did other Labour Ministers. Herbert Morrison, for example, was notably more vague than Haley when in answer to a parliamentary question on the subject in March 1946 he stated that it was 'in general, inappropriate that Ministers should give broadcast talks on bills which are still under consideration by Parliament. Broadcast explanations of new legislation are best reserved as a general rule until the discussions in Parliament are completed.'<sup>3</sup>

Haley did not like vagueness, and he remained unhappy about the possibilities of increasing 'confusion' in relation to political broadcasting, particularly if Ministers pressed successfully for the use of the BBC's facilities and the Opposition went on to demand equal rights. Even *The Week at Westminster* in December 1945 had irritated Quintin Hogg, who wrote a letter to *The Times* regretting that the BBC should have 'permitted it to degenerate into a mere vehicle of party controversy'.<sup>4</sup> In May 1946 the Programme Policy Meeting was told of 'recent unsatisfactory handling of Ministerial broadcasts on the Government side',<sup>5</sup> and throughout the year there were cases of friction. One of them in June involved Morrison and Churchill, when Churchill asked for the right to reply to a broadcast by Morrison on the theme of 'Britain Gets Going Again'.<sup>6</sup> Before the Governors considered the matter—at Haley's request—the Postmaster-General had written that

<sup>1</sup> \*Greenwood to Haley, 23 Jan. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Greenwood, 25 Jan. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 420, col. 22, 4 March 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 11 Dec. 1945. For changes in this programme, which had started in 1929, see the brochure produced by the BBC on its fortieth birthday. The pre-war rota system, which limited the number of speakers in any session, was abandoned after 1945 in order to infuse new blood into the programme.

<sup>5</sup> \*Programme Policy Meeting, *Minutes*, 21 May 1946.

<sup>6</sup> \*Listowel to Haley, 4 July 1946. Haley thought Morrison was on a 'poor wicket'.

there should be no right of reply in this case.<sup>1</sup> Another case in July concerned a request by John Strachey, the Minister of Food, to broadcast on bread rationing,<sup>2</sup> and a third involved the Postmaster-General himself, who wished to broadcast a New Year's Message on 30 December at the end of a *Works Wonders* programme. When Haley insisted on treating the last of these as a ministerial broadcast, the Postmaster-General abandoned the idea.

By then, two meetings of representatives of the Government, the Opposition, and the BBC had been called—at Haley's suggestion—on 30 July and 5 November 1946 to discuss political broadcasting, and between these two dates the political parties had also met on their own without the BBC itself being represented.

The first meeting, a high-powered gathering, took place on 30 July in the Prime Minister's room at the House of Commons.<sup>3</sup> Morrison, Greenwood, Cripps, Whiteley and Listowel represented the Government and Churchill, Eden, Woolton, Bracken and James Stuart the Opposition. After Morrison had outlined the Government's views, Churchill said that he did not think that there was 'much between the Government and the Opposition'. They both believed in 'fair play' and 'for good or ill—in a Party system'. As far as ministerial broadcasts were concerned, Churchill accepted the Government's argument that any Government should from time to time be able 'to use the wireless' for factual or explanatory purposes or in the nature of 'appeals to the nation to co-operate in national policies, such as food economy or recruiting'. The Government, he added, had 'responsibilities beyond those of the Opposition'. At the same time, speeches regarded by the Government as non-controversial—or slogans like Morrison's 'Britain Gets Going Again'—might well be deemed controversial, and the Opposition should have the right to reply to any 'electioneering' carried on under the protective cover of the term 'national

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 25 July 1946. Assheton had telephoned Haley before Morrison's broadcast to tell him that Churchill wished 'in the event of it being controversial' to have the right of reply.

<sup>2</sup> \*Record of Telephone Conversations, 3 and 4 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> The meeting had been preceded by a meeting between Haley and Assheton on 5 July 1946. Listowel wrote on the subject of a second meeting to Haley, 6 Aug. 1946.

broadcasting'. Whatever their differences in public, which were magnified by the Press, he and Morrison agreed that if Government broadcasts turned out unintentionally to be controversial, there should be discussion between the parties. Yet they both felt that in relation to 'controversial broadcasting' in general, decisions about what to broadcast or not to broadcast should rest with the BBC.

The conference also dealt with 'electioneering' at election times and between, and it was agreed that 'it was reasonable that only parties with a substantial electoral strength should have the right to a quota'. There is no record of Churchill's response to the argument that it would be 'impracticable' to provide fully for Independents and 'other distinguished individuals not nominated by any Party'. It was because such an argument had been taken almost for granted during the 1930s, that he had complained of having been 'excluded from the air',<sup>1</sup> yet he had nothing of interest to say on the subject now that the BBC wished to settle the whole question of individual as well as of Party rights.<sup>2</sup>

A few months later, the Governors of the BBC reiterated the views expressed by Haley in the autumn of 1945 as 'the most satisfactory starting point for an agreement on political broadcasting'. The BBC should continue to have the right to initiate political broadcasts, it was maintained, and other parties besides the Conservative Party should be called upon to represent the 'Opposition'. The Director-General should be left to decide which ministerial speeches were controversial, although the Governors should see all ministerial 'scripts'. Even if ministerial broadcasts were 'uncontroversial', their numbers should be 'restricted'. On 'rare' occasions, as already noted, the public had the right to hear 'some person outside Party agreements'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Churchill had written an interesting letter on this subject to Ogilvie, then Director-General of the BBC, on 21 Feb. 1939: 'Ought there not . . . to be room for independent opinions expressed by those who may be called "elder statesmen"?'

<sup>2</sup> \*'Political Broadcasting', Note by the Director-General, 2 Oct. 1945. 'It is not true that he had been prevented from speaking about the dangers of air attack' (Reply by Sir Ian Jacob to a questioner in the General Advisory Council, December 1953).

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 Oct. 1946. For this meeting Rendall had prepared 'Notes for a Paper on Political Broadcasting', 22 Aug. 1946. See also above, p. 615.

After the second meeting between the BBC, the Government, and the Opposition, held appropriately on 5 November, the Governors finally agreed to accept the idea of an *'aide-mémoire'* as a basis for regulating controversial political broadcasting in future. They insisted, however, on including the 'fourth clause' to the effect that 'no broadcasts other than the normal reporting of any Parliamentary proceedings' should take place 'on any question while it is the subject of discussion in either House'. It was only after Morrison accepted this clause at the end of the year<sup>1</sup> with two amendments—the substitution of the word 'legislation' for 'discussion' and the addition of the words 'arranged by the BBC' after 'no broadcasts'—that an *aide-mémoire* could be formally approved.

It is clear from this story that it was the BBC and not the political parties which sterilized political broadcasting at the end of the war, doubtless fearing that if it were to seek to become a more active influence there would be so many pitfalls ahead that the independence of the BBC, secured with difficulty during the war, would be in danger. Prudential motives—which critics of the BBC described more simply as 'timidity'—prevailed. The idea that the Corporation should refrain from trespassing on the powers of Parliament was nowhere held more strongly than in Broadcasting House. 'Parliament', Haley always maintained, 'is the only grand forum of the nation.'<sup>2</sup>

The 'Aide-Mémoire', printed in the Appendix, was dated 6 February 1947 and was accepted by Attlee on 25 February.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Morrison to Haley, 31 Dec. 1946. The Governors had first established this position in 1944 (*Minutes*, 10 Feb. 1944), when they had added the rider, 'This note shall not apply to matters strictly affecting the war effort or the national emergency.' They had been unwilling the year before to allow R. A. Butler to speak on the Education Bill before it was debated in the House of Commons (*ibid.*, 8 July 1943).

<sup>2</sup> See his article, 'Parliamentary Institutions and Broadcasting' in the *Journal of the Hansard Society*, Spring 1949. Nevertheless Haley said in 1953 that 'both Mr. Morrison and Mr. Churchill were against any initiative for Political Broadcasting resting in the BBC's hand; they went to the length of suggesting that the BBC could prejudice its impartiality merely by choosing the subject of a controversial political transmission on the air' (\*Memorandum by Grisewood, 20 Nov. 1953; see below, p. 673). For the view that the fourteen-day provision was 'an albatross round the BBC's neck', see K. Adam, 'Fifty Years of Fireside Elections' in *The Listener*, 14 Feb. 1974.

<sup>3</sup> \*At a Programme Policy Meeting (*Minutes*, 11 Feb. 1947) it was announced that it 'was now in force, although there were various matters of detail to be settled with the Government and Opposition Chief Whips'.

It began by stating 'the desirability' of 'political broadcasts of a controversial character' and, after dealing with ministerial broadcasts and Opposition rights of reply, it accepted the idea of a quota of political broadcasts between elections, to be decided 'on a yearly basis' with the number to be discussed between the BBC and the political parties and the allocation to be dependent on shares of the poll at the previous general election. For 1947 the total numbers, excluding Budget broadcasts, were to be Government 6, Conservative Opposition 5, and Liberal Opposition 1. All other 'microphone appearances' by MPs were to be balanced 'as between Government and Opposition over reasonable periods of time', and while 'no political tests' were to be applied to other broadcasts touching on politics, 'whether talks or discussions', the Corporation, it was stressed, 'had a broad duty to ensure it was really drawing impartially from all sections of the Community.'

Clause 6(iv), the critical clause on which the BBC had insisted, read:

No broadcasts arranged by the BBC other than the normal reporting of Parliamentary proceedings are to take place on any question while it is the subject of discussion in either House.

When the 'Aide-Mémoire' was next reviewed—during the summer of 1948—this clause was construed to mean '(a) that the BBC will not have discussions or *ex-parte* statements on any issues for a period of a fortnight before they are debated in either House and (b) that while matters are subjects of legislation MPs will not be used in such discussions'.<sup>1</sup>

The 1947 agreement with the political parties was announced publicly on 5 March, when a few, if only a few, local and national newspapers pressed for 'a little more fire' in political broadcasting.<sup>2</sup> They hailed as a model recent broadcast discussions between the editors of the five main national weeklies,

<sup>1</sup> \*Added Note, July 1948.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scotsman*, 6 March 1947, for example, welcomed the decision to allow 'political controversy . . . to invade the rarefied atmosphere of the radio, provided the rules of the contest are fairly drawn'. It added, first, that 'while broadcasting is a monopoly system, an attitude of impartiality on the part of the BBC is commendable' and, second, that 'there is always a temptation for the Government of the day to utilise the BBC for Party ends'.

publication of which had been suspended because of an industrial dispute. 'Would it not be better', one Yorkshire newspaper asked, in accents of which Arthur Mann would have completely approved, 'to have a full-blooded discussion before the mike, rather than—as apparently is intended—a set piece by one speaker with the possibility of reply set aside for a future broadcast?'<sup>1</sup>

Not everyone, however, welcomed the channelling of politics through the parties. As one sceptic put it, 'The microphone seems only to emphasize the futility of the case-hardened party man's pose of infallibility at a time when the country needs the combined efforts of all the best available brains to pull it out of the mire. The BBC has devised a rather wooden scheme of time allocation to the partisans.'<sup>2</sup> *The Tribune*, anxious to strengthen the authority of the Labour Government in a period of economic crisis, complained that Attlee in making 'a national appeal' had 'to approach the microphone gingerly, preceded by disarming comments from a BBC announcer that this is only Number One of a limited series of "party" broadcasts which the BBC has kindly arranged and that Mr. Eden would speak next.' Was this right? *The Tribune* went on to question the distinction between 'ministerial' and 'political' broadcasting. 'At a time when the entire nation must fight the economic Battle of Britain, when the atom bomb has revolutionized international affairs and given them a new, terrible urgency, is it for the BBC to decide whether a proposed broadcast address by a Cabinet Minister is indeed purely factual, or explanatory, and so should be permitted?'<sup>3</sup>

It was far-fetched to talk of Attlee as 'P.M. by courtesy of the BBC', for the BBC itself would have been under immediate attack then and later if it had given every statement by a Prime Minister the status of a national pep talk or even an educational lecture. Attlee's own broadcasts, indeed, could be attacked from the left, as well as from the right, as they often were, particularly

<sup>1</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 6 March 1947.

<sup>2</sup> *Evening Dispatch* (Edinburgh), 6 March 1947. 'Most political broadcasters of the present time', it added, 'are dull fellows.' Cf. *Morning Advertiser*, 7 March 1947: 'A wiser course [than that of the BBC] would have been the allocation to each party of a certain time—say an hour—which it could utilise in the manner it deemed best. . . . The average listener listens in for entertainment and not for instruction.'

<sup>3</sup> *The Tribune*, 21 March 1947.



when he dealt with foreign affairs.<sup>1</sup> Few people wanted to single out the Prime Minister for special treatment in peacetime; he still attracted a smaller audience than Churchill, and many people in the late 1940s preferred a variety of voices to a claim to authority. By February 1948 nine million listeners were hearing a wide range of political speeches, with Lord Woolton and Maurice Webb offering contrasting approaches to political persuasion—the former, it was said, in the manner of a ‘sugar daddy’, the latter in the manner of a ‘candid friend’.<sup>2</sup> The main complaint of the critics then was that so much time elapsed between Labour and Conservative performances that listeners had forgotten what the argument was all about.<sup>3</sup> There were other complaints, however, that politicians were not revealing themselves as ‘members of a higher profession’. They had ‘feet of clay’ and were fiddling for ‘place and power while their homes burn. The Party broadcasts were designed for a much finer ideal than that.’<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the public might want or not want, the BBC was forced to acknowledge through experience that many Members of Parliament—some of them in the middle of the political spectrum—were always highly suspicious of any significant extension of political broadcasting, just as they were to prove themselves very slow to understand the possibilities of television. Moreover, if they did not broadcast themselves, they tended to be jealous of those among their colleagues who did, for they knew that ‘broadcasting MPs’ were sometimes as well known or even better known in their constituencies than they themselves were. As a result, Parliament had to be supplied regularly (and repetitively) with information about the number of times MPs (and members of the House of Lords) broadcast, not least on the external services.<sup>5</sup> Those who headed the lists were usually

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, an account of a speech by Arthur Horner, Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, in *The Times*, 5 Jan. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> *New Statesman*, 7 Feb. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 23, 25 Feb. 1948. A good speaker, it was suggested, picked up a ‘catch crop of adherents’, and it would be best if all political speakers were planned ‘in pairs’.

<sup>4</sup> *The Sphere*, 6 Nov. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> The first list was produced for the Post Office in June 1947 (\*Farquharson to R. J. S. Baker, 27 June 1947). It dealt with broadcasts by Scottish MPs and was given to the Post Office to enable a parliamentary question to be answered. The questioner was Mrs. Jean Mann.

in more difficulty with their party political friends than with their opponents, and even when they had given or claimed that they had given 'non-political broadcasts' they were viewed with reserve.<sup>1</sup> In March 1949 there was even a suggestion from the Labour Party's Public Information Group that broadcasts by parliamentary candidates and party officials should be included in the MPs' quota to ensure that no 'unfair advantage' was given.<sup>2</sup> For its part, the BBC found it useful to keep tallies in order to deal with the argument that it was not 'balanced' in its political broadcasting.

The suspicions of Parliament as a whole were reflected also in antagonism to any suggestions that parliamentary proceedings should be open to continuous public scrutiny. In 1944, few MPs would have agreed with L. S. Amery, then Secretary of State for India, that the broadcasting of Parliament would provide 'the best antidote' to the emergence of 'a class of habitual broadcasters, interesting, but politically irresponsible';<sup>3</sup> and after 1945 most MPs took the fourteen-day rule for granted, not wishing to have arguments for and against it aired in public. Even in 1955 Attlee made it clear that he wished that the BBC had kept its existence quiet and not asked the Government to turn an acceptable convention into a controversial regulation.

Whatever the motives might be—and they were mixed inside and outside the BBC—the 'fourteen-day closed period' was even more restrictive in its effects on political broadcasting than the 'close period' during election campaigns. It prevented adequate discussion, for example, of the nationalization of iron and steel, a main issue between the political parties, and it meant that some of the most interesting pieces of new social legislation—like the National Health Service—introduced in the first post-war years were never fully discussed in the country through the biggest single medium of communication.

<sup>1</sup> \*In July 1952 Mary Somerville, then Controller (Talks), was told firmly by John Profumo, MP, that the Conservative Central Office would not support the opinion of a few back-bench MPs, including Christopher Hollis, that as far as non-political talks were concerned there need be no attempt to 'balance' speakers of different parties and 'no restriction in the market for *personal* talent'. The position in the Labour Party was complicated by the split between the 'Bevanites' and the rest (e.g. Note for Spoken Word Meeting, 25 April 1951, when Foot, Crossman and Driberg were described as on the Left, Barbara Castle as in the Centre, and Anthony Crosland as on the Right).

<sup>2</sup> \*Letter to Haley, 23 March 1949.

<sup>3</sup> B(44)9, 'Broadcasting of Parliament'. See above, p. 35.

From 1947 onwards, quarterly (later monthly) returns were kept of all broadcasts by MPs not only to provide the necessary tally for the BBC's own purposes but to facilitate speedy replies to critics of political broadcasting at Westminster. 'Home' and 'External' broadcasts were the two main divisions, with 'Home' further subdivided into 'Ministerial', 'Party Political' and 'Other' and with 'External' subdivided into 'Overseas' and 'European'. Outside broadcasts or recorded extracts of public speeches were excluded, as were news interviews. It was not only party divides which were scrutinized at Westminster. MPs were interested both in the number of Scots broadcasters—Mrs. Jean Mann was a persistent questioner on this topic—and in contributions to *The Week at Westminster* and *Today in Parliament*. Most Members were particularly interested in being mentioned in these two series, the second of which had started in October 1945. During the fuel crisis of 1947 several parliamentary questions were asked about the possible retiming of this programme earlier in the evening so that listeners could know what Parliament was doing before broadcasting transmitters closed down early for the night.<sup>1</sup>

If the BBC might be accused of 'timidity', Parliament, therefore, might well be accused of undue sensitivity;<sup>2</sup> and in retrospect it is not difficult to see how the two accusations were related to each other. Sir Waldron Smithers would have gone furthest of all to control broadcasting output. In June 1948 he asked the Postmaster-General 'to take the necessary steps to ensure that anyone broadcasting on a matter of political or other importance' should always do so 'under his or her real name and state to what political party he or she adheres'.<sup>3</sup> Vigilance—or impertinence—could have gone no further.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *Hansard*, vol. 433, col. 298, 26 Feb. 1947. Lord Calverley asked questions in the House of Lords on 27 Feb. and 10 March 1947; cf. *Hansard*, vol. 447, col. 360, 11 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> They were sensitive even to the BBC giving foreign speakers access to the microphone. Thus, there were protests in both Houses when Henry Wallace spoke on 23 April 1947 (*Hansard*, vol. 436, col. 1025, 23 April 1947). In a debate on the subject in the House of Lords, Lord Strabolgi for the Government said firmly, 'The present Government have no control over the BBC programmes and I hope that neither this Government nor any Government will' (*House of Lords Official Report*, vol. 147, col. 46, 22 April 1947).

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 452, col. 2190, 30 June 1948. It is fair to add that, as usual, he had one particular case in mind, that of Mrs. Olga Watts, who had recently given a talk of which he thoroughly disapproved on 'an Englishwoman's Impressions of

Political talks were fully discussed at a meeting between representatives of the Government and the BBC on 17 February 1948—the Opposition was not represented—and on 25 February—this time with Churchill present. On the latter occasion Churchill himself complained about broadcasts publicizing ‘Communist’ views, and this issue was raised again on 22 April, along with that of participation of MPs in *The Week at Westminster*.<sup>1</sup> It was also confirmed at this meeting that ‘polyglot broadcasts’ were outside the quotas and that there should be no Regional political broadcasting.

There was no further meeting between the BBC and the political parties early in 1949, although by then attention was beginning to focus not on political broadcasting between elections but on the arrangements for the next general election. When the Governors expressed the wish, in the spring of 1949, that after nearly four years of Labour rule the arrangements for the next general election should be decided upon ‘well in advance of the event’, Haley, bearing in mind the precedents, told them that there were only four main questions to settle—how many broadcasts should be allotted to the major parties; their length; whether to continue to keep to the ‘1939 rules’; and the treatment of the minority parties.<sup>2</sup>

These were all old and familiar questions, and they set the key for the handling of the broadcasting arrangements at the general election of February 1950, once again by the Parties rather than by the BBC. Indeed, apart from twenty-one ‘party political’ and electioneering broadcasts, ‘the BBC kept aloof from the election as if it had been occurring on another planet’.<sup>3</sup> It was content to interpret its role according to what Haley

<sup>1</sup> \*Minutes of Meetings of 17, 25 Feb. and 22 April 1948. On the first occasion the BBC described its difficulties in observing a ‘self-denying ordinance’ on questions which were the subject of legislation. Churchill, who noted that the two Communist MPs, William Gallacher and Phil Piratin, had both taken part in *The Week at Westminster*—the former in 1943 and 1946, the latter in 1947—remarked that the Communist Party was the only party to have secured 100 per cent representation.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by Haley, March 1949.   <sup>3</sup> H. G. Nicholas, op. cit., p. 126.

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Everyday Life in Moscow’ (\*Farquharson to Baker, 24 June 1948). The Postmaster-General told Smithers that he had no intention of ‘applying any purge to the BBC’. Smithers had pressed the Government the year before to copy Ceylon and require governmental approval for all broadcast programmes.

could now call—in a letter to Harry Pollitt of the Communist Party—‘a well-established tradition’.<sup>1</sup>

At two meetings in the Lord President’s rooms in the House of Commons in December 1949 the main Parties themselves had decided on the number of electioneering broadcasts—the BBC had suggested twelve or fourteen—the allocation of times, and the distribution of Labour, Conservative and Liberal speakers.<sup>2</sup> The higher figure of fourteen was chosen by the parties weeks before the actual election date—23 February 1950—was known. In fact, seven additional pre-election campaign ‘political party’ broadcasts, which had been ‘stored up’ from the parties’ 1949 ‘between elections’ ration, were transmitted in January before ‘the election period’ formally started with the dissolution of Parliament on 3 February.<sup>3</sup> Labour and Conservatives had three each and the Liberals one. The Labour Party chose J. B. Priestley, one of Britain’s most highly experienced broadcasters, as its first speaker in this series—on a Saturday night—but he had a smaller audience than Winston Churchill, who followed a week later (26 per cent as against 40 per cent).<sup>4</sup> Only 13 per cent chose to listen to Lord Salisbury. Barnes described this burst of political broadcasting to use up the quotas in time as ‘an ugly rush of bookings’ by the parties.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the horse-trading at the December conference in 1949 concerned the Liberal share of election broadcasts, with Attlee accepting a suggestion from Eden that the Liberals should be given not only one twenty-minute period after the nine o’clock News, as had been originally suggested (the Conservative Party and the Labour Party were each to have five), but two broadcasts of ten minutes each after the six o’clock News. An

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Harry Pollitt, 20 Jan. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Notes of Meetings, 14, 15 Dec. 1949. The Conservative Chief Whip, Patrick Buchan-Hepburn, told Haley that the Opposition had wanted such a meeting for some time (Letter to Haley, 2 Dec. 1949).

<sup>3</sup> \*As early as 15 Jan. 1948, Wellington had noted after an interview with Profumo and Brigadier Hinchcliffe of the Conservative Party that ‘the Parties are increasingly exercising their wits on the tactical game of spending coupons to the disadvantage of their opponents’.

<sup>4</sup> Priestley, who was not a member of the Labour Party, wrote a fascinating account of the broadcast, from the initial invitation from Morgan Phillips to the Press reactions. ‘If this is going to be a nice, clean, thoughtful friendly election,’ he summed up, ‘then one man is going to be surprised’ (*New Statesman*, 28 Jan. 1950).

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 9 March 1950.

argument used against the Liberal claim had been that the Communists might feel entitled to a full evening broadcast if the Liberals were to be given two broadcasts after the nine o'clock News. Eventually, because they had nominated more than fifty candidates, the Communists secured one ten-minute broadcast after the six o'clock News, to the anger not only of the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists (firmly kept out of the picture) but of those staunch anti-Communists who felt that Communist broadcasts were a dangerous luxury when 'we have done and are doing our very best to check Communism in Europe, in Malaya and in other parts of the world'.<sup>1</sup> The Liberals, for their part, were annoyed that in practice each of their ten-minute spells gave them only eight and a half minutes of 'hard' broadcasting time.<sup>2</sup>

There were the usual comings and goings of politicians in February 1950—with Morrison complaining at the outset that the BBC, for all its technical resources, would not allow him to make a 'trial' recording of his broadcast.<sup>3</sup> He and Attlee had switched places in the Labour Party list so that Attlee spoke last—on Saturday, 18 February from Chequers<sup>4</sup>—with the second biggest audience of any of the speakers (44 per cent). Churchill had the largest audience with 51 per cent (35 per cent of the Home Service audience and 16 per cent of the Light). Because of the timing of his broadcasts, the Labour Party speaker James Griffiths had the smallest audience for his Home Service broadcast (14 per cent) and the second largest (after Bevin) for his Light Programme repeat (17 per cent). Lord Samuel, the Liberal peer, with 27 per cent, was no more than 1 per cent ahead of Harry Pollitt.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 24 Jan. 1950. Pollitt replied on 25 Jan., pointing out that many working people would not be home in time to hear it. The BBC received many protests. \*The Communist requests to broadcast had been set out in letters by Pollitt to Haley, 9 Jan., 18 Aug. 1950. Barnes wrote a letter on the subject to the *Sunday Times*, 12 March 1950, after a hostile 'Scrutator' article on 5 March. He also set out his views clearly in a letter to the Northern Ireland Controller who had passed on official objections. 'We have not given a broadcast to the Communists; we have carried out the recommendation that minority parties . . . with fifty candidates . . . qualify.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Frank Byers to Haley, 23 Jan. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note from Archie Gordon, 30 Jan. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*W. Whiteley to Haley, 25 Jan. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> These composite figures included listeners both to the Home Service and the Light Programme. Some listeners may, of course, have listened twice.

Bevin arrived at Broadcasting House only just in time and was not rehearsed. By contrast, Lord Woolton, who had asked for technical guidance in 1945,<sup>1</sup> 'was most amenable to observations and suggestions for improvement in style, etc.', while Charles Hill, the 'Radio Doctor', a new and highly controversial speaker on the Conservative list who had been invited by Woolton to broadcast, was such a master of technique that he could have given invaluable guidance to all the rest of the broadcasters if they had chosen to visit his radio surgery. Broadcasting defiantly as 'a Liberal and Conservative', Hill came second in the audience ratings with 42 per cent. His broadcasts as 'Radio Doctor' had been cut in 1945 'in case he were to get at the electorate by way of throat trouble',<sup>2</sup> but now he was in a position to get at the electorate direct. In fact, he succeeded not only in inventing one of the memorable phrases of the election, 'Chuck it, Priestley'—he very nearly left this phrase out—but at the same time in spreading his message and in pushing up share prices.<sup>3</sup> At the other end of the political spectrum, Hill's Labour opponent at Luton, William Warbey, complained to the BBC (in vain) that Hill's use of the description 'the Radio Doctor' conferred an unfair advantage on him not only in the studio but in the constituency struggle. He had been beaten, he said, by a Voice.<sup>4</sup>

Churchill, the great Voice of the Second World War, broadcast from Chartwell on 17 February, and on this occasion was in no mood to tolerate unnecessary interference. On the afternoon before his broadcast, he objected that according to schedule his speech was to be followed by a programme called *We Beg to Differ*. This, he said, was not fair. The BBC noted his objection, but met it only to the extent of including a minute's piano interlude between the end of his broadcast and the announced programme. For somewhat similar reasons there had to be one slight amendment also to the announcement of the broadcast of the scheduled programme which followed the Labour speaker, Miss Margaret Herbison—*The Provincial Lady*.<sup>5</sup> One lady who

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 627.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Graphic*, 27 May 1945.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register*, 1950, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Hill of Luton, *Both Sides of the Hill* (1964), p. 135. \*Note by Barnes, 9 March 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid.

did not take part in the electioneering series, the Liberal ex-BBC Governor, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, had been invited to broadcast not by the Liberals but by Churchill, but she allowed herself to be dissuaded by the Liberal Party leader. Churchill made the most that he could of her exclusion.<sup>1</sup>

In general, the party broadcasts did not draw quite as large audiences as in 1945, although the figures were still remarkably high. According to Herbert Nicholas, they represented at least three to four times the number of voters who attended election meetings and thereby justified, so it seemed, the control of the medium by the party leaders.<sup>2</sup> Considering the BBC's handling of the election as a whole on Sound, there was little advance, however, in 1950 on the arrangements made for 1945; and most of the issues raised within the Corporation were all old ones—how, for example, announcers should pronounce place names such as Sowerby in Yorkshire, Bolsover in Derbyshire;<sup>3</sup> what to do if party electioneering broadcasts overran in time, as did Winston Churchill's from Chartwell on 17 February;<sup>4</sup> and, above all, what programmes, however frivolous, should be postponed during the period between dissolutions and elections, on the grounds that they might, however obliquely, influence the voter. There was no election television, but it was demonstrated that not even Churchill speaking on sound could distract the first generation of viewers from their non-political screens. As many as 86 per cent of viewers were glued to *The True Glory*.<sup>5</sup>

Unnecessary casualties on sound included Third Programme talks by Tom Wilson on Arthur Lewis's *Principles of Economic Planning* and by Michael Oakeshott on *The Idea of a University* (for which a learned and surely no more innocuous talk on William of Occam was substituted). A series on the constitution of Northern Ireland was also postponed—more justifiably—as

<sup>1</sup> She said that Churchill's account of his 'very generous offer' was 'completely accurate' (Nicholas, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–8; *The Times*, 2 Feb. 1950). Byers in his Liberal Party broadcast said that Churchill had been so keen that 'the voice of Liberalism should be heard that he instructed Mr. Eden to suggest that only one broadcast should be given to the Liberal Party'.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> \*Miss G. M. Miller of the Pronunciation Unit to John Snagge, 20 Feb. 1950. Cf. 'Orkney and Shetland: NEVER The Orkneys and The Shetlands or The Orkneys and Shetlands.'

<sup>4</sup> \*C. J. Curran to Miss Somerville, 24 Feb. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by R. Silvey, 14 July 1950.



was a review of *The God that Failed*, a book of essays by ex-Communists, and, more surprisingly, a short story by Kafka.<sup>1</sup> It was agreed that whatever the timing of the results, *Mrs. Dale's Diary* would have to be cancelled on 24 February. *Woman's Hour* was planning a programme for that same day about the new women MPs, but in asking permission to put it on added cautiously, 'what kind of balance would have to be preserved?'. More seriously, listeners were deprived during the election campaign of learning about important statements of national policy. Thus, only the BBC and the broadcasting system of the Soviet Union passed over in silence the headline news of an 'atom talks' proposal for the 'Big Three' made by Churchill in a speech at an Edinburgh political meeting.

Herbert Nicholas memorably called this decision 'neutrality carried to the lengths of castration'. 'It can hardly stand', he went on, 'as the last word in the collective wisdom and courage of mature democracy.'<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, considerable self-satisfaction was expressed inside the BBC about the way the election broadcasts had been conducted and about how the programmes had been kept 'pure' during the campaign.<sup>3</sup> The 'purity' had meant as much vigilant control as in 1945. When early in the campaign the Controller of the North Region had asked 'If there is some particular human interest or oddity value attached to a particular nomination, e.g. an eighty-year-old ploughman has entered the field in Bradford North, where he is standing as an Independent Holy Roller—would it be permissible to report it?', Barnes replied by telephone, 'No decision yet about Close Period'.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the close period was still on, and there was never any doubt that it would be. The self-censorship was particularly strenuous towards the end of the close period. 'We may . . . expect an even more vigilant watch on our programmes for matter which might influence voters in the critical period before the poll,' Barnes wrote just before the poll, 'and we may

<sup>1</sup> \*Memorandum by David Gretton, 17 Jan. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-7. Nor perhaps could the *Daily Mirror's* 'Who's finger on the trigger?' in 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Miss Somerville to Barnes, 25 Jan. 1950. Cf. Barnes to A. Davidson Dunton, Chairman of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 14 Feb. 1950 (Barnes Papers): 'So far the broadcasts have been of a high standard and have held a large audience.'

<sup>4</sup> \*D. Stephenson to Barnes, 11 Jan. 1950.

expect an immediate and weighty protest if we err. I therefore ask you to be particularly careful for these last days on which we are working to rule.'<sup>1</sup>

Although most of the news, including the election results, was provided through the Press Association, the BBC's home-produced overseas general election *Radio Newsreels*, transmitted while the results were being announced, were held to be a 'complete success'.<sup>2</sup> 'Open microphones' had not been allowed in the street, however—Barnes thought that they would have been dangerous—and there was no 'added comment' during the announcements such as descriptions of crowds or the atmosphere of reception of the results.<sup>3</sup> 'I do not think that we can improve on the operation of the broadcasting results,' concluded John Snagge.<sup>4</sup>

Because a traffic control point had been set up to control news flow and editorial conferences could now take place by telephone, Tahu Hole, the BBC's News Editor, hailed the handling of the election as 'a milestone in broadcasting'. 'At no time were the results as transmitted more than six results behind the central state of the parties as conveyed to us by the Press Association.' Hole had reporters in most Regions and asked them to send in 'interesting news' other than results, but their contributions were used exclusively in *Radio Newsreel*.<sup>5</sup> Hole claimed also that 'the American radio people who came especially for the election were fascinated by it and expressed astonishment at the efficiency'.<sup>6</sup> The American broadcasters in Britain were certainly present in large numbers from all three networks, and they included a team of three men from CBS headed by Ed Murrow.<sup>7</sup>

For the most part, overseas arrangements were simpler in 1950 than they had been in 1945. The number of Service voters had fallen to less than 140,000 as compared with 1,700,000 in

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 17 Feb. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by S. W. Rumsam, 28 Feb. 1950; T. R. P. Hole to Barnes, 3 March 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Barnes to Nicolls, 11 Jan. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Snagge to Wellington, 7 March 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Hole to Barnes, 22 Feb., 3 March 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Hole to Barnes, 3 March 1950.

<sup>7</sup> \*Note by H. R. Pelletier, 11 Jan. 1950. Very careful checks were kept on the total number of assignments per network and on the recording devices used. (Note by L. F. Lewis, 31 Jan. 1950.)

1945, and no simultaneous programmes were planned with the Home Service.<sup>1</sup> Yet political broadcasts were included in the General Overseas Service, and all other programmes were cancelled for the period when the results were being announced.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this period special election bulletins and newsreels were transmitted each hour. For its part, the European Service had been anticipating intensive broadcasting for several months before the election took place. 'As the election draws nearer,' Lindley Fraser, Head of the German Service, had written in October 1949, 'we shall I hope see to it that as many active politicians, whether MPs, candidates for Parliament or others, as we can get hold of will come to the microphone to write scripts suitable for European use.'<sup>3</sup> The North American Service, too, was soon anticipating election bulletins every quarter of an hour and 'a running commentary by a news analyst of the calibre of Vernon Bartlett'.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, it was far ahead of the BBC's Home Service.

Tangye Lean was nervous about 'magnifying' British Party differences for European audiences<sup>5</sup>—just what the Americans welcomed and what the British were never offered—but as the election went ahead there was mounting interest in both continents. Listener Research suggested that interest was especially lively in Poland, particularly in 'the elimination of Communist candidates', and especially keen in Holland, where it was thought that the BBC's coverage was inadequate. There was a great deal of 'cross-listening' to what was being said to the BBC's listeners in Britain itself and much searching (in vain) for cogent interpretations of what was 'going on' in the Britain of 1950. 'In general,' a BBC analysis of the evidence concluded, 'more people thought that we should have given more time to the elections than that we had given too much.'<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the Americans might have thought about the efficiency of BBC sound broadcasting in 1950, they were surprised by the lack of progress in political broadcasting by

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Douglas Ritchie, General Overseas Service Organizer (and formerly 'Colonel Britton'), 28 March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Sir John Crocker, the Adjutant-General, to Haley, 5 Dec. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Fraser to Lean, 1 Oct. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Pelletier, 11 Jan. 1950; Ritchie to Hole, 19 Jan. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Lean to Barnes, 23 March 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Miss K. S. Dyson to Lean, 15 May 1950.

television. 'American television went all out for elections and got a lot of credit for it,' Cecil Madden had rightly told McGivern as early as October 1948. 'Whether we can or not is worth keeping at the back of our mind.'<sup>1</sup> Chester Wilmot was convinced that televising election results provided 'an opportunity not to be missed' and Ian Orr-Ewing envisaged a 'skeleton plan' long before the Governors did, but a firm *cannot* soon come from Broadcasting House.<sup>2</sup> 'I discussed briefly with D.H.B. the question of television and the general election,' McGivern told Collins. 'He in turn talked to D.G. I understand that because of our constitution we cannot *approach* political bodies and therefore televising of campaign meetings is out, unless they ask!'<sup>3</sup> Collins quickly reiterated that everything had to go through 'the political machine'.<sup>4</sup>

For this reason, therefore, the 1950 election, like the 1945 election, was essentially a 'microphone election',<sup>5</sup> although the closeness of the result meant that there was less chance in 1950 than there had been five years before of the electorate becoming 'too absorbed in the important figures of the various parties to devote proper and judicious attention to the choice of its representatives'.<sup>6</sup> The 'horror' that 'politicians will not only have to sound right, they will have to look good as well' was not yet realized.<sup>7</sup> Ian Orr-Ewing might suggest modestly that the television operations room could be made 'more entertaining by obtaining photographs of the leading candidates . . . and by covering the more prominent of these not with still photographs but with films taken during the campaign',<sup>8</sup> and McGivern might point out that while the televising of party

<sup>1</sup> \*Madden to McGivern, 30 Oct. 1948. Although both the American Democrats and Republicans chose Philadelphia for their 1948 Conventions on the grounds that it was the best television centre, Truman made little of television in his presidential campaign. For its role, see E. Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty* (1975), pp. 110-12.

<sup>2</sup> \*Orr-Ewing to McGivern, 9 Dec. 1948. A few days earlier Madden had said that 'there was always the remote possibility of the Government going down' (Note to McGivern, 22 Nov. 1948). Wyndham Goldie, *Facing the Nation*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 7 Dec. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 3 Jan. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> *Time and Tide*, 16 June 1945.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. *The Times*, 27 July 1945, 'The Microphone in Politics'.

<sup>7</sup> A telling phrase from an article by Howard Thomas, 'Few Golden Election Voices', in the *Sunday Graphic*, 17 June 1945.

<sup>8</sup> \*Orr-Ewing to McGivern, 9 Dec. 1948.

political broadcasts by politicians from Broadcasting House would make 'dull television . . . an Outside Broadcast of a polling booth and of part of a Count would be good'.<sup>1</sup> Yet Collins—under instruction—had to reply that 'the selection of a particular booth or Town Hall . . . would be politically invidious' and that the best that could be offered when the results were coming in was 'some piece of apparatus' in the studio 'like the score-board at Lords which would enable us to show the figures neatly and efficiently'.<sup>2</sup> McGivern continued to ask for outside broadcasts from Parliament Square and other places by night,<sup>3</sup> and Raymond Baxter quoted an article in *The Observer* in 1935 which asked for Wigan or Durham, King's Lynn or Cardiff to figure among a number of 'spotlighted' constituencies.<sup>4</sup>

Haley and Nicolls quickly made it clear that in their view 'we cannot come to any decision at all until much nearer the time', and Collins passed on the message to McGivern. Like Haley, who was sceptical for other reasons, Collins felt that the parties would be reluctant to add television to their election commitments until television coverage was national.<sup>5</sup> This forecast proved correct, for when the matter was reopened later in the year at their December conference with the BBC, the parties unanimously rejected the idea, put before them by the Corporation, of televising a number of election broadcasts from the studio or outside. 'Every effort was made to interest them,' Barnes claimed, 'but the matter in their view did not even admit of argument.' Collins was disappointed, but not surprised. He knew that Barnes was right on this point.<sup>6</sup>

Barnes himself had recognized that 'the extension of the sound broadcast arrangements to television simply by placing a camera in the studio would (a) be poor programme value; (b) because of Television's short programme hours compared to Sound, either lead to the swamping of the television programme with election broadcasts or, if there were fewer than in Sound, would make difficult the assignment of the agreed proportion; and (c) form an awkward precedent for televising all Ministerial and Party Political Broadcasts'. Yet his approach

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 17 Dec. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 21 Jan. 1949.      <sup>3</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 8 Feb. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Raymond Baxter to de Lotbinière, 14 Dec. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Collins to McGivern, 14 Feb. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Barnes to Collins, 20 Dec. 1949; Collins to Barnes, 21 Dec. 1949.

to political broadcasting—as to News policy—was very different from that of a journalist. For him, the main role of television at election time had to be ‘educational’—‘by televising such things as the nomination of the candidates, canvassing and the Declaration of the Poll’. He accepted almost without question the cancellation of any television programmes between dissolution and polling day ‘which might influence the elector’. *Newsreel*, he insisted, would have to be very careful even about its selection of pictures.<sup>1</sup>

There were two interesting innovations early in 1950 which pointed to a very different future. First, an unsigned and undated note in the BBC Archives reads, ‘Possible election: British programme. Consult Herbert Nicholas, Tutor at Exeter College, Oxford. Subject: politics. Has been commissioned to do study of the next elections as McCallum did for the last election.’ Nicholas’s main collaborator was to be David Butler, then a student of Nuffield College, who was to prepare the statistical appendix to Nicholas’s survey, and it was *via* this note (and R. B. McCallum’s advice) that one of the best-known, and most enthusiastic, of all the television commentators at general election times entered television. Second, Grace Wyndham Goldie, who was not only to make the most of Butler but to initiate or sponsor many fascinating innovations in political broadcasting, suggested a ‘special programme’ on election night, complete with outside broadcasts. There was an agreeable note of astringency in her first sentence recommending her proposal. ‘I take it that it would be impossible for television on that evening to ignore the elections altogether.’<sup>2</sup>

Already Mrs. Wyndham Goldie had approached the British Council about the possibility of showing one of its films, *General Election*. She had also been talking with Chester Wilmot, the military historian, and the Art Editor of the Bureau of Current Affairs, about an election map, and had been consulting both McCallum (who was to take part in the results programme) and Butler about the best way to present the election results on the screen. She—and Butler—must have been chagrined to receive a note from Collins that, ‘though we are fully at liberty to

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 15 Nov. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to McGivern, 16 Jan. 1950. See also Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, pp. 64 ff.

analyse the results as they come through and draw such historic comparisons as may be relevant, we must scrupulously avoid anything that may be interpreted as political prophecy'.<sup>1</sup> The costs of the programme were to be kept down to £400,<sup>2</sup> but it was to be allowed to continue after midnight. (In fact it went on until after 1 a.m.) 'Not agreed that we shall be behind Sound with the *totals*,' Collins himself insisted. 'In comparison with the totals the individual results are frivolous.'<sup>3</sup> Collins watched the whole show from his office and discussed the 'lessons' with Mrs. Wyndham Goldie. She more than anyone else realized how much depended on improvisation and volunteer effort.

Given the restraints, Television made its debut as successfully as it could have done, largely due to the contribution made by Alan Chivers and the OB Unit which presented a programme of results from Trafalgar Square. The *Daily Mail* had its results board there and co-operated admirably in the pioneering arrangements. 'Without the sense of reality which the Trafalgar Square scenes gave,' wrote Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to de Lotbinière, 'the programme would have been much less a thing.' A print of the camera positions was kept as a historic document.<sup>4</sup>

What Dimbleby and other BBC commentators had to announce was exciting, particularly on 24 February, the day after the poll, when what the evening newspapers called 'the battle of the gap' (a subject very congenial to Chester Wilmot) was still raging. The two Parties were running neck and neck in the afternoon of the first day after the election, and BBC programmes were interrupted to announce each new result as a Labour lead was wiped out and re-established four times. It was not until 27 February that returns came in from the last outlying constituencies. The final result was Labour 315, Conservative 298, Liberals 9 (this was the election when BBC

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 31 Jan. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Madden to S. T. Hobson, 15 Feb. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 11 Feb. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*McGivern to de Lotbinière, 23 Jan. 1950, asking for 'a site with a big board'; Michael Henderson to de Lotbinière, 27 Jan. 1950, suggesting the *Daily Mail* board; H. A. Manning of the Ministry of Works to Chivers, expressing no official objection, 13 Feb. 1950; Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to de Lotbinière, 27 Feb. 1950. A photograph of the camera position by V. E. Hughes was sent to de Lotbinière by the Marconi Company.

announcers tired themselves out saying that the Liberal candidate had forfeited his deposit), and Irish Nationalists 2. One conclusion seemed clear—that there would be only a short interlude between the 1950 election and the next. ‘New Election to end Stalemate’ was a *Daily Mirror* headline on 25 February, and two days later the Co-operative Sunday newspaper *Reynolds News* was already looking forward to ‘the next battle’. The *Daily Telegraph* thought that there might be another election ‘perhaps not later than the autumn’.<sup>1</sup>

In the event, although the BBC’s Board of Governors began to consider arrangements for the next general election as early as May 1950, it did not take place until October 1951. On this occasion, the BBC’s General Advisory Council examined and discussed the broadcasting pattern before the Governors made up their minds. The Conservative politician, Duncan Sandys, who was a member of the General Advisory Council, had made what seemed to be controversial suggestions for extending the range of political broadcasting, and it was felt that the Council, which included several other politicians, should be directly consulted. Sandys suggested at the meeting that a period should be allocated each day during an election for short statements on behalf of each Party, that there should be summaries of the speeches made by its spokesmen, and that there should be more of a continuing dialogue throughout.

These, however, were only a few of the points raised in a BBC paper prepared for the General Advisory Council meeting, when the opportunity was taken to air a number of old and new questions. The other points included Budget broadcasts; party political broadcasts between elections (the current allotment for 1950 was six Labour, five Conservative, and one Liberal); broadcasts by ‘independents’ or people who had left their parties; the possibilities of debates at election times as well as speeches; the balance of speakers at elections; and the position of the Nationalist parties. The main requests under the last of these headings were that ‘there should be broadcasts in Welsh by all the political parties in Wales’ and that Scottish Nationalists should be able to broadcast in English on the

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 25 Feb. 1950. \*Cf. Note by Collins, 28 Feb. 1950: ‘it is reasonable to assume we shall be having another General Election within the next few months.’



Scottish Home Service. The case was put officially, but the general view expressed was that 'only Parties seeking a majority in the House of Commons should qualify for a broadcast'.<sup>1</sup>

There was only one reference to television as such in the paper. The extension of the form of 'radio press conference' to television 'has possibilities', it was stated. 'Unfortunately there is no obvious way in which a member of the Opposition can be given an equal place of honour with the Minister.' Barnes referred at the General Advisory Council meeting to a televised conference with Sir Stafford Cripps on the 'economic situation', which, he said, was 'admirably suited to Television', and he made a further reference to television in introducing his paper. 'Television', he said, 'is now becoming an important factor.' Yet while the BBC 'saw no difference between Vision and Sound where such things as the principle of political impartiality were concerned', the Parties themselves, he said, 'saw a definite division between the two and had shown a reluctance to embark upon political television broadcasting'.<sup>2</sup>

The main point in the basic paper prepared for the General Advisory Council was a familiar one—that between elections it would still be regarded 'as highly undesirable for broadcasting to be allowed to become a simultaneous debating arena with Parliament'. 'Can the Council suggest a formula,' members were asked, 'which would give the BBC greater latitude while safeguarding the interests of Parliament?' Once again the mood of the Council was conservative, and a formula suggested by Evan Durbin, the Labour MP, was not accepted. It would have involved the leading speaker for the Government in the debate on the second reading of a major Bill and the leading speaker for the Opposition appearing at the microphone on consecutive days *after* the vote had been taken 'to place their arguments before the public'.<sup>3</sup>

The BBC did not change any of its policies as a result of the meeting of the General Advisory Council. Indeed, the meeting reinforced the *status quo*. No significant support was given to the

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 11 May 1950; General Advisory Council, Verbatim Report, 15 June 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by Barnes, 'Broadcasting and Parliament', 31 May 1950; Summary of the Discussion, Aug. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Durbin's idea was not to sway Parliament but 'to assist the democratic process by making political leaders known to the public' (Barnes to Haley, 14 July 1948).

suggestion that political parties other than the three main parties should be represented in political broadcasting between elections,<sup>1</sup> and although a 'livelier' form of party political broadcasting was advocated, 'the practical difficulties involved were seen to be great, and no recommendation was made'.<sup>2</sup> The restrictive rules about broadcasts relating to subjects of legislation before Parliament were strongly supported—among others, by Sandys—and no 'suggestion for their alteration was made'. At the same time, Sandys, who emphasized that he wanted 'improvements' not radical changes, received little support for his innocuous suggestion that the Parties should give up part of a broadcast time allotted to them to provide a nightly summary of the main points included in election addresses. There was little support either for an idea, not mooted for the first time, that there should be Regional electioneering broadcasts, although Barnes himself seems to have confused Regional claims with the very different claims of the Welsh and Scottish Nationalist Parties. A characteristic speech supporting the *status quo* was that of Lord Llewellyn. 'The BBC had done pretty well in the past with regard to General Election broadcasts and they ought to be careful before altering the present system.'

In the light of later BBC history, it is interesting to note that Haley by-passed a speaker who suggested that there might be more political journalism and that BBC commentators might sometimes replace MPs in the programme *The Week at Westminster*. The BBC had discovered many good backbench broadcasters, Haley said, and 'it had become almost a tradition'. Yet the Council as a whole was chary about using MPs for other broadcasts. 'The Radio Doctor', Barnes explained, 'had ceased to give advice on the air on becoming an MP.' Douglas Houghton, who had formerly broadcast on the series *Can I Help You?*, no longer gave such regular broadcasts now that he was in the House; and while Fitzroy MacLean's *Eastern Approaches* had been chosen as the *Book at Bedtime*, 'the BBC had not allowed the author to read it'. No one directly challenged this policy. Did anyone smile?

<sup>1</sup> \*The Socialist Party of Great Britain asked to be allowed a broadcast in a letter of 19 Feb. 1951 and the Independent Labour Party in a letter of 13 April 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Summary of the Discussion by Barnes.

'One of the strengths of the BBC in conducting political broadcasting in conjunction with the parties,' Haley explained, 'was that the rules had been simple and the arithmetic of them elementary.' Critics who wished to replace them had to fall back on 'complicated calculations'. The Governors were no more willing than the Council to add to the complications.<sup>1</sup> Nor were the political parties. 'The view of the Government', William Whiteley, the Labour Chief Whip, told Haley in February 1951, 'is that on the whole the broadcasting arrangements at the last general election were satisfactory and that nothing has so far happened to require a revision of the principles then agreed.'<sup>2</sup> Patrick Buchan-Hepburn replied on almost exactly the same lines a little later,<sup>3</sup> as did Jo Grimond. 'Our view, which . . . accords with that of the Government and I rather think with that of the Conservative Party, though I have had no direct discussions with them, is that the arrangements made for national broadcasting at the last Election were satisfactory.'<sup>4</sup>

Given such unanimity, it did not seem necessary to hold a formal meeting of the political parties. Yet in the meantime the Beveridge Committee had stated unequivocally that it wished to see broadcasting 'used more and more as a means of assisting the democracy to understand the issues upon which it is required to decide at elections'. There should be 'more and not less opportunity than at present for free political debate through the microphone' in the interval between elections, its Report went on, and during 'the hitherto closed period of the election campaign' there should be greater opportunity for 'broadcasts both national in scope and limited to particular Regions'.<sup>5</sup> 'Fair play' meant that an opportunity should be presented 'for minorities to turn themselves into majorities'. 'Bold . . . experiments' should be undertaken by the National Commissions, and in order that the BBC as a whole could 'avoid too complete subservience to the views of organised

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 Sept. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Whiteley to Haley, 8 Feb. 1951, in reply to a letter sent by Haley to Whiteley, Buchan-Hepburn and Grimond on 11 Oct. 1950, suggesting a new conference. Grimond was the first to reply on 18 Oct. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Buchan-Hepburn to Haley, 8 Feb. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Grimond to Haley, 14 March 1951.

<sup>5</sup> Cmd. 8116 (1951), para. 265, p. 69.

Parties', it should 'be able to call on a committee of advisers specially appointed for this purpose, advisers recognised as people who would put the right of free democratic speech at the microphone and elsewhere above all other values'.<sup>1</sup>

The Beveridge Committee realized that support for the *status quo* rested on an alliance, tacit or explicit, between the BBC and the major political parties, which interestingly enough included the Liberal Party; but when Haley drew the attention of the Governors of the BBC to the relevant Beveridge recommendations, they showed that they were still no more interested than they had been or than the political parties were in changing the rules at election times. Haley himself gave the lead. 'If there were to be any extension of the number of Party political broadcasts allotted during an Election period . . . it could only be done by having more than one broadcast on a number of evenings. It is open to question whether this would be welcome to the listener or politically desirable. The effect might well be to diminish the effectiveness of the broadcasts.'<sup>2</sup>

The most important changes in the pattern of political broadcasting were to come only after the BBC's monopoly had been broken and a new period had begun in communications history. At a meeting, therefore, of the three main political parties held at the Home Office on 21 September 1951, when the long-awaited general election was pending,<sup>3</sup> it was agreed—as could have been predicted with certainty—that exactly the same arrangements should be followed as for the 1950 election. R. A. Butler for the Opposition, which was on the eve of a return to power, said that he hoped that there would be no party political broadcasts during the week preceding the dissolution and that existing bookings would be withdrawn, while the Liberals, who had made one such booking, agreed to withdraw it without discussion.<sup>4</sup> The formula for allotting the number and order of the electioneering broadcasts was fixed as before, and Haley promised that the BBC would not broad-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* See also para. 264, p. 68, for an attack on Clause 6 (iv) and the conception of the 'closed period' which was said to be 'open to serious objection'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by Haley for the Governors, 6 Feb. 1951; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 20 Feb. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Dissolution was fixed for 5 October.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Haley, 21 Sept. 1951.

cast politically controversial programmes after midnight on 4 September.<sup>1</sup>

Only one possible change was seriously considered—that of introducing strictly limited television—and in this connection the BBC, for all its inhibitions, was still far ahead of the political parties. Between the publication of the Beveridge Report and the general election there had been a marked increase in ‘controversial’ television broadcasting, less a consequence of the Report than of the growth of the new medium. *In the News* was always cited as the main contribution to a new style of political broadcasting,<sup>2</sup> and in Sound, too, the Light Programme now offered *Argument*, an unscripted and unrehearsed programme, first transmitted in January 1951. The initial run of three programmes had soon been extended to four, then to twelve and later to sixteen. Graham Hutton, who had never shirked controversial topics on the air (or on the screen), had written to *The Times* in October 1950 complaining of the ‘recent ironing out of real controversy on topical questions’,<sup>3</sup> and the decision to launch a new programme followed soon afterwards.<sup>4</sup> *Argument* was to go farther than any previous programme had done, even if what Hutton had called ‘brilliant flashes of silence’ were not always followed by brilliant verbal polemics.

It was obvious that television as a medium would raise some of the most difficult issues in political broadcasting—‘the projection of individual profiles rather than party programmes’, for example, or concentration on ‘personality rather than balance’.<sup>5</sup> Even during the last years of huge audiences for Sound, some of these issues could not be shelved. In May 1951 the Governors were trying to get the best of every world, noting

<sup>1</sup> This was the formula used in a directive to Controllers and Directors on 25 Sept. 1951. A meeting of responsible BBC officials had been held on 16 May 1951 to discuss operational procedures. Those present included John Green, John Snagge, E. W. S. Porter and Lord Archie Gordon.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 599.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Current Affairs Meeting, *Minutes*, 24 Oct. 1950; Spoken Word Meeting, *Minutes*, 2 Nov. 1950; Meeting of Producers, 24 Nov. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> The *Evening Dispatch* (Edinburgh) had a good article on ‘Profile Politics’ on 14 July 1951. It even prophesied that ‘if television politics develop, the women M.P.s will have an enhanced value to their parties because of their greater attraction’. Cf. *Birmingham Post*, 17 July 1952, where the view that television was a ‘new instrument of mass appeal’ was challenged in the light of American experience. Instead ‘it debunked and made ridiculous all the ballyhoo of publicity’.

that 'political balance' was proving less easy to maintain on Television than on Sound, yet expressing the hope at the same time that rectification would not be done 'at the expense of liveliness'.<sup>1</sup> The concept of 'liveliness', however, was generating its own anxieties, as was the 'unscriptedness' of television. Haley himself urged a re-examination of BBC policy following the letter by Hutton, and the Spoken Word Monthly Meeting considered carefully how to find speakers 'who would handle argument intelligently without resorting to mere wrangling'.<sup>2</sup> Not all critics felt, however, that such speakers had not so far been found. Thus, W. E. Williams headed a critique of recent political broadcasting which he published in *The Observer* 'The Cost of Liveliness'; and in referring to Lord Hailsham, Dr. Hill and Barbara Castle, among others, who 'have laid about each other with considerable heartiness' for the sake of Light Programme listeners on Wednesday night *Argument* programmes, he concluded that 'the argument, however spirited, has sometimes become inept, and, occasionally, downright silly. . . . In its determination to be lively at all costs, *Argument* seems to be borrowing some of the technique of the bogus wrestling arena.'<sup>3</sup>

Other critics were picking out Tom Driberg and Randolph Churchill as the leading warriors in what they called 'mock battles', but they almost all felt that Dr. Hill and Douglas Houghton had led the way. Most of them pointed, too, to Kenneth Adam's policy as Controller of the Light Programme, which was anticipating in this context—as in others—lines later followed by television. He had taken great pride, for example, in the fact that the biggest Light Programme audience ever—eleven million—had been attracted to *Argument* and that it deliberately appealed to popular tastes.<sup>4</sup>

'Programmes in which political speakers are free to attack or praise the Government,' wrote one newspaper, 'are drawing huge dividends in terms of listening figures; the cult of raising the national pulse-beat and making the blood boil has caught

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 10 May 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Spoken Word Meeting, *Minutes*, 2 Nov. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 4 March 1951. \*Cf. a Note by Barnes himself, 22 Feb. 1951, in which he stated that 'the speeches have so far, on balance, emitted more sparks than steady light'.

<sup>4</sup> *Reynolds News*, 25 Feb. 1951.

on. Being annoyed is a new pleasure.<sup>1</sup> There was some slowing down of tempo later in 1951, however—the Festival of Britain, itself highly controversial in its origins, was sometimes given as a reason<sup>2</sup>—after it had become abundantly clear that the ‘hot talk’ being offered was not to everyone’s taste, including Winston Churchill’s. ‘A puerile, barren exhibition’, was one listener’s description even of the first programme, while Churchill complained that there was inadequate Conservative representation, and threatened to raise the matter at a meeting with the other political parties.<sup>3</sup> Abuse and congratulation remained divided as listeners recognized a change in BBC policy as much as a change in style, and the programmes attracted as many listeners as *Palace of Varieties* (30 per cent of the audience) as against 23 per cent for the comedian Charlie Chester, 22 for Frankie Howerd, and 14 per cent for Eric Barker.<sup>4</sup>

Barnes’s own conclusion in May 1951 was that ‘unscripted controversy’ in politics had ‘attendant dangers’ as well as advantages, among them that ‘points vital to public understanding of the issue or to political balance tend to be overlooked in the heat of the fray’. He was at one with the critics also in believing that the programme might ‘foster in the audience a contempt for sober debate’. After one ‘quieter’ *Argument* a listener had written in, ‘Much too mild. We like to see plenty of blood flowing.’<sup>5</sup> A year later when the size of audiences had fallen steeply, Barnes noted that the programmes which had won most praise had always been those which were ‘most acrimonious’. ‘Moral indignation and the lightning riposte are spice for the listeners this programme attracts.’<sup>6</sup>

If the *Daily Express* was right in assuming that ‘the greatest of all listening treats is the opportunity of eavesdropping on someone else’s private quarrel’, the country’s taste was certainly changing.<sup>7</sup> This may well have marked, indeed, the beginning of a major shift in attitudes; and, not surprisingly, established politicians—even before the age of television—were showing signs of nerves as they faced competition from the ‘brighter’

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Chronicle*, 25 March 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 12 April 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Churchill to Haley, 12 April 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report by Barnes, 1 March–10 May 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note of 4 March 1952.

<sup>7</sup> *News Chronicle*, 16 Jan. 1951; *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Feb. 1951.

broadcasters. The Press, also not surprisingly, was most critical of those politicians who were most conventional. 'Mostly they lack both originality and fire' was one comment. 'They repeat well-worn party clichés . . . [and their party political broadcasts] are discussed afterwards by the man in the street rather as sermons are apt to be discussed.'<sup>1</sup>

The small television element in the general election of 1951 was not designed to change radically any of the 'traditional' approaches to political broadcasting. Lord Tedder, the Acting Chairman of the Governors of the BBC, urged the parties to include television in the arrangements, but Haley felt that 'the most that can be hoped for' would be 'three individual broadcasts on Television' with 'a repetition of the Sound broadcasts—in Sound only—on the Television channel at the end of the normal programme'.<sup>2</sup> The Parties themselves, not the BBC, would be responsible for them, as was the case in sound broadcasting.

This, indeed, was the outcome. Lord Samuel appeared on the screen for the Liberals, Sir Hartley Shawcross for the Labour Party, and Anthony Eden for the Conservatives. Samuel, speaking 'solo' for fifteen minutes, was the first to perform, so that *The Times* was right to hail his appearance as a pioneering achievement, adding, with perhaps a little more qualification, that 'if what has happened in America may be better as a guide, this is a landmark in British history'. Even then, its assessment, like Samuel's performance, was conservative rather than radical. 'The BBC thus finds its responsibilities grow more weighty, but, in throwing television open to politics, it can build on the generally admirable plans laid down for sound broadcasting.'<sup>3</sup>

Samuel overran his time and still had his peroration cut, yet most sections of the Press greatly preferred his broadcast to the last of the broadcasts, that on behalf of the Labour Party, in which Mayhew, by now a highly experienced television journalist, talked to Sir Hartley Shawcross. They rated it higher also

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 20 March 1951. Significantly the same article criticized a recent Churchill broadcast on technical grounds, a very interesting departure. It still praised his 'magnetic role', however, and described him as 'the greatest living exponent of exhortation by radio' in the darkest war days.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 24 Sept. 1951; Letter to R. J. Taylor, 27 Sept. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1951.



than the Eden broadcast the night before, even though Eden, carefully rehearsed, had been interviewed by the highly professional veteran of cinema newsreel and television, Leslie Mitchell. There was an immediate argument about a cost-of-living graph which he used and which Labour Party spokesmen claimed the following night had distorted the facts, and there was a concomitant argument, equally interesting, as to whether the BBC had any responsibility to produce a graph for Mayhew's use. Were not the Parties responsible? The BBC, desperately short of equipment, resolved prudently that in future there should be no doubt and that all such 'visual aids' should be left entirely to the political parties.

Barnes had been uneasy about the whole process of televising the politicians, and Mrs. Wyndham Goldie was appalled by 'the high plane of ignorance and unreality' displayed by her own BBC colleagues in Broadcasting House when they turned to television.<sup>1</sup> Barnes disliked the presence of the interviewers altogether and the 'hesitating, ingratiating manner which was supposed to represent conversation'. He would have welcomed more 'quick-fire questions' of the type put by an American interviewer, and he felt that in the long run 'the direct appeal by the single speaker, possibly with some visual aids' might 'well turn out to be the best electioneering'.<sup>2</sup>

Such peering into the future, however, was not the BBC's main concern when the election campaign started, and when it ended the Governors were careful not to commit the BBC to such broadcasts in future. They preferred again to leave them entirely to the Parties.<sup>3</sup> The Corporation had certainly been cautious in all other matters. Thus, the 'close period' from 3 October to 25 October had been very carefully observed, and Sound broadcasts followed exactly the same pattern as in 1950. The script of a Third Programme talk by R. L. Meek on Ricardo was scrutinized, therefore, to see whether it included hidden references to current economic problems, and this was only one of a 'list of doubtful talks'.<sup>4</sup> Nicolls repeated his usual

<sup>1</sup> Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 19 Oct. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 8 Nov. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ronald Lewin to Miss Somerville, 20 Sept. 1951; Note by J. C. Thornton to all Talks Producers, 26 Sept. 1951.

injunctions,<sup>1</sup> and it was even thought desirable to cancel broadcasts of a religious service from a church associated with Charles Kingsley on the grounds that he had been a Christian Socialist and of the Alamein Reunion in the Albert Hall on the grounds that Churchill, the Leader of the Conservative Party, was to be present.<sup>2</sup> In addition, there were special instructions for television. 'Television, with its frequent unscripted programmes, must exert a special and completely thorough supervision during the "close period"'. All performers must be specifically warned of the necessity to observe this strict ruling.'<sup>3</sup>

There was more criticism of the policy in the Press than ever before. 'This is the time for controversy, for the spreading of facts and information and for the broadcasting of political wit and election jokes,' George Darling, a former Labour MP and participant in *Argument*, wrote in the *News Chronicle*, but he added at once, 'don't blame the BBC. The party machines are the culprits. They have been too sensitive and do not appear to appreciate that broadcasting has not only brought big changes in the social lives of people but has also changed the character of electioneering. The BBC ought to be encouraged to make our elections brighter.'<sup>4</sup> Douglas Houghton, one of the victims—and by then a highly experienced broadcaster—added tersely: 'This is the time to put political discussions, lusty arguments and even touches of asperity on the air, not the time to take them off.'<sup>5</sup>

What the critics did not know was the extent of the enterprise being shown in television despite the system of restraints. Indeed, most of the critics were still thinking mainly in terms of sound broadcasting. As early as April 1951 Grace Wyndham Goldie was carefully meditating how best to proceed if an election were held in the autumn,<sup>6</sup> and while she had no

<sup>1</sup> \*Circular by Nicolls, 26 Sept. 1951. 'The aim [in the close period]', Haley stated categorically in a circular of 25 Sept., was 'not to ensure balance but to obtain exclusion. Voters can be influenced even by the most balanced broadcast.'

<sup>2</sup> A correspondent to the *News Chronicle* (12 Oct. 1951) suggested that in the light of the cancellation of the Kingsley broadcast *The Magnificent* should be banned for the close period. \*Note by Lewin, 20 Sept. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Directive by McGivern, 23 Sept. 1951. <sup>4</sup> *News Chronicle*, 12 Oct. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Mrs. Adams, 9 April 1951; Mrs. Adams to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 12 April 1951, asking her to design 'a format for handling the whole affair'.

influence on BBC policy during the 'close period', she could and did influence policy in relation to the announcement of the results. By April she had already been in touch with David Butler, who had now been engaged by Nuffield College to write the successor volume to that of Nicholas and was soon to visit the United States to observe political reporting with CBS.<sup>1</sup> Butler had become extremely interested in television techniques and wanted the BBC to show more of 'the works'—including computers and teletape machines—and when he watched television at home he liked quietly to imagine what was 'happening just off screen and in the producer's box'.<sup>2</sup> Mary Adams, then Head of Television Talks, agreed that he should be 'integrated' into BBC programme plans 'at an early stage'.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Wyndham Goldie demanded a greater degree of operational independence *vis-à-vis* Broadcasting House, including 'our own tape machines instead of telephones', and she wished to send OB camera teams into party headquarters and into the provinces to constituencies like Salford and Preston.<sup>4</sup> Mary Adams had encouraged her 'to arrive', if necessary, 'at a different scheme from the one we followed in the last election'<sup>5</sup>—a refreshing, even unique, invitation to innovate in political broadcasting—and she arranged, accordingly, several interviews with psephologists at 'experimental sessions' to try out new ideas like 'Peter Thompson's doodling device'.<sup>6</sup> Her instructions, particularly about the use of cameras, were precise and were often accompanied by diagrams.<sup>7</sup> Well-tried reporters, among them Richard Dimbleby, described as

<sup>1</sup> \*Butler to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 23 July 1951: 'They seem to live lives ten times more hectic than anything I've seen at Alexandra Palace,' he told her. His introduction to broadcasts in the United States was through the BBC North American Representative. 'Any experience which he could gain in America would be of considerable use to us for his further appearances here' (Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to N. G. Luker, 3 July 1951).

<sup>2</sup> \*Butler to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 20 May 1951. 'I shall never be able to watch', he added, 'with the simple-minded curiosity of the rest of my family.'

<sup>3</sup> \*Mrs. Adams to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 12 April 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Mrs. Adams, 10 July 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*Mrs. Adams to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 12 April 1951. The Home Office did not give its approval to cameras being taken inside the counting rooms until 8 October 1951 (Peter Dimmock to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 8 Oct. 1951). Salford congratulated itself on being first to declare its results.

<sup>6</sup> \*Mrs. Adams to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 12 April 1951; Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Norman Swallow, 21 Sept. 1951.

<sup>7</sup> \*For example, Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Swallow, 21 Sept. 1951.

our 'ace commentator', and Berkeley Smith, were to be sent out into the constituencies—the former to Salford, the latter to Fulham<sup>1</sup>—and in the studio there were to be 'animated diagrams' prepared by Alfred Wurmser and a 'ping-pong ball device'.<sup>2</sup> Lists of the names of candidates thought to be of particular interest to viewers were to be prepared with the help of the Parties, and Butler was to be backed by 'a team of research workers from Nuffield College'. Butler was to be accompanied on the screen by Nicholas and by Graham Hutton.<sup>3</sup>

All this activity required careful briefing and a bigger budget than in 1950—in this case £1,635.<sup>4</sup> Yet there could still be hitches. Everyone was willing to try to put out results for as long as possible, but the engineers were not sure whether they could work all night<sup>5</sup> and the News Editor did not want Television to have independent news tapes. 'We all know that the programme was successful,' a post-mortem read, 'because certain Engineers rushed madly and wisely across rules, opinions, and inspired revelations from above. The success of this ruthlessness should ensure the promotion, not the dismissal, of those concerned.'<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the reasons for its success, the television programme went off very well indeed, and congratulatory telegrams poured in of an 'unprecedented character', one of them from Norman Collins.<sup>7</sup> Listener response also was very favourable with a

<sup>1</sup> \*'Notes on the Election Programme', 9 Nov. 1951. Birmingham was chosen partly on the grounds that the local authorities were particularly helpful, even to the extent of being prepared 'within reason' to delay announcing results 'to suit our convenience' (B. Edgar to Mrs Wyndham Goldie, 11 Oct. 1951). For full details, see *Television News*, 15 Oct. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Swallow, 28 Sept. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Chester Wilmot would have been 'used' had he not been in Australia.

<sup>4</sup> \*Swallow to McGivern, 8 Oct. 1951. £555 was to be spent on OBs, £600 on artists, and £200 on designs. The briefing included detailed instructions to reporters in the provinces. 'Do not ask anyone for whom they voted . . . or what party they wish to win.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to McGivern, 1, 3 Oct. 1951.

<sup>6</sup> \*McGivern to Barnes, 6 Oct. 1951; 'Notes on the Election Programme', 9 Nov. 1951. Michael Balkwill was thanked by Grace Wyndham Goldie for doing an excellent job (letter of 31 Oct. 1951).

<sup>7</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Barnes, 29 Oct. 1951. She had never known such telegrams, she added, 'for any television production whatsoever'. She replied to Collins (2 Nov. 1951) saying that the whole idea of putting the election results on television was 'as one of the engineers said to me, very much your "baby" '.

reaction index of 85.<sup>1</sup> Very happy about the outcome, McGivern told Mrs. Wyndham Goldie when all was over how good it had been to have 'an official on whom one can so thoroughly rely to tackle such a task at such a time. The actual election itself was the climax to, not the whole of, your work and worry—and a most successful one.'<sup>2</sup> Already, however, Mrs. Wyndham Goldie was thinking of the next election. She knew how hard-pressed the members of her election team had been—as hard-pressed as they were enthusiastic—and she told Barnes at once that in view of the fact that another election in the near future was not impossible, she would like 'some discussion on methods of handling it which would not stretch willingness to quite such a degree as it was stretched on this occasion'.<sup>3</sup>

When all passion was spent, Haley also drew lessons for the future, although they concerned the electioneering programmes rather than the programme of results and they raised issues that were constitutional rather than operational in character. 'It is fairly clear that in years to come Television will play an increasing part in election campaigns. It is also clear, as last year's first broadcasts by the Parties showed, that there is going to be much more scope for elaboration than there is in Sound broadcasting by the Parties at the same time. In other words, an official Sound broadcast by one of the Parties in the course of the General Election costs the Party nothing. An official Television broadcast might cost the Party quite a lot in the way of specially prepared films and so on. Would this kind of expenditure by the Parties rank as accountable expenditure under the laws governing expenses at general elections? Could either the BBC or the Parties be got at for an improper use of money to influence the voter. . . ?'<sup>4</sup>

If there was no problem of 'improper influence' in relation to the sound broadcasts of 1951, there was continuing discussion of how much effective influence they exerted—or might exert—

<sup>1</sup> \*Viewer Research Bulletin, no. 24, Oct. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*McGivern to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 30 Oct. 1951; Andrew Miller-Jones to Mrs. Wyndham Goldie, 25 Oct. 1951, writing on behalf of the Programme Board: 'Praise was extended to you, not only for the programmes as they appeared on the screen but also for the conduct of the whole undertaking.' Norman Swallow (9 Nov. 1951) referred to 'a superb job of organisation'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Mrs. Wyndham Goldie to Barnes, 30 Oct. 1951. The staff, she said, had shown 'a complete disregard for their own convenience'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Haley to E. Robbins, 27 March 1952.

on the electorate. The average proportion of the listening public hearing the thirteen election speeches was slightly smaller than in 1950, but only slightly.<sup>1</sup>

AVERAGE AUDIENCES FOR  
PARTY POLITICAL BROADCASTS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Conservative Speakers</i>	<i>Labour Speakers</i>	<i>All Speakers</i>
	%	%	%
1950	41	36	38
1951	40	33	36

There was a 5-5-3 combination with Margaret Herbison leading off for the Labour Party and Attlee winding up. Churchill, Woolton, Hill and Eden were joined as Conservative speakers by Pat Hornsby-Smith, and Dingle Foot, Grimond and Byers represented the Liberal Party. Considered in party terms, the decline in audience affected Conservative speakers less than Labour speakers—a portent of the result, a small working majority for Churchill and his colleagues, although the Labour Party polled more votes.

The social pattern of listening was similar on both occasions—the “higher” the class, the greater the listening—but (again perhaps significantly) the Conservatives attracted a larger working-class audience than did the Labour speakers (34 per cent to 31). If Morrison had the largest share of the working-class audience, Hill had the second. Churchill, who came third in this respect, had the largest audience both of upper-middle-class and of lower-middle-class voters, with Attlee ninth among the thirteen broadcasters in relation to upper-middle-class voters and fourth in relation to lower-middle-class voters. The most assiduous listeners were the over fifty-year-olds, the least assiduous the sixteen to nineteen-year-olds; and men listened more than women. The second week’s broadcasts commanded larger audiences than did the first week’s. Such data were very valuable to the political parties, and it is not surprising that Morgan Phillips, the Secretary of the Labour Party, asked to have a record.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Listener Research Report, 20 Nov. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Morgan Phillips to Haley, 9 Feb. 1952; Haley to Phillips, 11 Feb. 1952.

European and Overseas listeners were again well catered for in 1951. There were several special programmes—for example, carefully arranged reports for Czechoslovakia on the campaign in one industrial and in one agricultural constituency, Newark and Banbury<sup>1</sup>—and informal discussions on the North American Service, whose listeners could hear William Clark and Robert McKenzie, who was later to be a ‘star’ on television.<sup>2</sup> Donald Baverstock was a member of the production team, and John Grist and Keith Kyle were also involved.<sup>3</sup> Oliver Whitley, then General Overseas Service Organizer, had asked broadcasters to relate their analyses more closely to the Gallup predictions, ‘now vindicated by three successive elections’, and there was a warm response both in the United States and Canada.<sup>4</sup> Whitley would also have welcomed a touch of ‘satire’—he was probably alone in this—for instance ‘a description of the strange shifts resorted to overseas to enable illiterate peoples to record votes’.<sup>5</sup>

How best to present the results of the election was considered at a special Election Briefing session.<sup>6</sup> ‘Vocals’—not only those with ‘unsuitable lyrics’—were carefully excluded, and ‘a quiet background of soft music’ was considered most appropriate.<sup>7</sup> Announcers were to follow previous practice.<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, everything seemed to go ‘without a hitch’ in

<sup>1</sup> \*Audrey Anderson to G. Macdonald, 10 Oct. 1951; Macdonald to the Czechoslovak Section, congratulating them on their work, 27 Oct. 1951. The European Service chose West Woolwich (J. A. Camacho to J. B. Clark, 8 Oct. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> See ‘Robert McKenzie: the Man under the Mortar-Board’ in *The Listener*, 18 Sept. 1975.

<sup>3</sup> So, too, from a different generation was Harold Nicolson. ‘I hope’, Derek Holroyde told them all, ‘we can get as much informality as possible into these Commentaries, and I think it will make for good broadcasting if the speakers are encouraged to feel quite free in making references to the fact that they have been watching the results by television’ (\*Note by Holroyde, 25 Oct. 1951).

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Oliver Whitley, 29 Oct. 1951; Pelletier to R. McCall, 6 Nov. 1951. There was a ‘descriptive actuality’ from a pit-head, where returns were being marked on cars as they went down the mine.

<sup>5</sup> \*Undated Note, ‘G.O.S. General Election Procedure, 1951’.

<sup>6</sup> \*Franklin Engelmann to D. Lloyd-James, 22 Oct. 1951.

<sup>7</sup> \*Kenneth Adam to Michael Standing, 26 Oct. 1951; Standing to Adam, 30 Oct. 1951. Oliver Whitley, then General Overseas Service Organizer, asked for no ‘braying ass records’ (Note of 29 Oct. 1951).

<sup>8</sup> \*A Retrospective Paper by John Snagge, 20 Sept. 1951, dealing with the election of 1950.

what Nicolls called 'a splendid job'.<sup>1</sup> 'We cannot speak too highly of the actual announcing throughout,' wrote Max-Muller, the Head of Outside Broadcasts (Sound). He believed, too, that Sound had scored points against Television. 'Those of us who were able to watch Television felt . . . that their summaries and facts and figures became boring to a degree.' Max-Muller's conclusion pointed to a familiar future pattern of response. 'I know of many people who turned to Television away from Sound solely to get more information.'<sup>2</sup>

Despite the precarious election result and the feeling that 'snap general elections' were always possible,<sup>3</sup> there was no further general election until 1955, by which time the number of television viewers had increased from just over three-quarters of a million to more than four and a half million. It was quite impossible in 1955, therefore, to deal with television as it had been dealt with in 1951. Yet the change was not simply quantitative. There were changes in outlook too—with a new Director-General and a new Director of the Spoken Word, Harman Grisewood. Between them, they encouraged greater informality and more regular contact with politicians, much of it personal and casual.<sup>4</sup> With the 'relaxation' came a willingness to reconsider old BBC policies. Thus, by November 1953, Grisewood was writing that 'some recent incidents involving negotiations with political parties raised the question whether the BBC's practice was right in offering facilities and withdrawing them in the absence of agreement'. This was a new question. So, too, was his further question—whether the BBC could be said to have discharged its duty to impartiality if it offered facilities and left the Parties to broadcast or not as they chose.<sup>5</sup> Similar questions were asked, too, by Jacob himself who had close personal experience of what went on in the Ministry

<sup>1</sup> \*Nicolls to Wellington and Hole, 29 Oct. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Max-Muller to Wellington, 2 Nov. 1951. The Board of Governors (*Minutes*, 8 Nov. 1951) congratulated 'all staff concerned on the excellent arrangements made for the broadcasting of the election results both on Sound and Television'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Peter Dimmock noted on 16 July 1954, 'Whenever I assume temporary charge of a Department, I am haunted by the thought that a snap general election may find us unprepared.'

<sup>4</sup> H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (1968), pp. 191-4.

<sup>5</sup> \*H. Grisewood, 'Agreement with the Parties as a Factor in Political Broadcasting', 20 Nov. 1953.



of Defence and the Cabinet Office; and it was significant that a group of Conservative MPs accepted an invitation to visit Alexandra Palace early in October 1952 and a group of Labour and Liberal MPs four weeks later.<sup>1</sup>

The 'recent incidents' included the offer of pre-election broadcasts in Northern Ireland, a proposal to televise the party conferences, and suggestions (in line with Beveridge's recommendations) that there should be 'separate pre-election broadcasts specially suited to the needs of Scotland and Wales'.<sup>2</sup> The failure to achieve a breakthrough suggested to Grisewood not that there should be withdrawal on the part of the BBC but rather that there should be a new attack. 'It is open to the BBC to apply what systems and procedures it thinks best to secure the best result; it need not choose one rather than another consistently over the years.' This, again, was a new note to sound, and Grisewood went much further. The BBC was not bound to treat all 'political broadcasting' as one category. Party conferences could be handled differently from general elections. 'Agreement among the parties' was not a principle but an expedient 'and should be used by the BBC as an expedient'. The primary duty of 'impartiality' remained, but there need be no 'continuing contract'.

Before this refreshing and important paper had been penned, the political parties had stated in 1952 that they did not wish to use television for ministerial broadcasts 'at present' on the grounds that 'it would be rather embarrassing and distracting for the speaker, who could hardly be expected to memorise his speech like a paid performer'.<sup>3</sup> There was obviously a deep suspicion, particularly within the Labour Party, of politics being treated as 'entertainment'. In March 1953, however, there were signs of change when it was agreed at a meeting attended by Crookshank, De La Warr, Buchan-Hepburn, Morrison, and Whiteley first that there should be televised Budget broadcasts and second that the Parties had the option of taking two of their existing quota of party political broadcasts

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Grisewood, 'Political Broadcasting', 13 March 1953.

<sup>2</sup> The BBC had invited the parties in Northern Ireland to attend a conference to arrange eight fifteen-minute broadcasts. The parties failed to agree, the offer was withdrawn, and there were no broadcasts (\*'The BBC and the Parties', Paper prepared for the General Advisory Council, 2 Dec. 1953).

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 25 March 1952.

on sound and television and two other television broadcasts outside the existing quota.<sup>1</sup> Although Labour Party objections to the televising of party conferences were strong and there was no agreement about ministerial broadcasts on television, other questions concerning the use of television, including general election broadcasts, were referred to a working party which first met in June. Its members included Edward Heath, Gilbert Longden and Mark Chapman-Walker for the Conservative Party and Anthony Wedgwood Benn, Edward Shackleton and Christopher Mayhew for the Labour Party, with Harman Grisewood in the Chair.<sup>2</sup> This was a politically powerful working party—at least in its potential—for most of its key members were leading politicians not of the past or even the present but of the future.

The working party agreed that 'Ministerial broadcasts on Television'—of the same kind as those allowed by the *aide-mémoire* on Sound—'should be given at any time when, in the public interest, the nation should be informed about matters of national concern' and that efforts should be made to obtain 'the maximum audience'. A decision to broadcast a reply should be taken within four days after the original broadcast, and if no agreement was reached within that time the BBC would be allowed to exercise its own judgement. At election times there should be three twenty-minute broadcasts each. The BBC said that it was willing to supply the Parties with appreciation index figures along with statistics concerning the number of listeners. The Liberals were not represented in this working party, and their position was not referred to in the final Report, even in relation to sound broadcasts at election times.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 24 March 1953; Note by Jacob, 'Political Broadcasting', 10 April 1953.

<sup>2</sup> The other members were Barnes, the Hon. John Hare, and Brigadier J. W. Hinchcliffe for the Conservatives, and William Pickles, Cyril Isaac, and David Ginsburg for the Labour Party. Meetings were held on 18 and 25 June, 1 and 24 July 1953. For Grisewood's relations with some of the members, see *One Thing at a Time*, pp. 193-4.

<sup>3</sup> \*Meetings of the Working Party on Political Broadcasting, Composite *Minutes*. Grisewood had prepared a paper covering the themes for the Governors, 13 March 1953. It was designed to consider 'television broadcasting during a General Election in the wider setting of the Corporation's practice generally' (Note by Grisewood, 19 Dec. 1952, describing a meeting he had held with a number of people concerned with political broadcasting, including Grace Wyndham Goldie and Michael Balkwill).

The conclusions were not all put into effect at once, and it was not until April 1956 that the first formal ministerial broadcast (by Eden) was given on television: he had been angry with the BBC in 1955 when he was not allowed, because of the ban on ministerial broadcasts, to announce the dissolution of Parliament and the date of the general election.<sup>1</sup>

Dislike of innovation in political broadcasting on Sound—even in relation to broadcasts between elections—had been apparent earlier, in March 1953—in a paper Grisewood prepared for the Governors. When Morgan Phillips had asked for ‘illustrated’ extracts in a programme in May 1952, he had been reminded that Hugh Dalton had been refused such permission in December 1951 when he wished to use an extract from a recording of a Conservative speech in a broadcast of his own. Such interpolations represented, in the Director-General’s phrase, ‘a breach with custom’.<sup>2</sup> Whatever he wanted in Sound, however, Morgan Phillips was very ‘negative’ in relation to Television, and the only real proposal for innovation to come from within the political parties in 1953 was made by Mark Chapman-Walker from Conservative headquarters. Viewers of party broadcasts, he suggested, should be allowed to ‘telephone in’ questions to the speakers. This time it was the BBC, through Barnes, which was resistant to what would now be called ‘access’ broadcasting.<sup>3</sup> The technique was tried out the next year, however, following a broadcast by Reginald Maudling, when it was claimed that ten thousand people ‘tried to make contact’ and there was ‘dislocation’ to telephones ‘all over the country’.<sup>4</sup> There was a further television innovation when Butler and Gaitskell decided to have separate television broadcasts after the 1954 Budget (with the same interviewer in each case) on the same day as their sound broadcasts.<sup>5</sup> Butler broadcast from 11 Downing Street and Gaitskell not from his home, as he had wished, but from Lime Grove.

Public opinion did not follow *The Times* in objecting to the televising of party conferences, a subject referred to David

<sup>1</sup> Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Grisewood, 19 Dec. 1952; Note by Haley, 5 May 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Chapman-Walker to Barnes, 6 Aug. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *National and English Review*, 1 Aug. 1954. Maudling replied to sixteen questions.

<sup>5</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 24 March 1953.

Butler and Robert McKenzie for comment inside the BBC.<sup>1</sup> Nor did public opinion stand by a vigorous definition of 'fair shares'—all parties or none—in relation to these and other broadcasts. The Executive of the Labour Party was itself divided, and if there were some Labour MPs and delegates (a majority) who were 'TV-shy', there were others who argued that television was 'welcome in politics because it can make democracy better informed'.<sup>2</sup> Morgan Phillips himself admitted that within a few years the conferences would be televised *in toto*.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime, Lord Hailsham insisted that the BBC could only discharge fairly 'its duty of impartiality in the matter of television by offering equal facilities to both parties and leaving it to each to decide whether to avail themselves of the opportunity'.<sup>4</sup> The *Daily Telegraph*, unlike Hailsham, thought that any other interpretation would provide 'fresh grounds for criticising the existing monopoly'.<sup>5</sup>

The BBC's General Advisory Council, doubtless concerned about the relationship between broadcasting and politics and party politics, came to the same conclusion as Hailsham—that no Party should have a veto. Broadcasting of conferences—or

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 26 Sept. 1953: 'Television would inevitably tend to draw them into one common mould. . . . The same arguments which have wisely convinced the parties throughout the years never to allow Parliament to be broadcast apply also to the party conferences. And, finally, there is the question whether there is not already enough political broadcasting of one kind and another.' Cf. *Yorkshire Post*, 30 Sept. 1953, 'I doubt whether any gathering could stand up to being televised continuously five or six hours a day. . . .' Butler and McKenzie wrote an interesting paper on the subject, 'Television and the Party Conferences', 12 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scotsman*, 3 Oct. 1953; cf. *Everybody's*, 14 May 1955, 'TV Frightens Them'; *The Economist*, 3 Oct. 1953. The 'Bevanites' were thought to be more sympathetic than the right-wingers, possibly because they had more star performers (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 Feb. 1954). See also p. 600.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of a Lunch, 22 Feb. 1954. Phillips remained happy about sound recordings in excerpt form, but even in 1954 still objected to television (Phillips to Mrs. Adams, 11, 27 May 1954).

<sup>4</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 8 Oct. 1953. Cf. a letter from Errington to *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1953 and *News Chronicle*, 2 Oct. 1953. 'T-Veto.' 'It is difficult to see why the obligation of the BBC to hold the scales evenly would not have been fulfilled so long as it had made a genuine offer of television facilities to each of the parties.'

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1953. Grisewood thought Errington's letter to *The Times* was 'seeking to show the BBC in a bad light' (\*Memorandum to Jacob, 9 Oct. 1953).

excerpts from them—‘should be regarded as coming within the general field of information, education and entertainment, which was for the BBC to present, or not, according to its ordinary [political] principles’.<sup>1</sup> It thereby prepared the way for one of the first really significant changes of practice in 1954, when the Conservative Party’s Conference was broadcast. A General Advisory Council resolution of December 1953 that ‘the BBC should not feel itself precluded from broadcasting one conference because the other Party did not agree to its own being broadcast’<sup>2</sup> was communicated to the political parties and confirmed by Grisewood to Sir Stephen Pierssené and Sir Eric Errington at the Conservative Central Office in April 1954.<sup>3</sup> The Labour Party, represented by Attlee and Morrison, continued to object to special programmes concerning the conferences, including film shots of scenes inside the conference halls, but discussions with the Conservative Party went ahead and the televising of the Conference was a great success.<sup>4</sup> In the meantime, Leonard Miall, Mary Adams’s successor as Head of Television Talks—he took over officially on 1 January 1954<sup>5</sup>—received congratulations from Lord Woolton. Writing of the occasion, he recorded that ‘Lord Woolton, R. A. Butler, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe and many others from the platform visited our booth during the sessions when we were transmitting material to be telerecorded in London and showed great interest in the operation. Both Mr. Eden and Mr. Butler were interviewed. There was some slight criticism of sharp questioning by Robert McKenzie during the second programme, but this was well liked by the officials at the Central Office.’<sup>6</sup>

Miall summed up the three main ‘lessons’ for the future. First, ‘we learnt how to do a highly difficult and fast editing operation with a minimum of political or programme embarrassment.’ Second, ‘we showed that the cameras could be

<sup>1</sup> \*General Advisory Council, *Minutes*, 9 Dec. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \**Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> \*Grisewood, Note of a Meeting, 7 April 1954. What the BBC was planning for television, Grisewood added, was a broadcast consisting of edited extracts with a team of commentators.

<sup>4</sup> \*Grisewood, Note of a Meeting with Morgan Phillips, 9 April 1954.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 604.

<sup>6</sup> \*L. Miall, Report of 25 Oct. 1954 (to Barnes).

present at a Conference without resulting in demagoguery or speakers playing to the audience outside.' Third, 'it was apparent that if the proceedings had been carried live, the programmes would have been better in interest, immediacy, and technical quality.' The lessons were not lost on Transport House. Privately, officials told Miall that they had missed an opportunity which might have been taken. Publicly the Labour Party Conference gave the National Executive of the Party a free hand to negotiate about the televising of the Conference for 1955. On the Conservative side Winston Churchill's resignation as Prime Minister and Sir Anthony Eden's acceptance of office on 6 April 1955 brought to Downing Street for the first time a political leader who liked appearing on television and was determined to make the most of it as a political weapon.

Given these developments inside and outside Broadcasting House, it is not surprising that long before the general election of 1955, MPs, according to taste, could either enthuse or complain that 'the old soap-box has gone for ever'. It was not only—or so it could be argued—that the 'great audience' was destroying the smaller audiences, but that power was being transferred from the political parties themselves to 'one or two not very knowledgeable officials in the BBC'.<sup>1</sup> There was some unfairness in this last charge, for although the BBC might be setting the style of discussion in political broadcasting, it was still not making the decisions. It was, after all, a conference of the political parties along the 'traditional' lines which determined sound and television 'quotas' in March 1955. Nine weeks' notice was to be given about party political broadcasts on television, and there were to be no ministerial broadcasts.<sup>2</sup>

Yet despite the fact that the political parties were making the decisions, they were not able, it seemed, completely to control events or trends. 'Since the 1950-1951 period,' Philip Goodhart wrote in 1954, 'both parties report a drop of up to 50 per cent in the average attendance at their meetings.' It was not simply the case that television politics was supplanting constituency

<sup>1</sup> Woodrow Wyatt in the *Daily Herald*, 15 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note on a Meeting of 10 March 1955; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 7 March 1955.

politics. One senior Labour Party official told Goodhart that he would never send canvassers to call on families on evenings when *What's My Line?* was being televised. Goodhart, unlike many Members of Parliament, was not gloomy about the possibilities. 'In television,' he maintained, 'there is a possible means of re-establishing personal contact between a mass electorate and its Parliamentary leaders.'<sup>1</sup>

Arrangements for the general election of May 1955, which proved to be a 'dull election [on] a dull polling day',<sup>2</sup> had long been in the course of preparation. Attention was paid from the start not only to what had happened at the previous election, but to what was happening to political broadcasting abroad, particularly in the United States,<sup>3</sup> a country which Miall knew well at first hand. Sound had been preparing since July 1953;<sup>4</sup> Television since March 1952, when members of both political parties had received their invitation to visit Alexandra Palace.<sup>5</sup> Since the previous general election, both the Welsh and Scottish National Broadcasting Councils had asked for special broadcast arrangements in Wales and Scotland, but these had not been conceded.<sup>6</sup> The main Parties had reduced their number of broadcasts, including the 'between election' broadcasts which they had saved out of quotas. The Liberals lost their two

<sup>1</sup> P. Goodhart, 'Fireside Politics' in the *Daily Telegraph*, 13 Feb. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*A. Stewart to Wellington, 15 June 1955; *Annual Register*, 1955, p. 24; H. G. Nicholas, *The British General Election of 1955* (1955), esp. ch. VI.

<sup>3</sup> \*See an unsigned paper, 'Coverage of U.S. Elections', Nov. 1954. For the Eisenhower/Stevenson campaign of 1952—and Stevenson's refusal to be 'merchandized like a breakfast food'—see Barnouw, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–40. Barnouw accuses him of waging a campaign of the radio age when the age was waning. 'The word was battling against the image, not knowing its strength.'

<sup>4</sup> \*Wellington had written to Grisewood on 15 July 1953 that 'Sound' had already begun 'to clarify practical procedures governing election broadcasts'. Outline proposals would be put in a drawer until needed. 'There seems no point in waiting until the election is upon us.'

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 671. \*Jacob summarized preparations already made for 1955 and what still needed to be done in a Note of 25 Feb. 1955; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 March 1955.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Grisewood, 13 March 1953; *Minutes* of a Meeting held on 24 March 1953; A. B. Oldfield-Davies to Jacob, 22 Sept. 1953; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 17 Sept. 1953; Grisewood to Buchan-Hepburn, 25 Sept. 1953; Jacob to Buchan-Hepburn, 22 Jan. 1954. Neither Nationalist Parties nor Communists put up the fifty candidates which would still have entitled them to a broadcast.

broadcasts after the six o'clock News, although they now had one out of nine following the nine o'clock News as against four each allotted to the Conservative and Labour Parties. All were repeated twice. There was also one Liberal television broadcast of fifteen minutes as against one of thirty minutes for the Conservatives and two of fifteen minutes for Labour.

There was considerably less interest in the broadcasts—and the election itself—than there had been in 1951, and commentators were divided in deciding whether to call it 'the apathetic election' or 'the TV election'. The former seems the better label in retrospect, for there is considerable doubt as to whether the election really was a 'TV election', as the *New Statesman* called it.<sup>1</sup> Before the campaign began, the Governors had been uneasy about the rule preventing Eden from making a ministerial broadcast announcing the dissolution on Television<sup>2</sup>—Eden had also been refused a ministerial broadcast after the Geneva Conference in May 1954—but they had to conform to policy, hoping to change the policy in future.<sup>3</sup> Consequently Eden, the Conservative leader, was heard by listeners but was only reported to viewers. The restraints continued, despite the public interest in the role of television, with almost everything that was political being transmitted from the studio, 'a solitary business . . . which does not communicate . . . enthusiasm'. Before there was any reason for talking about 'orthodox television techniques', this is how they could be described.

After the election had ended, *The Economist* stated sourly that 'there seems to be general agreement that there has not, after all, been a television election; and certainly no party made as effective use of the medium as the planning behind the programmes should have ensured', while for the *New Statesman*, which had hoped that there might have been cameras in Ebbw Vale, the one certain thing was that there would never be

<sup>1</sup> For the term 'TV Election', see the *New Statesman*, 14, 21 May 1955; *Daily Mirror*, 25 April 1955. For apathy, see *The Times*, 'The Anatomy of Apathy', 27 May 1955. Mass Observation, which carried out a survey in three London boroughs, not only revealed lack of interest among 25 per cent of electors but lack of political knowledge in those electors who had actually seen or heard political broadcasts: 65 per cent of viewers and 63 per cent of listeners could not remember the names of politicians they had seen or heard (*Manchester Guardian*, 9 June 1955).

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 634.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 14 April 1955.



another television election like this one. 'By the [next] time we shall have in addition to a second BBC television programme half a dozen or more commercial stations centred on the most densely populated parts of the country.' *The Listener's* television critic noted that no one on the winning side had claimed to have received any help from television, while the spokesmen for the Labour Party never referred to it at all.<sup>1</sup>

The sound broadcasts were certainly affected by television, with the average audience for each broadcast barely a third of that in 1951. This was a telling piece of statistics which overshadowed all other news about the broadcasts—for example, that Attlee, dispensing with a rehearsal, spoke from Brighton and Eden from Chequers—and which prompted *The Times* to demand 'a very modest maximum' number of broadcasts in future.<sup>2</sup> Another piece of statistics was that the audience for the television broadcasts was only 14 per cent of the adult population, and that 'the tendency' was for viewers to watch the election broadcasts only if they had seen the *News and Newsreel* programmes before. 'The prospect of viewing election broadcasts', a BBC Audience Research Report concluded, 'did not, in general, either enhance or reduce the number of people viewing.'<sup>3</sup>

'Accidents of placing' seemed to determine sizes of audiences both for sound and television at the 1955 election. Thus, because of the 'low rating' of the programme which followed, Harold Macmillan had an audience of as few as 10 per cent for the first Conservative sound broadcast—as against an average for the whole series of only 14 per cent. There were few listeners who chose to listen to repeats of election broadcasts and few listener/viewers who used Sound and Television as complementary services. It could be shown, however, that the proportion of 'TV public' (set owners and their families) viewing the political programmes on television was very much larger than that of the rest of the population.

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 28 May 1955; *New Statesman*, 21, 28 May 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 23 May 1955. Sound audiences averaged 7 per cent of the adult population as against 22 per cent in 1951. The numbers listening to the Conservative and Labour broadcasts were about equal. It should be added that news bulletins in 1955 were attracting only half the audience of October 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Audience Research Report, 4 June 1955. Gallup Poll estimates confirmed the BBC figures. They suggested that out of every hundred viewers watching television, 94 were owner-viewers and 6 guests.

Once again 'appreciation indices' heralded the result—a majority for the Conservatives and their allies of seventy over the Labour Party and, this time, only six Liberal victories. Eden, Butler and Selwyn Lloyd topped the Government polls for the sound broadcasts, with Selwyn Lloyd making the biggest appeal to the 'uncommitted'. Attlee and Miss Herbison came last, the former significantly less 'popular' than Morrison (said to have been 'at the top of his form') with three different categories of listeners—'Labour Party supporters only', 'opponents', and 'non-committed'. Selwyn Lloyd, whose broadcast began with the words, 'It's a risky occupation these days for politicians to broadcast', also received the highest rating for both 'sound and delivery' and 'convincingness'. All the speakers eschewed 'the anecdote, the analogy and the fable', and the absence of Hill from the Conservative Party list was noted almost as often in the Press as the absence of Churchill. Attlee was near the foot of the poll for 'sound and delivery' and at the very bottom of the ratings among 'opponents' of the Labour Party and the 'uncommitted'.

The television performances attracted far more attention—largely on account of their novelty—than the sound broadcasts, and here Eden came top in every BBC rating, as he did (with a wide margin) in the Gallup poll. Harold Macmillan, future television star, who was the first to appear on 10 May—rather nervously, so it seemed—had a somewhat 'lukewarm' reception, although he was thought to be the second most convincing speaker after Eden.<sup>1</sup> The greatest drama centred not on what he had to say but on his use as 'visual aids' of two money boxes (along with 'fructifying watering cans' in a cartoon), one representing personal savings under Labour government, the other under Conservative government. The latter was huge—thirty times as large as the small one—and remembering the 1951 argument about Eden's graphs, the producer pocketed the small one to make comparisons impossible. Churchill had refused to be shown in the programme because, according to Randolph Churchill, it included a film shot of a slum lavatory. The last

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Audience Research Report, 4 June 1955; Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 59; *Annual Register*, 1955, p. 27. Macmillan had just arrived back from Paris. His talk was followed by a film which 'would have won the approval of John Wesley, who used to read his sermons to an illiterate servant girl in order to find out whether they were suitable for an average congregation.' For the very wide variety of opinions, see *Daily Express*, 11 May 1955, 'The Verdict on Macmillan'.

Eden broadcast was most successful because it conveyed a sense not of drama but of authority—Eden, flanked by Butler, Macmillan, Macleod and Monckton, being questioned by the newspaper editors.<sup>1</sup>

The Labour Party broadcasts involved a 'duologue' between Dr. Edith Summerskill and Harold Wilson which Morgan Phillips insisted on interrupting in his own voice with the question 'What about pensions?' It was odd for the Secretary of the Labour Party to be interrupting the Chairman, Dr. Summerskill, with a question of this kind, but he persisted.<sup>2</sup> In his programme, Attlee was interviewed by Percy Cudlipp, ex-editor of the *Daily Herald*, in a chintzy drawing-room, and again he came last in the ratings, with 'the little fireside drama', which included Mrs. Attlee, 'proving a godsend to the fun-makers of the daily and weekly Press'.<sup>3</sup> The last Labour Party programme incorporated a miscellaneous group of politicians—among them Morrison, Gaitskell and Jim Callaghan, and the recent recruit from Liberalism, Lady Megan Lloyd George—with William Pickles, a university lecturer, as question master. 'It may not have been a very dignified or closely reasoned performance,' wrote Nicholas, 'but it was designed to give life to the election in a way that was unmatched by anything else in the Labour campaign on or off the air.'<sup>4</sup> The Liberals, with Philip Fothergill, were perhaps least successful, largely because the rehearsal was devoted mainly to preventing Lord Samuel from taking over four minutes to introduce the speakers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Statesman*, 21 May 1955; Reginald Pound in *The Listener*, 2 June 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Miall, 'Sidelights on General Election Television Broadcasting', 25 May 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register*, 1955, p. 28. There is a good report in *The Times*, 12 May 1955. See also, for comparisons with Macmillan, *Daily Express*, 12 May 1955. Maurice Wiggin in the *Sunday Times*, 15 May 1955, preferred the Attlee broadcast to the Macmillan broadcast. He judged Attlee to be 'very much at home' in his setting and Macmillan to be less at ease when he delivered 'his argument with the unappreciative eye of a machine which had no place in his proper world'. Wiggin thought that the Liberal broadcast showed 'real people, vivid and fervent individuals'. In general he found the main broadcasts 'dull and dim'.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 61; *The Times*, 21 May 1955. 'Poor Mr. William Pickles had a hard struggle to get in all his questions.' See also *News Chronicle*, 21 May 1955, 'Labour made it a Knockabout'. Comment inside the BBC was that the broadcast was technically better than the Conservative broadcast the night before, but that some of the 'conceptions' were those of a Drama Producer rather than of a Talks Producer (\*McGivern to Barnes and Miall, 12 May 1955).

<sup>5</sup> \*'Sidelights on General Election Television Broadcasts', 25 May 1955.

The *Daily Mirror* had asked for more television broadcasts before the election and for more younger Tory performers, like Julian Amery, Angus Maude and Enoch Powell, and for more younger Socialist performers, like Alfred Robens, George Brown and Jim Callaghan.<sup>1</sup> It was quite wrong, however, when it blamed the BBC and not the political parties for 'trying to bottle up this new force in politics'. The parties could use their time exactly as they wished, and the Conservatives employed Captain Brownrigg, General Manager of Associated-Rediffusion, one of the new commercial companies—he had no BBC experience—to advise them on presentation and performance.<sup>2</sup> It was ironical that most of the controversy in the election campaign centred on the Labour Party's showing a packet of Lyons tea in the Summerskill/Wilson programme—to illustrate the rise in the cost of living—a piece of commercialism (whatever the motives) of which the BBC thoroughly disapproved.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the political influence of the television programmes, William Salter, writing in the *New Statesman*, was right to remind his readers that it was an error to think of them as if they existed in a void, 'in a sort of sacred three weeks of election campaigning'. Their effect could hardly be separated from that of earlier party political broadcasts (including an excellent documentary on Skipton produced by Peter Kneebone—with Iain Macleod as star). While viewers were now beginning to be used to viewing, politicians were becoming more used also to learning about 'gadgets'. The right critical vocabulary to assess the consequences of 'the switch to TV' in 1955 would have to include not only such terms as 'convincingness', terms that were employed within the BBC, but terms like 'stereotype' and 'image' which usually were not.<sup>4</sup> Attlee and many of the other 'performers' might secretly prefer

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 25 April 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Brownrigg to Jacob, 11 May 1955; Barnes to Brownrigg, 12 May 1955. There was one squabble in a BBC studio about Brownrigg's role.

<sup>3</sup> Labour Party, Press Statement, 17 May 1955; *The Times*, 18 May 1955, 'The Tea Packet shown "Against Advice" '.

<sup>4</sup> *New Statesman*, 14 May 1955. For the first serious analysis of communications processes in a general election, see J. M. Trenaman and D. McQuail, 'Television and the Political Image; A Study of Television in the 1959 General Election' (1961). There is an interesting article by William Pickles on 'Television and the Election' in the *Manchester Guardian*, 31 May 1955.

'good old-fashioned public meetings with their heckling',<sup>1</sup> but there was a new scope now for 'professionalism' in planning and presentation. Many newspapers suggested that Lord Woolton was pulling the strings. Others talked more generally of an 'exhibitionist approach to democracy'.<sup>2</sup>

If there was a void in May 1955, it was in Broadcasting House itself, where the same rigorous instructions went out yet again to maintain meticulous impartiality. It was not surprising that *In the News* went off the screen along with *Press Conference* (in the first number of which R. A. Butler had met the Press and in a recent number of which Eden had just appeared<sup>3</sup>) and *International Commentary*. Nor was it surprising in the light of what had happened in 1945, 1950 and 1951 that a number of popular songs were in doubt<sup>4</sup> and that the broadcast of an Oxford Union debate on 12 May was cancelled (Anthony Howard was then President), although it was on the motion that 'the methods of science are destructive of the myths of religion'.<sup>5</sup> A BBC film commentary on the tenth anniversary of VE Day was pushed forward, amid protests, from 9 May to 5 May—one day before the dissolution—because it featured Sir Winston Churchill and other political leaders of 1945;<sup>6</sup> and, more amusingly, a play, *A Jig for a Gipsy*, was cancelled because it concerned a fortune-teller who foretold an election result, as was a Hugo Bishop detective series which disappeared because of a reference to Communism in the second instalment. The 'sound barrier' even affected some overseas programmes, though to a relatively small extent; and on this occasion at long last there was a pre-election

<sup>1</sup> *The Star*, 29 April 1955; *Sunday Times*, 13 May 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *Truth*, 29 April 1955. See also R. Churchill, 'How to win the Election in Sixty Minutes' in the *Evening Standard*, 28 April 1955. Peter Kneebone, who produced all the pre-election Conservative programmes but resigned before the election, wrote an interesting article in the *News Chronicle*, 24 May 1955. The conclusion of the BBC's own Audience Research Report, 4 June 1955, was that the election had offered 'no clear conclusion about the relative effectiveness of the various techniques employed'.

<sup>3</sup> His questioners included William Clark, Francis Williams and William Hardcastle.

<sup>4</sup> For the interrogatory mode in *Press Conference*, see Wyndham Goldie, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 ff. \*F. O. Wade, Head of Light Music, to K. S. Baynes, 22 Aug. 1955, made fun of the 'Instruction' and suggested that 'Red Sails in the Sunset', 'Blue Moon' and 'Comrades' would have to go.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 25 April 1955, gives the President's comments.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 5 May 1955.

number of *At Home and Abroad* which included constituency reports and an analysis of the mechanics of the election.<sup>1</sup> The Press was more critical of all restrictions in 1955 than it had ever been before, but *The Economist* drew the topical lesson that 'these slightly ludicrous pre-election arrangements are inevitable so long as the monopoly in broadcasting remains'.<sup>2</sup>

It was a little premature, nonetheless, for the *Manchester Guardian* to conclude 'how demurely do we do things',<sup>3</sup> for within two months there was to be the great row between the BBC and the two major political parties about 'the fourteen-day rule'. The BBC had always had far less room in which to manoeuvre than its critics suggested.<sup>4</sup>

The actual reporting of the election results in both Television and Sound was hailed by Jacob—and the Board of Governors—as 'a most successful operation in which the News Division played their part with their accustomed high standard',<sup>5</sup> and 'Current Affairs' provided a far fuller service of commentary and analysis, including *A Verdict of the People* (with Noel Annan, Honor Balfour, Andrew Shonfield, Joseph C. Harsch and others). There were more difficulties, perhaps, in Sound than in Television following 'lengthy and curiously oblique negotiations' about the transmission of results,<sup>6</sup> but the idea of using an electrical computer for the first time in order to assist forecasting marked a break with tradition.<sup>7</sup> (Professor Maurice Kendall was in charge.) There were interesting interviews, too, with Woolton, Morgan Phillips and Fothergill on 26 May and with Eden and Attlee on 27 May after it was clear that the Conservatives had established a simple majority. 'This was the

<sup>1</sup> \*John Green to Grisewood, 3 May 1955, with the plan of the Current Affairs Unit.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economist*, 30 April 1955. For support of the BBC, see *The Observer*, 24 April 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 22 April 1955.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 637.

<sup>5</sup> \*Jacob to Hole, 27 May 1955; Jacob to Wellington and Grisewood, 27 May 1955; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 9 June 1955.

<sup>6</sup> \*Bonarjee to Green, 2 June 1955.

<sup>7</sup> The Americans had used UNIVAC for the 1954 Presidential elections. \*After carefully considering the use of a computer, Television decided instead to use 'a team of Nuffield statisticians with slide rules' (Barnes to Jacob, 11 May 1955), while Sound persisted with the computer (Report by Grisewood, July 1955). The computer seemed to show that 'future events may fail to be preordained by arithmetical means'.

first time', the Controller, Home Service, wrote, 'on which sound broadcasting made an attempt to correct the wrong impression which a straight reading of results can give.'<sup>1</sup>

The number of listeners was large—more listened for the first hour than in 1951—with the special extended post-election edition of *At Home and Abroad* on 26 May attracting three times the usual audience. There seemed to be two lessons for the future: first, either programmes on the Home Service and the Light Programme should be amalgamated or there should be 'genuine alternative services';<sup>2</sup> second, there should be less concentration on speed of announcement and more on 'the best possible overall service'.<sup>3</sup> It was recognized in all the post-mortems that Television by the very nature of the medium could broadcast the results more quickly than Sound.<sup>4</sup> The contribution of Television on election day and of the Assistant Head of Television Talks, Grace Wyndham Goldie, in particular, was highly praised as 'a triumph of teamwork',<sup>5</sup> and the work of particular producers and performers and of the engineers was singled out also. It had been possible during and after the election results (with the help of thirty-seven cameras, sixteen more than had been used during the Coronation) flexibly to switch quickly from one constituency to another.<sup>6</sup> In retrospect, this election stood out as the first in which Richard Dimbleby—at Grace Wyndham Goldie's suggestion—was 'anchor man'. Before the event McGivern felt that he lacked 'the edge for the job',<sup>7</sup> but the *Manchester Guardian* thought that he had given 'the best performance of his whole career'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Stewart, to Wellington, 15 June 1955. See *Radio Times*, 20 May 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Pelletier, Controller, Light Programme, to Wellington, 20 Aug. 1955, pleading for separate programmes, and Stewart (loc. cit.) appealing for a 'joint, single shared programme'. Gillard, the Chief Assistant to Wellington, was in favour of a single programme in future, which would 'in journalistic terms use the Home Service as the text and the Light Programme as the illustration' (Gillard to Wellington, 8 Sept. 1955).

<sup>3</sup> Bonarjee to Green, 2 June 1955.

<sup>4</sup> Note by Hole, 9 Sept. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1955.

<sup>6</sup> *Radio Times*, 20 May 1955.

<sup>7</sup> McGivern to Hole, 22 April 1955; Hole was doubtful also (Hole to McGivern, 19 April 1955). *The Listener*, 18 Sept. 1955, reprint of BBC 2 Programme on 'Richard Dimbleby—30 Years of Broadcasting'.

<sup>8</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1955. The audience rating for the sound results was 76 and for television the exceptionally high figure of 88. See Peter Black in the *Daily Mail*, 28 May 1955, 'To Dimbleby and Co., Thanks'.

Whatever 'lessons' were learnt inside the BBC from 'the first TV election', a third lesson was stressed outside. A dull election could not be redeemed by TV. 'The campaign as a whole has roused so little surface interest', wrote *The Spectator*, 'that even TV could not make an impact.'<sup>1</sup> Even when the results were being broadcast, there was what seemed to be an ominous contrast. Although a far larger proportion of the electorate listened to the results for the first hour, a far smaller proportion listened thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

The media were to be blamed for much in British politics in future. It was difficult to blame them, however, for what happened to British politics between 1945 and 1955. Nobody could claim, either, that the poor showing of the 'television personalities' at the polls in 1955—Michael Foot out, Barbara Castle's majority low, Walter Elliot's halved, Christopher Mayhew's down—was due more to television than to politics, although the *Manchester Guardian* noted as neutrally as it could that 'television hypnosis', it appeared, was not 'a lasting phenomenon'.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Drama, Features, and Variety

OF THE millions of words spoken each year in BBC studios from 1945 to 1955 far more were spoken in plays and features than in news programmes or political broadcasts and commentaries. There were, of course, some links between the two. 'The fundamental connection between drama and politics,' Val Gielgud, the BBC's Head of Drama, once wrote, long before it was fashionable to talk of both dramatists and journalists wrestling with the same material, 'is I think almost as close as that between drama and religion.' 'When the stage is healthy,' he went on, 'its political connection is strong.' 'Living characters' and 'living issues' inevitably involved controversy, and broadcasting should resist the temptation to make drama 'nothing more than an entertainment and a show'.<sup>4</sup> Fact and fiction were never separated by a fabric curtain.

<sup>1</sup> *The Spectator*, 27 May 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Audience Research Report, June 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \*Val Gielgud to Haley, 11 Oct. 1950.



Gielgud himself was involved as playwright and not as administrator in the biggest 'dramatic storm' of the post-war years—the 1950 row surrounding *Party Manners*, his 'trivial little comedy'.<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, it looks like a storm in a teacup, although its repercussions were wider than such a judgement would suggest. The original stage production of *Party Manners* had created little public interest, although the reviews were favourable, and there was little reaction to a Home Service broadcast of the play in June 1950. It was only after the play was performed on television on 1 October that trouble began. The trouble did not start with telephone calls, the usual portents—there were, in fact, none of these—but with the headline in the *Daily Herald*, 'We Don't Want Any More of This, Mr. Gielgud'.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Labour Party Conference was meeting at the time and the rumour that Herbert Morrison thought the play 'anti-Labour' may have influenced Lord Simon's highly controversial decision on 3 October to ban a second scheduled television performance for 5 October.<sup>3</sup>

There was certainly more controversy about this decision than there could possibly have been about the play, and the chief effect as far as theatre was concerned was 'a remarkable, and most desirable, relaxation of the restrictions regarding TV drama'.<sup>4</sup> An attempt to raise a similar storm and to provoke a similar response when George Orwell's *1984*, brilliantly produced by Nigel Kneale, was televised in 1954 failed completely.<sup>5</sup>

*Party Manners* revealed the power of television to reach a wide

<sup>1</sup> The description is his own. See V. Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror* (1965), p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Herald*, 2 Oct. 1950. The following day it described the play as 'steeped in class snobbishness and anti-Labour prejudice' and said that it should not be repeated. Gielgud denied this. He believed, he said, in words which he put into the mouth of one of his characters, 'the only consistent political belief held by the English is that all politicians are funny' (op. cit.), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 453. Simon's case is set out in Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within* (1953), pp. 329–30.

<sup>4</sup> Gielgud, op. cit., p. 153; cf. p. 133: 'The quite fortuitous result of the *Party Manners* row seems to have freed the BBC permanently from any danger of political censorship.' There were, however, to be somewhat similar rows in the future.

<sup>5</sup> *1984* was performed on 12 Dec. 1954. For Press comment, see *The Times*, 15, 16 Dec. Four motions were tabled in the House of Commons on the subject. The BBC broadcast a repeat, despite the criticisms, on 16 Dec. and attracted the largest audience ever for a Thursday evening repeat. Cinema attendance is said to have been reduced in television areas throughout the country. Douglas Cleverdon had suggested a Third Programme version of *1984* in 1950 (\*Third Programme, Features Meeting, 26 Jan. 1950).

audience, including politicians, and although Press publicity doubtless added enormously to the size of audience when the play was shown in the West End, Gielgud was suspicious both of that kind of publicity and of the power of television as a medium. In 1949 he became Head of Television Drama as well as of Sound Drama and moved to Alexandra Palace, staying there for eighteen uneasy months before returning, after a year of 'grace', in April 1952 to his old post of Head of Drama (Sound). It was not only makeshift organization which irritated him at Alexandra Palace—that was frustrating, yet superficial—but a more fundamental doubt. 'Even more than sound radio, television is a Moloch. Its capacity for devoration is terrifying and the eye is more easily and more quickly surfeited than the ear.'<sup>1</sup> The quality of output could never be maintained. Gielgud's view on this subject was close to that of Haley,<sup>2</sup> and Haley gave him his full backing also when the *Party Manners* storm broke. Collins, by contrast, had argued from the start that to combine responsibilities for Sound and Television Drama was a serious mistake: 'anything less than this complete familiarity with all aspects of television production will mean . . . that the Head of Television Drama is an amateur.' It would be like putting one man in charge of the Old Vic and of Pinewood.<sup>3</sup>

If one of the main themes of the history of drama during this period is the rise of television—and it certainly frightened theatre managers and Equity, both of whom followed restrictive policies towards it<sup>4</sup>—it was through sound broadcasting that drama still reached its largest audiences and most widely extended its range of expression. It was in sound broadcasting also that there was the strongest sense of a 'tradition'. Gielgud disliked 'off-the-cuff and last minute changes', which were to become normal in television, just as he objected to the fact that

<sup>1</sup> Gielgud, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to Haley, 'Integration of Sound and Television Drama', 14 Sept. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 207. After long negotiations, agreement was reached with the Theatres National Committee about relays of excerpts from theatres. The agreement came into force on 1 May 1952, but there were no relays from July to October 1952 because of disagreement with Equity about fees. In December 1954 it was decided that the agreement with the Theatres National Committee would continue in force indefinitely subject to six months' notice on either side.

# **BRITISH EQUITY**

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**MONTHLY MEMBERS' MEETING**

**The B.B.C.'s Director of Television**

**GEORGE BARNES**

**will speak on**

**"THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION"**

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**Victory House, Leicester Sq.**

**Friday, February 6th, 1953**

**2.30 p.m.**

**In the Chair:- Felix Aylmer**

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**BRITISH ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION**

**8, Harley Street,  
London, W.1.**

**GORDON SANDBISON  
General Secretary**

18. Advertisement of talk to British Equity by George Barnes, 6 February 1953

there was 'no established script unit'. It was not until late in 1951 that a Television Script Supervisor was appointed—with an Assistant, a secretary and two copy typists—and a Script Library grant. A Section followed soon afterwards, although most of the money made available to Gielgud's successor, Michael Barry, was spent on one man, Nigel Kneale. At last in 1955, on the eve of commercial television, a new Central Script Section was formed.

The successes of drama in Sound from 1945 to 1955 were achieved within a tradition, as Burton Paulu, the American observer of British broadcasting, recognized at the end of the period. 'One expects—and gets—good drama from the BBC,' he wrote in his study of British broadcasting published in 1956,

and the basic reasons, he went on, antedated the birth of broadcasting. 'The British theatre has flourished from the times of Marlowe and Shakespeare to those of Shaw, Christopher Fry and T. S. Eliot in the twentieth century.'<sup>1</sup>

It was a somewhat comfortable verdict, for in the year that his book was published there was a profound cultural shock as the British theatre entered a new and exciting phase in its history (parallel to the new and exciting phase in the history of 'pop' music): the shock occurred as a result of the great success of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and, perhaps to a lesser extent at the time, of Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow*. Thereafter, both dramatic themes and their treatment changed as plots explored situations not explored before and as 'raw talent' began 'to take precedence over expertise'.<sup>2</sup> Val Gielgud was to write a 'retort' to Osborne, *Not Enough Tragedy*, but not surprisingly it was submerged in the noise of what was soon called 'theatre revolution'. Gielgud had little sympathy with the 'new trends' in the theatre, revolutionary or not—either with 'kitchen sink' or with 'the theatre of the absurd'. 'Much of it I did not understand. Some of it I frankly disliked.' He has made no attempt since to soften any of his criticisms. 'Glamour and illusion have gone together, symbolised perhaps by those bare stages on which no curtains rise.'<sup>3</sup>

No curtains rose, of course, on the radio plays which, simple or sophisticated, had been a staple of British broadcasting since the 1920s. The BBC Repertory Company, formed during the war, consisted of thirty able actors, many of whose names—those of Gladys Young, for example, and of Carleton Hobbs—were better known to the public than any actors in the West End. Yet West End stars frequently figured in radio plays also. There were fifteen full-time BBC Sound producers in the early 1950s, with hundreds of 'dramatic programmes' being broadcast each year from London and the Regions, ranging

<sup>1</sup> B. Paulu, *British Broadcasting: Radio and Television in the United Kingdom* (1956), p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> F. Norman, *Why Fings Went West* (1975), p. 13. See also J. R. Taylor, *Anger and After* (1962), p. 35, for the effects on box-office sales of the showing of an excerpt on television.

<sup>3</sup> Gielgud, *op. cit.*, pp. 155, 159. He added, 'I wish that I did not find the Theatre of Non-communication anomalous and incomprehensible. It is no doubt my fault and not Brecht's that to me his work appears old-fashioned and above all boring.'

from short fifteen-minute plays or serials to major productions lasting two or three hours.<sup>1</sup>

As in the case of music, the range of offerings varied according to their source—the Home, Light or Third Programmes—as did the weekly timetable. The Home Service *Saturday Night Theatre* series, which had an average audience of over twelve million in 1948, still had an audience of seven million in the month when commercial television started; while *Curtain Up*, first broadcast in February 1946 in the Light Programme,<sup>2</sup> still had an audience of over seven million. As effective head of BBC Drama since 1929—his first title had been BBC Productions Director, and he became Director of the Drama Department four years later—Gielgud had certainly built up a ‘mammoth’ twentieth-century audience. And since the advent of the Third Programme he had also enjoyed an exciting new freedom both to produce plays which would never have been broadcast in either the Home or the Light Programme and to break free of the limits of fixed timetabling, what he called ‘rigid Bradshaw scheduling’.<sup>3</sup>

The history of radio drama during the ten years from 1945 to 1955 may seem unadventurous in retrospect, but it certainly did not seem so at the time, either to its admirers or to its critics. It is true that at the beginning of the period Gielgud felt that there was too much ‘self-satisfaction’ in the Sound Drama Department and a tendency ‘to rest on its laurels’ and that at the end of the period Wellington was calling for more

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Harding, who deputized for Gielgud while the latter was working at Alexandra Palace, claimed in December 1950 that annual output included 190 ‘long plays’ (of 75 to 150 minutes) and 130 short plays (of 20 to 60 minutes). This output, he said, was beyond the current resources of the Department (\*Harding to Wellington, 12 Dec. 1950).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Nicolls, March 1948, ‘L.P. has already agreed to schedule *Thursday Night Theatre* which will be an interesting experiment.’ In the event, Wednesday, not Thursday, was the chosen night.

<sup>3</sup> \*Gielgud to Chalmers, 31 March 1948. There was an early discussion about what was best for the Home Service and what was best for the Third Programme in October 1945. ‘I put it to D.G. that a *season* of Ibsen plays is a concept which fits Programme C better than it does Programme A. It provides broadcasting for the specialist and the student. D.G. accepted this point of view’ (Wellington to Godfrey Adams, 8 Oct. 1945). A year later Wellington wrote to Gielgud, ‘I do not normally take fright at research figures but 41 appreciation index for the Pirandello play and 37 for “Precession” seem to show that we are barking up the wrong tree.’

'experimentation'.<sup>1</sup> It is true, too, that when in 1945 Felix Felton revived Tyrone Guthrie's 1929 experiment, *Squirrel's Cage*, Philip Hope-Wallace could ask pertinently what advances had been made in radio since 1929 as compared with cinema technique, and that between 1945 and 1955 one of the few really distinguished new pieces of writing was R. C. Scriven's *A Single Taper* (1948), a play about the loss of eyesight which was well suited to the sightless medium.<sup>2</sup> Yet the admirers found much to admire in the years between, and the critics found much against which to object. From time to time, as in the case of music, reports were specially commissioned,<sup>3</sup> and these mingled praise and blame and very general and very specific criticism. 'Radio Drama is strongest when telling a story or evoking an atmosphere and weakest when expressing artifice or exploiting "clever dialogue".' *Glad Tidings*, by R. F. Delderfield, was an even greater disaster, for I can find no justification at all for this play which would surely have scarcely run a week on the London stage. . . . It seemed to me that the BBC underrated the intelligence of its public in putting on this play.<sup>4</sup>

The critics were already protesting against both 'violence' and 'morbidly' in 1948. 'With blasphemy, adultery, prostitution, profanity, obscenity and drunken debauchery brought into our homes by the wireless,' wrote a correspondent to the *Sussex Daily News*, 'goodbye to a decent Britain.'<sup>5</sup> Some of the sharpest critics then, as more recently, were firmly entrenched inside the BBC. 'Over the last two or three months,' Donald Stephenson, the Head of General Overseas Programmes, wrote

<sup>1</sup> V. Gielgud, *British Radio Drama, 1922-1946* (1957), p. 181. \*Wellington's criticisms were discussed at a meeting of Drama producers on 3 Nov. 1955 after the end of the period covered in this volume, and Gielgud subsequently produced a memorandum on the subject on 23 Nov. 1955. He welcomed 'experimentation', he said, so long as it was genuine and 'not merely superficially effective tricks'.

<sup>2</sup> 'Toujours la technique' in *The Listener*, 5 July 1945; D. Cleverdon, 'Radio Features and Drama at the BBC' in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 Feb. 1970, an excellent critical account from inside of the history of radio drama and features. There is an interesting note on the effect of recording on radio plays by Hope-Wallace in *The Listener*, 7 Feb. 1946, and some provocative general reflections in his 'Farewell', *ibid.*, 12 July 1951. J. C. Trewin then took over as radio drama critic and on 17 Sept. 1951 Hope-Wallace became television drama critic.

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 742 ff.

<sup>4</sup> J. Fernald, 'Report on Plays from *Saturday Night Theatre* and *Curtain Up*, Feb.-June 1952.'

<sup>5</sup> *Sussex Daily News*, 20 Nov. 1948. It added, 'If this filth must continue, confine it to the Third Programme.'

in March of that year, 'I have been rejecting almost 100 per cent of Drama Department's offers of crime-theme output. . . . Poisoning no longer seems adequate unless it is preceded by adultery. Violence is incomplete without the sound effects of a woman being struck by her husband or lover. . . . The Police are either painted as a ludicrous music hall caricature or else reflected as having no common humane principles or scruples.'<sup>1</sup> Such charges were to become commonplace later: in 1948 Gielgud could dismiss them as completely unfair.<sup>2</sup> On at least one occasion the chief critic was the Director-General. Of one play he wrote to Gielgud, 'it not merely justifies a murder but makes the doing of it seem admirable'.<sup>3</sup>

The admirers pointed both to the BBC's great success with classical plays and to the wide range of interesting foreign plays broadcast, often—but not exclusively—in the Third Programme. Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov could take their place alongside Shaw, Fry and Eliot. But so, too, could Sartre (before the London stage took him over), Giraudoux, de Montherlant and Anouilh; and in the twelve months before Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* three Ugo Betti plays, pioneered by the Third Programme, made their way to the West End.

The Controller of the Third Programme had much to do with the overall control of Third Programme 'output', including drama,<sup>4</sup> but on the Home Service also *World Theatre* presented in 1954-5 a remarkable repertoire of foreign plays, old and new, from *Oedipus Rex* to *The Master Builder* and Pirandello's *Henry IV*, while the Light Programme was arranging a Somerset Maugham Festival.<sup>5</sup> *The Stars in Their Choices* featured plays for Light Programme listeners chosen by the 'stars' who appeared in them, and the stars included Ralph Richardson, Boris Karloff and Robert Morley. During the autumn of 1955 a series of plays on the Home Service, *Between Two Worlds*, dealt

<sup>1</sup> \*Stephenson to R. McCall, Assistant Controller (Overseas Services), 17 March 1948. There had been earlier problems with the Overseas Services who felt that 'the supply of suitable shows was dwindling' (McCall to Gielgud, 6 Aug. 1946; Howgill to Gielgud, 8 Oct. 1946; Gielgud to Howgill, 9 Oct. 1946.)

<sup>2</sup> \*Home Broadcasting Committee, 23 March 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Gielgud, 20 July 1948.

<sup>4</sup> Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror*, p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> The highlight was said to be Gielgud's own production of Howard Agg's adaptation of *Cakes and Ale* (\*Report by John Fernald, Jan.-March 1953). 'It seemed to be, not an adaptation of a novel, but the essential work that Maugham created, unadulterated, uncurtailed and *in toto*. It was, in fact, "spoken literature".'

with 'various aspects of the sociological and political scene which had proved significant in the period between 1914 and 1948'—between the bombs of *Heartbreak House* and the atomic bomb of Robert Bolt's *The Last of the Wine*. The series was initiated by Donald McWhinnie, who had become Assistant Head of Drama in 1953, and Barbara Bray, the Drama Script Editor, and marked an important new departure. So, too, did McWhinnie's concentration in the Light Programme's *Radio Theatre* series in 1954–5 on plays especially written for radio. Gielgud confessed that during the early 1950s he often found himself between two worlds—that of McWhinnie on his left and Martyn C. Webster on his right.<sup>1</sup> Webster had produced the light thriller *Send for Paul Temple*, and although he sought practical experience in television, he was one of 'the impenitent believers in the present and future of Sound Drama as such'.<sup>2</sup>

The admirers often pointed also to the BBC's successes with an audience which was not a regular (or even intermittent) 'play-going public' and which derived its 'appreciation of dramatic values' either exclusively from radio or from radio and the cinema together. Certainly radio offered far wider and more varied fare than the commercial cinema during these years, and Tom Chalmers, when he was Controller of the Light Programme, conceived of *Curtain Up* as 'a kind of People's Theatre without the moral earnestness and lack of humour that such a title might lead us to expect. . . . The Light Programme has a missionary purpose—at any rate so long as I am in charge—and I hope that *Curtain Up* will help in fostering a taste for the Drama rather than just being a provider of "nice bright plays", important as these are.'<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes, of course, since not all plays could be 'nice' and 'bright', critics and admirers clashed on their assessments of the same play. Indeed, a whole category of 'Unpleasant Plays', as the critics thought of them, included recognized classics and new foreign plays. During the early part of 1949, when John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* was being discussed and attacked, E. A. Harding, the Assistant Head of Drama, emphasized that he was always looking for 'plays that are likely to appeal strongly as entertainment to the great majority of listeners

<sup>1</sup> Gielgud, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Gielgud, *British Radio Drama*, pp. 180–1.

<sup>3</sup> \*Chalmers to Gielgud, 31 Aug. 1949.



rather than plays which would give offence to none . . . and to be suitable for "family listening" down to the fifteen year olds'. Some 'strong' plays were bound to be 'unpleasant', and while he tried to weight the choice of Light Programme plays in favour of 'wholesomeness' and 'cheerfulness', his first question was 'always about the play as a work of art. . . . Its morality must come after that.'<sup>1</sup> When such issues were raised again in 1954, the Controller of the Third Programme conceded that many Third Programme plays, if broadcast on the Home or Light Programme, 'would have to be regarded as either macabre or unpleasant or possibly both',<sup>2</sup> and Kenneth Adam, Controller of the Light Programme, stated bluntly of 'sordid or horror plays', 'we naturally eschew these when planning for the mass audience'.<sup>3</sup>

Self-censorship influenced the choice both of themes and of language. 'In the ordinary run of plays a really unpleasant or sordid subject needs greater justification.' 'In all plays . . . the producer should make all reasonable attempts to eliminate strong language, blasphemy and gratuitously offensive lines. Substitute euphemisms should not be neglected.'<sup>4</sup> At least one Governor, Dr. Whitfield, Simon's main supporter in the *Party Manners* affair, wanted the self-censorship to go further. He hoped that drama would serve the social purpose of doing what could be done 'to rehabilitate this country', but failing such a positive objective, he asked whether it was beyond the Corporation's 'ingenuity to devise ways of helping the country out of its difficulties by means of drama': if it was, 'we should not at least hamper it by putting on plays inimical to generally accepted public policy'.<sup>5</sup> Such a general policy would have

<sup>1</sup> \*Harding to Howgill, 14 Feb. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*John Morris to Wellington, 8 Jan. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Adam to Wellington, 21 Jan. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 29 March 1949. See also above, p. 75. In 1948 Harding as Acting Head of Drama had warned all producers that they were individually responsible for 'cutting all bad language that they cannot give positive justification for on dramatic grounds either of situation or characterization. . . . Unless there is some improvement in this matter,' he concluded, 'there is danger of a flat prohibition of all oaths in all plays and this would be damaging to dramatic values, particularly in serious plays' (Note of 6 Dec. 1948).

<sup>5</sup> \*Whitfield to Simon, 26 March, 9 May 1950. Cf. a note from Lord Inman, reported in the *Daily Mirror*, 1 Oct. 1946: 'The Governors of the BBC are public servants . . . and it would not hurt any of us when we hear items of [an offensive] kind, to spend tuppence on a postcard and tell them what we think about it.'

raised far more controversy than Simon's banning of *Party Manners*, and the Governors, when asked to consider it, not surprisingly decided that 'the existing policy was generally right'. They added, however, that a better balance between cheerful and gloomy plays could be struck and that the whole question of policy was so important that it would be useful to return to it later.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly the choice of completely new plays submitted or commissioned from scripts raised particular policy-making issues which were at once more simple and more difficult. Unknown works could be rejected if they failed to meet explicit criteria which known works might not always meet. Yet unknown writers had to be treated fairly if only to preserve the BBC's reputation, and they had to be given the opportunity of learning from their own experience and proving themselves. In 1955 as many as three hundred scripts for sound broadcasting might be submitted to Broadcasting House in a month, and even more were submitted to some of the regions. The procedures, as in the case of music, had been submitted to central scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> The key body in London was the Drama Script Unit, consisting of a Script Editor, two Assistants, and four Play Reader/Adaptors, but the Drama Department as a whole kept 'a constant watch on potential sources of new talent'.<sup>3</sup>

In the autumn of 1951, between fifteen and twenty writers who had not written before for radio were invited to submit synopses of plays, but only three did so. The Regions also found it difficult to persuade new writers to write for radio, even when their senior producers regularly visited Writers' Circles—as was customary, for example, in the North of England. Financial rewards were small, but it is remarkable that there were no intimations of 'the provincial renaissance' which was to contribute to the 'theatre revolution' of the late 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 22 June 1950.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 700.

<sup>3</sup> \*Gielgud to Farquharson, 2 April 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*A Note from Gielgud to Regional Programme Directors, 15 July 1952, dealt with possible Regional contributions to *Saturday Night Theatre* and Monday night plays. He thought the latter offered the best opportunities. *Saturday Night Theatre* had 'a popular appeal, with good acting opportunities along conventional lines': 'the plays should provide vehicles immediately sympathetic to popular stars.' For drama in the North, see P. Campbell, 'There's Plenty of Drama in the North' in *BBC Year Book*, 1951, pp. 59-62. Rayner Heppenstall set out some of the difficulties of a writer in a note to Gilliam, Head of Features, 15 Nov. 1950.

There were certainly not enough new young writers from any part of the country who were appealing to young listeners as John Osborne was to make his appeal. Kenneth Tynan was to describe *Look Back in Anger* as 'the best young play of its decade' because it immediately reached this audience. It would 'remain a minority taste', but what mattered was the size of the minority. 'I estimate it', he went on, 'at 6,733,600, which is the number of people in this country between twenty and thirty.'<sup>1</sup> Very little was being offered to that audience between 1945 and 1955 except to a segment of it in *Dick Barton*.

It is impossible to tell from BBC archives whether or not any young writers who made their reputations after 1955 submitted scripts which were turned down before 1955. There were, indeed, few really interesting new playwrights, although Giles Cooper made his debut in the *Radio Theatre* series. What is certain, however, is that efforts were made to monitor the system of selection. At a meeting of the General Advisory Council in 1953 the author Elspeth Huxley had raised this issue, and the Governors agreed to arrange 'an occasional outside check' 'to protect the Corporation against charges of a closed shop policy in drama'.<sup>2</sup> The results were interesting if inconclusive: 232 plays were read by two outside observers—Howard Rose and Barbara Burnham, former BBC producers—and in sixty-eight cases there were different judgements from those of the Script Unit. In thirty-two cases the differences were wide. Gielgud upheld the finding of the outside observers in only three cases, and in these cases 'the bias of the Department', he said, 'was for acceptance rather than rejection'.<sup>3</sup>

Before there could be any protracted debate, Wellington and Jacob ruled firmly that Gielgud must have final authority. 'No Department in the BBC and no publishing business or theatrical management could look beyond its Head (or editor) for final authority.' Yet the Governors continued to urge that no script

<sup>1</sup> *The Observer*, 11 May 1956. For other verdicts, see J. R. Taylor, op. cit., pp. 31–3. 'It is feverish, undisciplined, intense, angry', wrote John Barber in the *Daily Express*, 9 May 1956. 'It is ever crazy. But it is young, young, young.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 March, 28 May, 11 June 1953. The General Advisory Council had met on 11 March 1953. A paper on the subject, 'New Authors', was prepared by Maurice Farquharson, 19 May 1953, and departmental notes were collected from Gielgud, the Regional Programme Heads and others.

<sup>3</sup> \*Gielgud to Wellington, 22 Oct. 1953.

should be rejected on the basis of one single reading.<sup>1</sup> For all the limitations, no other broadcasting system in the world was so closely or so sensitively concerned with creative writers outside the organization. There was no other country either which offered creative writers so much advice on how to write radio plays. One example of a genre, Felix Felton's *The Radio Play: Its Technique and Possibilities* (1949), went straight into the mechanics. After dealing comprehensively with stage and studio, sound effects, adaptation of stage plays, narration, documentary and the use of music, it ended, as it had to do, with the listener. 'It is in the creative act of the listener's imagination', it stressed, 'that the play ultimately achieves its life.'<sup>2</sup>

Felton knew the BBC from within as actor, writer and producer, and it is illuminating to compare his comments with those of Gielgud in an interesting report written by the latter in 1948 after he had been working at Alexandra Palace and was about to take leave of absence before returning to Broadcasting House. 'We have gone a long way since the early days at Savoy Hill,' he began, 'when the microphone was thought of as little more than an unexampled eavesdropping instrument.' Yet of the two lessons which stood out after twenty years of experience, one was that 'the content of plays must not be sacrificed to mere technical ingenuity'. The other was that 'not all stage plays and certainly not all theatre classics, made satisfactory material for broadcasting'. 'It must regretfully be admitted,' he added, 'that in the field of original radio plays we have failed to discover more than a minimum of first rate work, and equally to establish any real school of pure radio dramatists.'<sup>3</sup>

Gielgud said nothing about television in this paper, although Felton wrote in his last paragraph that 'one of these days radio is going to find that its glasses have been mended by television'.<sup>4</sup> By 1955, the year when across the Atlantic Paddy Chayefsky, author of *Marty*, published his pioneering *Television Plays*, ten

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Wellington, 'Drama Department: Play Reading Investigation', 22 March 1954; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 8 April 1954.

<sup>2</sup> F. Felton, *The Radio Play* (1949), p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> \*Gielgud, 'Considerations Relevant to Broadcast Drama based upon Experience in the Years 1929 to 1948', 19 June 1948.

<sup>4</sup> Felton, op. cit., p. 146.

BBC television producers were usually engaged upon drama, and at any moment of time ten plays were in the course of active production.<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Night Theatre* (with a Thursday repeat) paralleled *Saturday Night Theatre* in Sound just as *The Grove Family*, on a very different level, first broadcast on 9 April 1954, paralleled *The Archers* and *Mrs. Dale's Diary*. If there was little in Britain comparable in quality to Chayefsky's discovery through television of the 'marvellous world of the ordinary',<sup>2</sup> the soap-opera element in American television was for the most part missing too. Some currents of criticism were similar on the two sides of the Atlantic. Gielgud was not alone in finding even *Mrs. Dale's Diary* 'socially corrupting by its monstrous flattery of the ego of the "common man"' and 'soul-destroying to the actors, authors and producers concerned'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet there were writers and producers in Britain and America who saw new possibilities in television as a medium. If Chayefsky conceived of television as 'the dramatic medium through which to express our new insights into ourselves', Robert Barr, a former Fleet Street reporter, moved easily across the divides between documentary and drama. He started with politics—*Germany under Control*, on 18 September 1946—but he was equally happy with *Pilgrim Street*, six stories about a London police station, and he was to go forward, after the period covered in this volume, to *Z Cars* and *Maigret*. Duncan Ross, who arrived at Alexandra Palace from the making of documentary films, very quickly switched from scriptwriting for what McGivern called 'illustrated radio' to 'strong television' without owing any debt to Chayefsky or any American. Indeed, when he visited America in 1952 he saw nothing that impressed him.

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Handbook, 1955*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> P. Chayefsky, Preface to *Television Plays* (1955), p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> \*Gielgud, 'Considerations Relevant to Broadcast Drama based upon Experience in the Years 1929 to 1948', 19 June 1948. For a more generous assessment of British 'soap opera' see Philip Hope-Wallace in *The Listener*, 14 Oct. 1948: 'Is it fantastic to hope that one day Mrs. Dale, on some really exalted wavelength, may be having adventures as earth-shaking and important as those of the House of Atreus whose griefs the Third Programme is ever canvassing? . . . Let Colonel Chinstrap abduct Mrs. Dale! Let them flee to Sinking in the Ooze and start living Third Programme existences with Dick and Miss Dangerfield. . . I am beginning to think that only by working on the figures that radio has established and not by continually resuscitating old west-end plays—will progress be made. Forward the Light Brigade! Hope-Wallace's 'Farewell' (*ibid.*, 12 July 1951) ended 'Toodle-oo. See you next door.'

Working with the producer Ian Atkins, he blazed his own trail.<sup>1</sup>

It was under the regime of Gielgud's successor, Michael Barry, that Barr, Ross, Caryl Doncaster, Norman Swallow, Gilchrist Calder, Stephen McCormack, Leonard Brett and Arthur Swinson thrived,<sup>2</sup> although when the small Documentary Unit was placed under the control of Paul Rotha (with his vast experience of film-making), from May 1953 to May 1955, it lost in influence and was eventually dissolved on the eve of the launching of commercial television.<sup>3</sup>

Gielgud's policy in restricted surroundings and with restricted resources had been to concentrate on 'quality', and faced with shortage of accommodation and resources, including time, he did not flinch when he was told that 'quality as opposed to quantity' was his King Charles's head.<sup>4</sup> Yet Michael Barry, who had worked with pre-war television, moving over from repertory, did not so much change this emphasis as extend the whole range of dramatic output on television—'classical' as well as 'documentary', 'new' as well as 'old'. It was doubtless to guarantee quality that the proportion of time devoted to television drama fell from 15 per cent in 1951-2, the year Gielgud left, to 11.2 per cent in 1954-5. Yet all kinds of innovatory things were done, culminating in the setting up of the Central Script Section under Donald Wilson in 1955.

Barry was a brilliant producer, who recognized that unless 'the importance of visual imagination' was well understood 'words will tyrannise over the small screen as they did over the early years of the talking film'. He realized that the small screen in the home was very different from the stage, big or small: it offered new kinds of picture and new kinds of movement, and the words emerged directly from the action. He also wrote wisely, however, about the difference between film-making and television production, recognizing that the producer turning

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> See N. Swallow, *Factual Television* (1966).

<sup>3</sup> For Rotha, see above, p. 282. For his reminiscences of his period in the BBC, see the book he edited in 1956, *Television in the Making*, p. 13. 'BBC TV has a fine record in engineering; its weakness to date has been its failure to devise administrative machinery flexible enough to accommodate the needs of the creative artist—be he writer, producer or director. . . . Administrative minds prefer the foreseeable, the orthodox, the kind of respectable talent that can be evaluated and filed at an annual review.' Some of his comments during the period can be found in the *Manchester Guardian*, 31 Dec. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror*, p. 131.

from film to television would have many things to learn, for example 'how an actor sustains a continuous performance'.<sup>1</sup> Most important of all, however, Barry put his ideas into practice or encouraged others to do so. Before he became Head of Television Drama he had experimented with *The Crock of Gold* (February 1948), a story of the Australian gold rush (he shared the script-writing with an Australian writer, H. C. James), *I want to be an Actor* (with Robert Barr), *Behold the Man* (Easter 1949), *The Passionate Pilgrim* and many other plays.

Among the successes of his regime were plays as different as Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*<sup>2</sup> and Frederick Knott's *Dial M for Murder*, which made its way to the West End stage after its television première in 1952. The serial *The Quatermass Experiment*, written by Nigel Kneale, who was also responsible for the adaptation of Orwell's *1984*,<sup>3</sup> was the first of many ventures in serialized science-fiction; and among other adaptations were novels by Jane Austen, Dickens, Stevenson, and Wells. One new writer was Wolf Mankowitz with his *The Bespoke Overcoat*.

Television plays were almost always popular with the audience. Indeed, Barry could quote with pride a letter received, after a performance by Donald Wolfitt in Shakespeare's *King John*, superbly produced by Stephen Harrison: 'We are only a working-class family and have only seen Shakespeare once at the pictures in *Henry V*. You showed our England to us. Please give us more Shakespeare.'<sup>4</sup>

Drama was not the only 'art form' which had to adapt itself both to sound and vision between 1945 and 1955. 'Features',

<sup>1</sup> M. Barry, 'Problems of a Television Producer' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VI, no. 3, Autumn 1951. See also the ten television plays he selected for publication in 1960—Donald Wilson was the editor—in *The Television Playwright*. The oldest of them, *The Unloved*, 'a piece of drama documentary', was broadcast in June 1953. Rupert Davies, later to star in *Maigret*, was in the cast. Gielgud also had clearly realized the difference between a stage play and a television play. \*When Barnes once suggested to him (17 March 1952) that plays might be broadcast simultaneously in Sound and Television he replied (20 March) that to subtract vision from a televised play would give the listener a sense of jerkiness (there would also be 'incomprehensible pauses') and to add vision to a radio play would be to court disaster on many counts (including the inability of many radio performers to learn their lines).

<sup>2</sup> See M. Barry, 'Shakespeare on Television' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. IX, no. 3, Autumn 1954. Desmond Davis was the producer.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 687.

<sup>4</sup> Barry, loc. cit.

bracketed with Drama since the late 1920s but made into a separate Department in 1945, had the more interesting history. Headed by Laurence Gilliam, who had joined Gielgud's staff in 1933 from the *Radio Times*,<sup>1</sup> it quite deliberately framed its manifesto: 'No programme service can live a healthy life on an exclusive diet of classics. Radio must initiate or die, publish new work or be damned.'<sup>2</sup> Features, according to Gilliam, dealt with Fact, Drama with Fiction. Yet Fact had to be interpreted very broadly indeed if this sharp distinction was to stand. Gilliam also maintained proudly that the feature was 'the one unique form that radio has achieved in its short history. Owing something to the radio play, something to the radio talk, it is a synthesis different in essence from either.'<sup>3</sup> Philip Hope-Wallace put the matter somewhat differently in 1947. Would Zola's *Germinal* have been commissioned by Features or Drama if it had been a contemporary work? 'Perhaps the general public doesn't very much mind from which stable, Features or Drama, the evening's dark horse emerges; all it asks is that it should not go lame. But of course it does greatly matter, not because of feelings of departmental dignity, but because one department owes allegiance to a Muse, the other has a Task.'<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to conceive of John Betjeman, Dylan Thomas, or Geoffrey Grigson—to choose only three very different names among the very different feature-writers of 1946—owing allegiance to a task rather than to a muse. There was an intimate connection between feature-writing and poetry. Louis MacNeice had always insisted on it and had invited other poets to share his own 'exciting experience of having "your-own-things-being-performed" '; and with the advent of the Third Programme all kinds of new possibilities opened themselves up.<sup>5</sup> So, too, had D. G. Bridson, after 1949 the Assistant Head

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1961), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1947, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> L. Gilliam, 'Aspects of the Feature Programme', in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. II, no. 2, Summer 1947.

<sup>4</sup> *The Listener*, 25 Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*There is some good MacNeice correspondence. Thus, on 3 June 1954 MacNeice wrote to Gilliam that before leaving for three months' absence he wanted to get a few programmes 'either broadcast or in the ice box'. One was 'a programme about childhood', beautifully spelt out, with a possible title 'Father of the Man' or 'The Child is Father'.



of the Department, who has singled out among the outstanding Features of the period Wyndham Lewis's *The Childermass* (June 1955) and *The Human Age* (May 1955).<sup>1</sup> So, too, had the producer Douglas Cleverdon, a key figure in the Department—it had a London staff of forty people in 1955—who found in his experience that ‘nearly all the most rewarding programmes’ he had produced had been written by poets.<sup>2</sup> Yet poets were never alone as feature writers: C. V. Wedgwood came from history, V. S. Pritchett from the world of the novelist, the critic René Cutforth from journalism, Douglas Cleverdon from selling antique books, and Alan Burgess from mountaineering and world travel.

The feature programme had flourished during the war and continued to flourish during the immediate post-war years.<sup>3</sup> There was just as wide a range of features as there was of plays, ranging as it did from MacNeice's *The Dark Tower*, W. R. Rodgers's *Radio Portraits* (the first two were of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce) and Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*,<sup>4</sup> to Rayner Heppenstall's *The Dialogues of Plato* and *The Rising in the North*, Francis Dillon's *Rumpelstiltskin*, and Cutforth's *Journey in Malaya* or Stephen Grenfell's *Special Duty—Hospital Burns Unit*. The parallel in features to the serial was the series, like the Light Programme's *Focus* series;<sup>5</sup> and, as in the case of drama, there were some features which were considered just right for the Light Programme as there were some which seemed just right for the Third.

Weekly ‘Features Meetings’ within the different services, including the Overseas Service, dealt with different items within the range. Thus, to take examples chosen at random, an Overseas Features Meeting was dealing in December 1947 with programmes as different as *Anthology of Three Kings*, *The Irish Story Teller*, an adaption of *Moby Dick* in ninety minutes,

<sup>1</sup> D. G. Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel* (1971), pp. 189 ff. He also noted Henry Reed's *The Streets of Pompeii*, Bronowski's *The Face of Violence*, Laurie Lee's *Voyage of Magellan* and Terence Tiller's *The Tower of Hunger*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 Feb. 1970.

<sup>3</sup> A. Briggs, *The War of Words*, p. 587.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 554.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 61. In November 1951 Kenneth Adam (then Controller, Light Programme) wished to substitute for it ‘a “special investigator” type programme’, possibly with Chester Wilmot (\*Adam to Gilliam, 20 Nov. 1951).

*Afforestation* and *The White Collar Worker*, while a Third Programme Features Meeting a year later was considering a serialization of Proust, Koch's 'sound pictures', a Rex Warner translation of *Anabasis*, an adaptation of Harold Nicolson's *Some People, World Food*, and a series of *Imaginary Conversations*.<sup>1</sup> There was 'liaison with Talks', and there were frequent messages from the Director-General. Thus, a note on a meeting of the Home Broadcasting Committee in 1951, headed 'Nazi Thugs', reports 'D.G.'s wish that there should not be many programmes such as *Rommel* and *Marshal Without Glory*'.<sup>2</sup> Two years earlier he had asked rather plaintively, 'How many "BBC families" have we got on the air now—national, regional, in sound, in television, in series on their own, as parts of other shows?'<sup>3</sup>

Regional Features, including topographical and historical features as well as 'documentaries', were an important element in Regional broadcasting, but once again, as in drama, the assumption was made, rather too easily, that the writer, even if he were rooted in the provinces, would eventually always look to London. Indeed, the young but experienced producer Edward Livesey put this explicitly in 1950: 'this is what we should expect and encourage; our job is nursemaid until that time.'<sup>4</sup> Livesey, who died in 1957 at the age of thirty-eight, might well have made an outstanding contribution to broadcasting.

Television figures little in the minutes of the various Sound Features Committees—and it was still possible in 1951 for a sound feature to be called *Window on Europe*—but with the increasing number of viewers and the increasing, if still inadequate, resources available to television producers, the new medium presented a challenge to many of the highly creative people whom Gilliam had gathered together. They were convinced, as Gilliam was, that features were essentially 'radio-

<sup>1</sup> \*Weekly Overseas Features Meeting, *Minutes*, 16 Dec. 1947; Third Programme Features Meeting, *Minutes*, 4 Nov. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Home Broadcasting Committee, *Minutes*, 27 Nov. 1951; Howgill to Gilliam, 30 Nov. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 28 Nov. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*E. Livesey to H. J. Dunkerley, Controller, Midland Region, 30 Oct. 1950. His note is headed 'Regional Features, 1943-50'. For Livesey's contribution to drama in the Midlands, see T. C. Kemp, 'Radio Drama in the Midlands' in *BBC Year Book*, 1950, pp. 58-9.

genic' and that if 'radio can claim to be an art at all, it must base its claim on its features'.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the tradition of documentary film went back as far as the tradition of the feature: John Grierson's *Drifters* was made in 1929, and he had coined the term 'documentary'.<sup>2</sup> Long before social exploration influenced drama, it captured 'drama documentary' in BBC television. As a result, there was something of the same excitement after 1945 in pioneering a new television 'art form' as Gilliam had felt earlier in the golden age of wireless. 'Documentary', Barr told McGivern, 'is concerned with . . . the dramatization of facts, reconstruction of events, and it uses any dramatic device to make its point.' Since 'its nature' was 'to select, edit, synthesise and present its own conclusion', it had to rest on a script, and since it was dealing with facts the script would have to be 'accurate' in order to be effective.<sup>3</sup> Barry did not believe as strongly as Barr that there was a sharp contrast between the television documentary and the television play,<sup>4</sup> but he encouraged those producers who did. The result was an impressive collection of new-style television programmes. Some of them, like *The Magistrate's Court* (1948), *I Made News* (1951), and *They Came by Appointment* (1955) came in series, the last of them about Harley Street. Some were individual programmes like *I Want to be a Chorus Girl* (1947) or, in a different vein, *Walter Sickert* (1955) or *Living Machinery* (1955) from Bristol (complete with robots).

Critics often said much the same things about 'documentaries' as about 'features', calling them 'perhaps the BBC's most renowned TV productions'.<sup>5</sup> 'There are those who believe that television cannot be an art form,' wrote Reginald Pound in February 1955, 'that the possibility is not inherent in it. They must acknowledge the priority of documentary as the most truly

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Ross Williamson, 'Reflections on Radio Features' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VI, no. 3, Autumn 1951. Louis MacNeice, 'A Plea for Sound', *ibid.*, vol. VIII, no. 3, Autumn 1953, written at a time when everyone was writing of the triumphs of television.

<sup>2</sup> See H. Forsyth Hardy (ed.), *Grierson on Documentary* (1966); P. Rotha, *Documentary Film* (first edn., 1935); A. Lovell and J. Hillier, *Studies in Documentary* (1972).

<sup>3</sup> \*Barr to McGivern, 3 Aug. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Barry to McGivern, 15 Aug. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> K. Baily (ed.), *The Television Annual for 1956*, p. 9. This volume covered the year 1955.

characteristic of television's forms of expression. All else is contributed from without, the cinema, sound radio, the theatre, the lecture room, the concert hall. Documentary gathers these resources into a single combined act of communication and interpretation, and it is unique in being able to do so.' 'Research' behind the scenes might take months, and 'impact' might be very difficult to measure, but the programmes were thought of (as Gilliam had thought features should be) as 'extremely relevant to . . . this day and age', enabling viewers to 'get beyond appearances'.<sup>1</sup>

Pound was drawing a contrast between such programmes and straight 'entertainment' programmes or those dealing with topical news, and, like most of the writers of the time—on theatre as much as on music—he could not help moralizing. 'In many of its activities television is encouraging the erroneous view that appearances are important.' Yet he added generously, 'in "show business" no doubt they are.' Before turning to *Variety*, which by 1955 was far more obviously (if still incompletely) a part of 'show business' than it had been in 1945, it is interesting to note that there were many 'hybrid' programmes both on Sound and Television which included contrasting items. *Panorama*, for example, first broadcast on 11 November 1953, was sometimes thought of as 'documentary', but more often—in its early stages at least—it was conceived of as a 'magazine' programme. So, too, of course was Francis Dillon's *Country Magazine* on Sound.<sup>2</sup>

*Children's Hour*, which combined many different elements in broadcasting, had always included features. The Sound programme, with its origins in the Reithian era, still set out in 1955 'to entertain the children in a stimulating way, guiding their reading, encouraging their various interests and inculcating the love of God and their neighbour',<sup>3</sup> and it was carried

<sup>1</sup> R. Pound, 'Documentary: A Continuing Problem' in *The Listener*, 17 Feb. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of 6 July 1953. For *Panorama*, see below, pp. 993-4. For *Country Magazine*, see F. Dillon, *Country Magazine, Book of the BBC Programme* (1950).

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 8117 (1949), *Report of the Broadcasting Committee*, p. 27; see also D. McCulloch, 'Entertaining the Young Listener' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. II, no. 4, Jan. 1948. The *BBC Children's Hour Annuals* included excerpts from scripts. For a sharp criticism of *Children's Hour* see Sir Compton Mackenzie, reported in the *Kentish Observer*, 22 May 1955: 'I sometimes wonder whether the Children's Hour of the BBC has not done more harm than all the horror comics in the world by destroying

on the Home Service, with heavy Regional participation, from 5 o'clock to 5.55 p.m. *Regional Round* was a favourite quiz item, and there were adaptations of serials like *David Copperfield* or *Ivanhoe* as well as talks and music. There was little 'pop' music, and on Wednesday there was a religious talk and prayers. Different age groups were expressly catered for, and efforts were made to cover all age groups at least once during a week.

Television from the start had a rather less certain format, if not a less certain objective, when it addressed itself to children; and children were soon amongst the most avid viewers of adult television. Yet in September 1950 it extended the set period each day from half an hour to an hour, and every effort was made to keep the hour inviolate even when Test Matches were in progress or there were thousands of viewers anxious to watch Wimbledon.<sup>1</sup> In both cases, however, the set hour was not the only offering specifically for children. Listeners could *Listen with Mother* from Monday to Friday at 1.45 in the afternoon and on Saturday just *Listen on Saturday*: viewers could *Watch with Mother* from Monday to Friday from 3.45 to 4 o'clock.

There was, in fact, a weekly round for young listeners and viewers. *Andy Pandy*, the *Flowerpot Men*, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, and the *Woodentops*, successor to *Muffin the Mule*, were creations of the new Children's Television Department set up in September 1950, with Freda Lingstrom at its head, and by 1955 their fame had spread far outside the areas of the country where television flourished.<sup>2</sup> Already by then more children were watching children's television than listening to children's radio programmes. Programmes for younger children may well have been more successful at this date, however, than programmes for 'teenagers'. 'I think children's tv is perfectly

<sup>1</sup> M. Adams, 'Programmes for the Young Viewer' in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 2, Summer 1950; F. Lingstrom, 'Children and Television', *ibid.*, vol. VIII, no. 2, Summer 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the sound Children's Hour was still holding its own, and the number of Request Week postcards had increased in March 1955 to 54,600 from the previous year's figure of 42,470.

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children's imagination whereas horror comics stimulate it.' H. G. Wells's *Invisible Man* had been left out of the programme in February because it was thought it might frighten young children and *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* was broadcast in its place.

suited to the under-tens,' a thirteen-year-old with 'more grown up tastes' had complained in January 1954.<sup>1</sup>

Children's programmes on radio were part of the wide-ranging responsibility of the BBC's Entertainment Division. Under its Controller, until the end of 1952 R. J. F. Howgill and afterwards Michael Standing, it arranged everything from 'pop music' through to Gilbert and Sullivan, the *Life of Handel* and beyond; and everything from *Transatlantic Quiz* and all the other quizzes, or *In Town Tonight* (first televised in October 1953) to Leslie Baily's *Scrapbooks*, *Take It From Here* and *The Goon Show*.<sup>2</sup> The Home Service and the Light Programme were dependent upon it for a large element in their programming, and it was mainly through the response to such programming that most listeners—and later viewers—judged the BBC.

In 1952 Standing, then Head of Variety, collected his own statistics of 'Variety output': they were based, rather precariously, on particular weeks, but they clearly showed the extent of Standing's responsibilities (see opposite). Standing was seeking to refute the view that there had been a substantial decline in the Variety content of the Light Programme between 1945 and 1952. He noted the virtual elimination since 1945 of fifteen- and twenty-minute programmes, a fact which cut the number of 'new productions', and he noted, too, how blurred and how volatile his own responsibilities really were. 'The balance between scripted shows and musical programmes has fluctuated fairly violently and often there have been programmes which really qualified for either category.'<sup>3</sup>

In 1945, when he took over Variety, Standing found the Department uneasy and unhappy. Nor was its reputation high, despite all its war-time successes. 'It was charged variously (and sometimes quite irresponsibly) with lack of integrity, poor organisation, bad leadership, frustrated, disinterested and incompetent producers, disloyalty and no *esprit de corps*, all of which were put forward as reasons for an undue proportion of

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 25 Jan. 1954; see also K. Baily (ed.), *The Television Annual for 1956*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 544-6; \*Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 10 July 1946, 17 Dec. 1947. A *Scrapbook* for either 1926 or 1927 was proposed at a Variety Meeting on 10 July 1946, 'whichever was *not* the general strike year'. Leslie Baily's history was beyond reproach, but obviously there were *lacunae* in the Variety Department.

<sup>3</sup> \*Standing to Howgill, 25 March 1952.

VARIETY OUTPUT, 1945-1952

	HOME			LIGHT		
	No. of new productions of all kinds per week*	Total hours per week including 'repeats' and SBs	% of Home Service output	No. of new productions of all kinds per week*	Total hours per week including 'repeats' and SBs	% of Light Programme output
1945	Average of 2 sample weeks					
1946	" " 6 "	34	20h. 15m.	16	64	36
1947	" " 3 "	32	21h. 25m.	18	63	38
1948	" " 6 "	31	19h. 35m.	17	49	36
1949	" " 5 "	32	20h. 25m.	18	43	30
1950	" " 3 "	36	21h. 20m.	19	50	32
1951	" " 3 "	27	19h. 5m.	17	49	31
1952	" " 1 "	20	16h. 25m.	15	52	32
	" " 1 "	19	15h. 25m.	14	45	28

\* These 'productions of all kinds' include scripted productions, musical shows, dance music and cinema organ programmes.

"flops" and inferior work generally.' Morale was low and 'minor troubles tended to be magnified by all grades of staff'. Producers in 1945 were said to be 'browned off' and 'unhappy about their conditions of work and future prospects'. They were taking too many opportunities to condemn the Corporation, and Management and, above all, the twin bogeys of 'Administration' and 'Planners'.<sup>1</sup>

There were not dissimilar problems in the Radio Talks Department,<sup>2</sup> but that Department was less involved in an elaborate organized world of agents and contracts outside Broadcasting House. Nor was it troubled as often by 'the smell of the footlights'. Moreover, any troubles emanating from the lecture-room or the weekly periodical did not involve whole masses of the population as did troubles in the Variety studios. 'The Variety Department provides most of the goods in the popular shop window of broadcasting,' Standing maintained, 'and this fact should have fair recognition in the gradings of the staff.' The Department in his view also badly needed a Script Section, 'not so much to produce original material as to doctor current scripts, where necessary, and to provide the means of encouraging and training outside writers'.<sup>3</sup>

By October 1945 Standing was expressing the hope that producers could be offered programmes in accordance with their 'tastes and primary interests',<sup>4</sup> and two years later a Script Section (with a 'gag library') was established. At the end of its first year's work, Gale Pedrick, the Head of the Section and himself an experienced scriptwriter, praised it for 'the provision of new writers and ideas' and 'the improvement of current material'. It had set out to look out for and to encourage young writers and to provide a convenient central point of contact between the Variety Department and its writers; and among the programme ideas which had emanated from it in the first year were *Up the Pole* and *The Street We Live In* (Overseas). By the end of the year there were already 721 names on the Script Register, 170 of which were of people who could be recommended with confidence.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Standing, 'The Variety Department', Dec. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 578.

<sup>3</sup> \*Standing, 'The Variety Department', Dec. 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 25 Oct. 1945.

<sup>5</sup> \*\*Notes on the Script Section of the Variety Department', April 1948.



It was to Pedrick as Head of the Section that Ray Galton and Alan Simpson sent their first script in 1951 on the advice of Denis Norden and Frank Muir. The script was in the style of *Take It From Here*—written by Norden and Muir—and it was used in a Derek Roy show which also included the comedian Tony Hancock. Galton and Simpson were to go on to work for Hancock through sound and television for ten years and to follow this up with another remarkably successful programme, *Steptoe and Son*, in 1966.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Eric Sykes was both scriptwriter and comedian: he wrote a number of scripts for Frankie Howerd and Tony Hancock and even three *Goon Shows*, and he performed himself in *One Minute Please*, a series which began in September 1952. One of his greatest successes of the years 1945–55, however, was his share in the writing of *Educating Archie*, a programme to the script of which Marty Feldman also contributed.

Good scripts were to guarantee the BBC's supremacy in the field of comedy once competitive television established itself after 1955. Yet between 1945 and 1955, when radio still retained its mass audience, the 'comedy' which counted most was that which had no visual basis or support. *ITMA*, by now an institution, survived until the death of the first of the exclusively non-visual comedians, in January 1949, as did other war-time shows, like *Much Binding in the Marsh* or *Navy Mixture*, even though there was considerable adaptation, in 1946 in the latter case, for example, to give less 'weight' to the 'naval characteristic'.<sup>2</sup> *ITMA* was just as 'relevant' in an age of post-war austerity and control as it had been during the war—a 'laughing criticism of the mysterious "they" who rule our fortunes'.<sup>3</sup> The relevance, however, while much commented upon by sociologists (amateur and professional) and much prized by BBC administrators, would have mattered little but for the art and the sheer fun of the characters. 'Tomtopia', first invented in 1945, was ruled by Handley and inhabited amongst others by Sir Short Supply, Mona Lott and Tattie Mackintosh. Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 544, and D. Nathan, *The Laughtermakers* (1971), pp. 19 and 130 ff.

<sup>2</sup> \*Light Programme Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 8 May 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \**Manchester Guardian*, 10 Jan. 1949; see also above, pp. 58, 545, and F. Worsley, 'Anatomy of *ITMA*' (1946) and T. Kavanagh, *Tommy Handley* (1949).

Mopp had gone, but in the *ITMA* of 1947-8—one show in December 1948 was put on in the presence of the King and Queen—Frisbie Dyke and Sophie Tuckshop joined the cast. The three weekly broadcasts of the show were then being listened to by nine million, four million, and four and a half million people.<sup>1</sup> *ITMA* had loosened 'the bonds of the possible in radio'. The speed would have been 'difficult to follow by eye'.<sup>2</sup> Yet the kindness in it as well as the fun kept it moving.

John Watt, Kavanagh, the scriptwriter, and Worsley, the producer, had been uncertain in 1945, however, whether to go on with *ITMA* in peace-time, and it had been Haley and Wellington who had pressed hard for it to continue.<sup>3</sup> They rallied to its defence again in 1948 when the Governors suggested that it should be given 'a long rest': 'if *ITMA* disappears for a year,' Wellington wrote then, 'it will disappear for ever.'<sup>4</sup> When Handley died, it was Haley who delivered his radio obituary. *ITMA*, he summed up, had 'spanned an age' and 'typified the spirit of the British nation': with the death of Handley, 'a true original', 'something inestimable' had been lost.<sup>5</sup>

Behind the scenes, there had been doubts about Handley's abilities as a comic in other contexts and continuing uncertainties about whether the show could go on much longer.<sup>6</sup> There were even a few complaints that the show was not 'as clean as it was', always a serious matter in BBC Variety of every kind.<sup>7</sup> *Much Binding in the Marsh*—with Kenneth Horne and Richard Murdoch—had had higher appreciation figures in 1948, and in the fourth quarter Jimmy Jewell and Ben Warris's *Up the Pole* had a higher audience rating also. Eric

<sup>1</sup> \*Wellington to Nicolls, 11 March 1948.

<sup>2</sup> P. J. Kavanagh, Introduction to *The Itma Years* (1974), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> \*Watt to Howgill, 27 June 1945; Haley to Nicolls, 9 July 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Wellington to Nicolls, 11 March 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*'An Appreciation of Tommy Handley', broadcast of 13 Jan. 1949 on the Home Service. The *Spectator* called his death 'a national calamity' (14 Jan. 1949). Cf. *New Statesman*, 15 Jan. 1949 and Philip Hope-Wallace in *The Listener*, 13 Jan. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Worsley to Standing, 7 Jan. 1949, pointed out that *Family Favourites* was now nearly as popular. Worsley himself did not long survive Handley; he died on 10 Sept. 1949.

<sup>7</sup> \*Howgill, then Controller, Entertainment, to Standing, 5 Jan. 1949. There had, in fact, been earlier complaints on this score even during the war (Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 9, 23 April 1945). See also above, pp. 58, 212.

Barker's *Waterlogged Spa* was at least as familiar to listeners from its first edition in February 1946 as 'Tomtopia', and its catchwords ('Ullo, cock, 'ow's yerself?', 'As long as you tear 'em up', or just 'Steady Barker') remain as memorable to those who heard them as his characters, many of them played by Jon Pertwee, most of them very real characters in Labour Britain. The first Baron Waterlogged (ex-dustman) was played by Barker himself and his daughter Phoeb by his wife Pearl Hackney.<sup>1</sup>

*Waterlogged Spa* derived from *HMS Waterlogged* and the Spa Symphony Orchestra from the Old Ship's Band in *Navy Mixture*, just as *Much Binding* was carved out of a war-time service show, 'much as the York civil plane was carved out of the Lancaster bomber'.<sup>2</sup> *Take It From Here*, however, had no echoes of the war, even though Jimmy Edwards had been and looked like an RAF pilot and had taken part in *Navy Mixture*. It was 'completely post-war in its attitudes', Norden has said, 'and it recognised the literacy of the listener'.<sup>3</sup> It included some jokes—about Picasso, for instance—which 'people inside the BBC' felt the public would not understand. Indeed, its first reception had been far from encouraging, and it reached the peak of its popularity, by then very high, when it substituted 'The Glums' for its parodies on films and books. 'The Glums' (the father played by Jimmy Edwards, Eth by Joy Nichols, and Ron by Dick Bentley, who had returned from Australia, where he was the highest-paid comedian, to seek his fortunes in Britain in 1947)<sup>4</sup> were an irresistible combination. Later, *Take It From Here* was to be 'intellectualized', like *ITMA*, and solemn articles written on the 'deglamourization' of courtship, the fiancé not as romantic hero but as moron, the girl as the born reader of the woman's magazine, the non-mention of sex. In the beginning, however, neither Norden nor Muir, superb writers, was conscious that anything socially 'significant' was happening.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 56, and E. Barker, *Steady Barker* (1956).

<sup>2</sup> P. Black, *The Biggest Aspidistra in the World* (1972), p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Nathan, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> \*'Programme Offers and Points for Discussion', 28 May 1947. In the same month plans were going ahead for programmes with Cicely Courtneidge, a Wayne/Radford serial, a further *Just William* series, and the anniversary number of *Workers' Playtime*. *Happidrome* had difficulties in collecting material and *Palace of Varieties* was being scheduled to take its place in the autumn.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Nathan, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

*The Goon Show*, first broadcast on 28 May 1951, was written mainly by Spike Milligan, and it is difficult to believe that he was not aware of the 'significance' of what *he* was doing. 'What', asked Harry Secombe, 'is the zaniest comedy show on the air today?' After hesitation Spike guessed *Today in Parliament*. 'No,' replied Secombe, 'it's those Crazy People, the Goons.' The fantasy could be controlled as well as wild, and it seldom faltered. *The Goon Show* was strongly supported inside the BBC at the start (in face of some opposition) by Standing and by the producer Pat Dixon, with whom Peter Sellers, one of the key performers, along with Milligan, Secombe and the progenitor of more than one kind of new show, Michael Bentine, discussed the first series. But soon such support was unnecessary, for the programme quickly became the centre of a cult.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the wildness of the Goons, particularly in their later series—and the programmes went on for nine years—had its influence on television, and Bentine has said that he was always 'sparked off' by visual ideas for which he had to find words.<sup>2</sup> In this connection, the most extraordinary production of the period was *Educating Archie*, a Sound programme built around a ventriloquist's dummy. Such an idea was visual in a stage sense, at least, yet it was so successful as radio that it quickly shot to the top and won the *Daily Mail* Variety Award, a coveted honour, in 1950 after only four and a half months on the air.

The idea of using the ventriloquist Peter Brough had been noted as early as 1946<sup>3</sup>—and he was to become well known nationally, not least to a young audience—yet the enormous success of *Educating Archie*, first broadcast on 6 June 1950, depended both on the quality of the scripts and the abilities of the many young comedians—and others—who took part in the series. Max Bygraves and Hattie Jacques were leading characters, and Julie Andrews the chief singer, while later recruits included Tony Hancock (from *Variety Bandbox*), Beryl Reid and Harry Secombe. Already in 1954 *Hancock's Half Hour*

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 545–6. Sellers started in radio with the ambition of following Jon Pertwee and becoming a 'voice man' and he secured an interview with Gale Pedrick by imitating Kenneth Horne on the telephone.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Nathan, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> \*Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 22 May 1946. He was a guest in *Ignorance is Bliss* in Sept. 1949.

had become a radio success, with Sid James prominent as a foil and Kenneth Williams a regular performer.<sup>1</sup> Galton and Simpson's East Cheam was a very different place from either Tomtopia or Waterlogged Spa, but it already existed in listeners' minds before it could be seen on the screen in 1956.

Throughout the period from 1945 to 1955 'programme offers', new and old, were collected and set out in weekly papers by the Assistant Head of Variety, C. F. Meehan, and discussed at meetings with the various Services, including Overseas. The Overseas Service was so successful with some of the big shows, indeed, that their characters and catchwords were soon as well known 'in Brisbane and Bulawayo' as they were in London or Manchester.<sup>2</sup> The 'programme offers' were wide-ranging, with far more programme ideas being rejected subsequently than were accepted. Far too many of them were 'spin-offs' from other programmes—like 'The Private Life of Mrs. Mopp' or even a Stars' Brains Trust with Ronald Frankau as Question Master;<sup>3</sup> but it was all too easy to settle down into regular weekly routines.<sup>4</sup> However, there were always a few pioneering ideas and promising starters.

The costs were remarkably low by later standards—*Hancock's Half Hour* was costing only £260 in December 1954<sup>5</sup>—but even then there had to be economics. Thus, an Arthur Askey repeat of *Hello Playmates* was rejected 'with regret' in the same month by the Controller, Light Programme, on 'financial grounds'.<sup>6</sup> 'Good Variety cannot be produced on a shoestring,' Standing had insisted in July 1952, adding correctly that 'it is often the seeming extravagances, stunts and flourishes which give our programmes their popular appeal.' It was always recognized

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 546.

<sup>2</sup> F. Grisewood, *My Story of the BBC* (1959), p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> \*Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 14, 28 Aug. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *The Star*, 22 Nov. 1954, complained of 'apparently immovable programmes' like *In Town Tonight*, 'that fix the monotonous pattern of weekend (and particularly Sunday evening) listening'. H. Rooney Pelletier, then Chief Assistant to the Controller, Light Programme, argued in 1952 (\*memorandum to C. J. Mahoney, then Variety Manager and later Head of Light Entertainment, Radio, 11 Dec. 1952) that to relieve tight schedules and 'repetitive listening habits' there should be special 'topical Variety programmes attached to given days, such as Halloween, Boat Race Day, etc.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Variety Meeting, *Minutes*, 1 Dec. 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid., 8 Dec. 1954. The show had been first broadcast on 31 May 1954.

that shows had to be 'given a chance' even if at first they were not very successful and that comedians had to be 'built up', as Eric Barker was built up in 1945 or Benny Hill after 1952. Some were highly professional like Arthur Askey or Ted Ray.<sup>1</sup> Most needed strong support away from the microphone. They were almost all conscious by 1945 of the fact, first, that *Variety* on the stage was going through a period of crisis behind the footlights, and second, that as far as broadcasting was concerned television was now providing the challenge. The Music Hall, in what then seemed to be the last decade of its long history, was dying at the same time as television began to boom. Askey and Ray were both employed on television long before 1955, as were Benny Hill and Frankie Howerd, and the former's *Before Your Very Eyes* (with the model Sabrina) was a hit of 1952. It spanned past and present in recalling the mood of seaside concert-parties, while Bob Monkhouse's *Fast and Loose* (May–December 1954) pointed ahead to 'situation comedy' on the screen.

In retrospect, the first lines of Peter Waring (in white tie and tails) at Television's opening Variety Party on 7 June 1946 stand out, and they are more poignant than comic. Waring—from the Windmill, and star of *Music Hall* and *Variety Bandbox*—was sent to gaol not very long afterwards in July 1949 and committed suicide in his cell.

Hello everyone [he began]. Of course, I must say, I feel a trifle self-conscious going into the lens of this thing; the Engineer bloke said 'Now look right into the lens of the camera'. I felt very foolish because the last time I did that they also took a profile shot and put my number underneath. But since I'm here I might just as well tell you a little more about myself and my hobbies. I have one or two hobbies you know that Sir Stafford [Cripps] can't control. No, I thought that now I'm being televised, you might see the jokes quicker. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Ronnie Waldman, who was in charge of light entertainment on television, must often have felt that 'seeing the jokes quicker'

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 18 Dec. 1946, for a proposal to launch a series for Ted Ray, who was then appearing in Tom Arnold's *Ice Revue* at the Stoll; and 5 Feb. 1947, for a burlesque opera series with Askey, 'in view of the increased public for operas'. *Ray's a Laugh* was first broadcast on 4 April 1949.

<sup>2</sup> \*Broadcast script, Television Variety Party, 7 June 1946. For Waring's obituary, see *Evening News*, 9 July 1949.

was the least of his problems. He was as much subject to financial limitations as the Sound Variety Department, and his expenses were necessarily greater.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, if some of his other main difficulties lay in the world of 'show business' outside the BBC, he was not always helped in his endeavours by the competitive attitude of his opposite numbers in Broadcasting House and by their emphasis on the contractual obligations of their own artists. Bernard Braden, whose first television ventures had been found 'fresh and courageous',<sup>2</sup> was one of the artists in question. Those 'comedians', old or new, who appeared on television—Terry-Thomas (complete with carnation and cigarette-holder) or Norman Wisdom of a different vintage and appeal—tended either to be used too much or to become too expensive to hire. 'Personality programmes', like *What's My Line*, a huge success,<sup>3</sup> were in many respects easier to organize than screen Variety, old or new: they had their own stars, like Gilbert Harding, and they did not depend on witty scripts or elaborate staging. Some performers in basic Variety, like Barbara Kelly, were extremely effective in this new television game.

In relation to televised 'light entertainment', which was described for the first time in 1951 as 'much more professional, with obvious hard work and thought behind it', there were fewer outstanding successes at first than in 'drama and documentaries'.<sup>4</sup> Yet by 1954 and 1955 Waldman, who carefully studied what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic, had far more to report.<sup>5</sup> Money was still a serious problem, but there was no lack of variety, as Waldman put it, in Television Variety.<sup>6</sup> Light Entertainment—with a full-time staff of thirty—was presenting 450 productions a year, 'a vastly greater output than that of any theatrical or film organization', and

<sup>1</sup> Average programme costs in 1954/5 were £892 per hour.

<sup>2</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1951. See also above, p. 546 n. 5.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 677. The programme was first presented on 16 July 1951. Ted Kavanagh was in the very first programme, as was Barbara Kelly; Marghanita Laski appeared in the second. There were many other such games including Peter West's *Guess My Story* (1953) and Margaret Lockwood's *Down You Go* (1954). Harding described one of his two hobbies as 'watching television'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 29 March 1951.

<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 936.

<sup>6</sup> R. Waldman, 'The Variety of Television Variety' in the *Radio Times Annual*, 1954, pp. 56-7.

its lively magazine *Kaleidoscope* was no less diverse in its offerings than the programmes as a whole. The *Passing Show* had traced the whole history of entertainment and of some of the great names in it; and if the arguments among television administrators and producers about 'series' were at least as sharp as those in Broadcasting House,<sup>1</sup> there was a growing feeling that in any future competitive battles the BBC could hold its own whether in series or in single programmes.

No survey was made during the years 1945 to 1955 of television Variety output, although American commentators noted that on the eve of commercial television New York television stations were devoting 53.3 per cent of their time to 'light entertainment' while the BBC was devoting only 15.7 and that there were few British counterparts of the American stars of entertainment, like Ed Sullivan, Jackie Gleason, Steve Allen, or Imogene Coca.<sup>2</sup> Nor, despite the Toppers, were there British equivalents of the great American 'spectaculars'. There were 'startling contrasts', indeed, in programme expenditure on the two sides of the Atlantic.<sup>3</sup>

One interesting survey, however, of Sound output in Variety, still the dominant output in 1955, was undertaken by J. C. Trewin, the theatre critic, in 1952. It was similar in scope to studies of musical output, and attempted ambitiously to place in perspective what the public was being offered. Trewin found a good deal of 'sparkle' in the programmes, for all the 'vast body' of the output: 'indeed, day after day, in Variety shows, band programmes, organ and piano recitals, record programmes, the amount of genuine skill and verbal resource' surprised him. 'The Variety Department was doing an uncommonly good job on a scale still not wholly realised.' He enjoyed *Riders of the Range*, a Western put out at 6 p.m. on Sundays (much Variety, he complained, suffered from an 'indoors' flavour), *Bedtime with Braden* (particularly when it

<sup>1</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 14 May 1953 record a difference on this point between Waldman, who said that 'series were the best way of building light entertainment', and McGivern who considered the BBC had already reached 'a limit of series'.

<sup>2</sup> B. Paulu, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 986. K. Baily, in *The Television Annual for 1956* (p. 10), claimed that there had been an increase in the hours devoted to Television Variety from 9 per cent in 1950 to 12 per cent in 1954.



opened with lines like 'Critics, here's your favourite fiasco'), Eric Barker's *Just Fancy* (he wished there were more 'intimate revues') and *The Goon Show*; and although he was less impressed by *Take It From Here* than the great audience, he admitted that on occasion it could be 'admirable'.

Trewin praised the work of Norden and Gale Pedrick (of *These Radio Times*) as scriptwriters and the high level of performances of artists as different as Cyril Fletcher, Sam Costa and Hermione Gingold. He also liked Brian Reece's *P.C. 49*. Yet he asked for fewer regular weekly programmes and more surprise. He drew a sharp distinction between programmes like *Music Hall* and *Variety Bandbox*, which were 'straight music-hall-into-radio without elaborate frameworks', and *The Goon Show*, 'pure radio, the kind of hubble-bubble nonsense we can hear only on the air'. Television did not figure in his survey, although he noted that the Goons already referred to Sound as 'steam radio' and that one of Braden's catchphrases had been 'What! and miss television!' 'I would like', he concluded, 'to hear one programme at least of more intimate Variety without the use of the big drum and without "the large man with an enormous red face".'<sup>1</sup>

Trewin did not believe that BBC Variety was too 'Americanized'. Nor was it, even though Eric Maschwitz, who was to play an active part in the British Songwriters Guild,<sup>2</sup> complained comprehensively not only of American songs but of bogus American accents and of American 'comedy programmes'. Turning down an offer to produce a survey of the kind Trewin presented, Maschwitz bitterly attacked the BBC's 'system' (false competition between Home and Light) and all the 'hectic talk and semi-hysterical laughter'. 'Whatever Luxembourg may do to catch the cinema-queue, dance-hall audience in order to bamboozle them into combating night starvation, it is *not* the function of a British national broadcasting monopoly to speak with a catchpenny American accent . . . a fair imitation of the voice of Kansas City.' Trewin's report showed what a travesty this was. It was also far removed from reality, as Haley noted, when it included such phrases as

<sup>1</sup> \*J. C. Trewin, 'BBC Variety Programmes, A Critical Report on the Output in May 1952', 30 June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 756.

'there is no law that says that for £1 annually the public must be entertained at high pressure all the time.'<sup>1</sup> Neither Haley nor Jacob after him subscribed to any such law or to any such precept. They wanted both sound and television broadcasting to be 'balanced' and 'diverse'. It was only after 1955, with competitive television, that people's *right* to be entertained came to be treated as seriously as any other right, including the right to be informed.

## 4. Sounds of Music

THE great pride of the BBC was its music. Until the end of 1952 Music was a Department of the Entertainment Division, and only thereafter did it become a Division in its own right with its own Controller. Yet music was always thought of as more than entertainment. Two articles of belief, regularly tested in the light of changing circumstances, were, first, that the BBC had 'a duty towards the art of music'<sup>2</sup> and, second, that the influence of broadcasting upon 'the public love and understanding of music' was enormous. For thousands of 'potential music lovers' Bach, Beethoven and Wagner had been born only when the thousands bought their first wireless sets.<sup>3</sup>

The diffusion of music had always been considered a necessary daily activity in BBC programming on the grounds that music was 'the common property and common enjoyment of mankind',<sup>4</sup> and each week from 1923 onwards the *Radio Times* had set out details of the BBC's weekly music programmes which, if followed critically, constituted an education in itself. After 1945, Haley, at the apex of the BBC, was just as interested in the BBC's role as an agency of musical diffusion and appreciation as Reith had been, and he was far more knowledgeable. Broadcasters also had a duty, Haley believed, 'to strengthen the

<sup>1</sup> \*Maschwitz to Standing, 30 April 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Haley, 'The Responsibilities of Broadcasting', The Lewis Fry Memorial Lecture, May 1948, and Dyneley Hussey, 'The BBC and Contemporary Music' in *The Year's Work in Music*, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Percy A. Scholes, 'Broadcasting of Music' in the 1955 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Music*, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. W. Reith, *Broadcast over Britain* (1924), p. 173.

practice of art in the community': and in the case of music this meant paying careful attention both to composition and to performance. On all these points Haley's Lewis Fry Memorial Lecture in May 1948 anticipated the BBC's evidence to the Beveridge Committee. No other broadcasting system in the world, it was claimed with justice on the latter occasion, offered to its listeners such 'a wide variety of music', 'music of every acceptable kind'. No other broadcasting system was so dedicated to upholding the cause of music as 'an art to be fostered and furthered for long-term ends', and this dedication had entailed a continuous effort 'to present music at its best . . . with all that that implies in the way of expenditure on rehearsal and research'.<sup>1</sup>

There was no doubt about the magnitude of the BBC's commitment to music or the total expenditure devoted to it, although the detailed statistics were revealed to the BBC's General Advisory Council rather than directly to the public. The BBC was the country's largest employer of musicians—over 500 of them on its staff, supported by 350 other employees involved in programming and music—and in 1950 music, 'serious' and 'light', accounted for about 40 per cent of programme time and nearly two million pounds of expenditure on programmes out of a total of nearly four million pounds. About four times as much money was spent on music 'under this country's monopolistic system', it was then claimed, as was spent on Variety, whereas under the American system 'at least twenty times as much was spent on Variety (a term the Americans did not use) as on music'.<sup>2</sup> 'Pop' music or 'dance music',

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8117, 'General Survey of the Broadcasting Service', para. 41, p. 14. Haley's personal interest was often apparent. \*Thus, in March 1950 he wrote to Nicolls saying that after consulting output charts, which he attached, he was 'rather concerned' at a decline of the amount of 'serious music' in each Service and in the combined output. Wellington replied on 17 March 1950 stating that he did not think the comparison in minutes and percentages was 'the best guide', and Chalmers replied on 31 March reiterating his firm intention to pursue a progressive policy towards 'good music' on the Light Programme. Haley wrote a second note on the subject on 11 Sept. 1950, pointing out that the decline continued (1948: 20 per cent; 1949: 19 per cent; 1950: 18 per cent). The Light Programme proportion had fallen during the same period from 8 per cent to 5 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> \*General Advisory Council, Summary of Discussion, 8 March 1950. Despite or because of the large sum, much attention was devoted in 1951 to the 'rising costs' of music (Note of 7 Feb. 1951; Music Policy and Output Committee, *Minutes*, 11 April 1951).

as it was then always called, was excluded from the BBC's two million pound figure. So also was music in Variety and Gramophone Programmes, each organized in a separate department. The BBC's Music Department, through the Head or Assistant Head of Music or later the Controller, was not completely uninterested in either 'pop' or Variety music, but it did not manage them directly.<sup>1</sup>

The BBC's music policy was explained to the public in different language on different occasions, and it was regularly reiterated in every department inside the BBC at every level. From November 1948 onwards there was also a Music Output and Policy Committee under the chairmanship of Nicolls, the Director of Home Broadcasting. In addition, every care was taken to obtain advice, including specially commissioned reports, from outside the Department and outside the Corporation on matters ranging from selection of repertoire to quality of performance. Finally, every encouragement was given to outside bodies, ranging from Glyndebourne Opera to the International Society for Contemporary Music; and the Corporation took a great interest not only in the 'Proms', which it had 'presented' to the public since 1927,<sup>2</sup> but in the Edinburgh Festival, which started twenty years later.<sup>3</sup> Support was always provided for music to be played on great national occasions, like the 1951 Festival of Britain,<sup>4</sup> and for musicians, not least through the commissioning of new works: in 1954-5 alone the latter included a piano concerto by Edmund Rubbra, a sextet by Lennox Berkeley and a violin concerto by Arthur Bliss.

There could be problems, of course. The choice of performers and the system of choosing them were often criticized, as was the repertoire and, less often and then mainly inside the BBC,

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 758 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See T. Russell, *The Proms* (1949), ch. VIII, and L. Ayres, *The Proms* (1968), chs. 10-12. Henry Wood Birthday Concerts were broadcast from 1953 to 1959.

\*On 26 May 1944 Wood had written to Haley, 'It is my desire to perpetuate my life's work for the good of the people and I feel that the BBC is the most suitable organisation to carry on my Promenade Concerts after my retirement.' Haley replied (30 May 1944) thanking him for 'the exclusive right' he offered the BBC to use the title 'The Henry Wood Promenade Concerts' after his death.

<sup>3</sup> The BBC Scottish Orchestra, conducted by Ian Whyte, played a regular part during the early Festivals.

<sup>4</sup> \*The BBC had fixed five broadcasting dates by February 1950 (Music Policy and Output Committee, *Minutes*, 14 Feb. 1950). For a vivid account of the opening, see C. Reid, *Malcolm Sargent* (1948), pp. 8-9.



13a. Last Night of the Proms, 13 September 1947. Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony Orchestra



13b. Vaughan Williams with Reginald Redman in the Bristol studios, January 1951



*a.* Winifred Shotter



*b.* McDonald Hobley



*c.* Mary Malcolm



*d.* Sylvia Peters

14. Television Announcers

the performance. And the 'occasions' were not always easy. Thus, when BBC Television 'really went' to Edinburgh for the first time during the Edinburgh Festival of 1952, the cameras harassed the audience which was listening to the Festival Piano Quartet in the Usher Hall and caused difficulties for the players.<sup>1</sup> In general, the televising of music was never easy to arrange successfully during the early years. There were many critics who thought that music should be reserved for sound, while the Musicians' Union restricted or prevented the televising of music from public concerts. 'In my opinion,' said the producer Stephen Thomas, 'you are destroying the composer's purpose by putting straight music on television', even though the conductor's arts could be displayed, as in the successful series *The Conductor Speaks*.<sup>2</sup>

There were obviously many organizational as well as technical problems: they related not only to the difficult borderlines between economics and aesthetics, but to the clash of personalities in the world of music itself. Behind all the policy-making, however, whether it was simple or complex, there was always a deep love of music. There was also a strong sense of responsibility expressed in many different ways. Thus, a very wise counsellor, Herbert Murrill, who was Head of Music from 1950 to 1952 and who had been a very active Assistant Head since 1945, was less interested in boosting what the BBC was doing than in warning listeners of the dangers of listening too frequently to the classics. For him, 'the listener's duty' was as important as the Corporation's duty, and casual listening to great works always exasperated him: in a published article, he once referred with disgust to a friend in Canada who got into a taxi halfway through the first movement of Beethoven's fifth symphony, being played on the taxi's radio, and left in the

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern to Dinwiddie, 17 March 1952, setting out his plans for the Festival. Technical difficulties, like the clicking sound of the remotely controlled electrically driven lens turrets, were said by Lord Harewood 'to have ruined the performance' (*Scottish Daily Express*, 1 Sept. 1952). The Third Programme independently broadcast the same concert. From 1953 onwards BBC cameras at Usher Hall concerts were enclosed in wooden boxes with glass panels at lens height. One of the distinguished members of the piano quartet in 1952 complained that people remembered nothing of his performances except that he had a bald patch at the back of his head.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in D. Horton, *Television's Story and Challenge* (1951), p. 140. Another producer, Philip Bate, took up the opposite point of view. See also below, p. 741.

middle of the slow movement.<sup>1</sup> This was the kind of casual listening which he felt should always be avoided. In similar spirit, E. M. Forster, a member of the reconstructed Central Music Advisory Committee, which met for the first time after the war in July 1947, objected strongly to the intrusion of any 'light' music into the Third Programme: the argument that Third Programme listeners should occasionally be given a change from the 'severity of their fare', he suggested, was entirely spurious. 'They are not imprisoned in a concert hall and can get a change for themselves by turning a knob.'<sup>2</sup>

For all the pride in a long record of fostering music since the 1920s, there has seldom been much complacency inside the BBC itself about the evolution of its musical policy: indeed, a later generation of BBC policy-makers has been more critical of the BBC's policy between 1945 and 1955 than outside critics were at the time. Even at the beginning of this period, before the post-war music policy had been fully articulated, one of the Governors, Dr. Whitfield, himself a (blind) professional musician, expressed concern that the aims of the BBC's policy were not sufficiently clear. 'Is our object to give rough and ready entertainment; are we trying to familiarise our public with the largest possible number of musical works; do we want to give the highest attainable aesthetic satisfaction; do we wish to place Britain in the front rank of musical nations?'<sup>3</sup>

A listener survey by Silvey in 1945 had shown that only 11 per cent of the listening public were 'enthusiastic' about symphony concerts and only 4 per cent enthusiastic about chamber music;<sup>4</sup> and at the end of the period in 1955 only small proportions of the adult population were actually listening regularly to the former and less than 1 per cent to the latter. The audience share for the Sunday afternoon Palm Court concerts from a non-existent hotel was then 20 per cent and for Sunday afternoon's recorded *Family Favourites* 30 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Murrill, 'Broadcast Music: The Listener's Duty' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 4, Winter 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by E. M. Forster, 4 March 1956.

<sup>3</sup> \*Whitfield to Powell, 14 Sept. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> R. J. E. Silvey, 'The Public for Broadcast Music' in *Hinrichsen's Musical Year Book*, 1945-6, pp. 170-5.

<sup>5</sup> B. Paulu, *British Broadcasting* (1956), p. 228.



The knowledge of such figures was always in the minds of the programme makers.

LISTENER REACTIONS TO MUSIC, 1945

<i>Percentage of the Listening Public classified as</i>	<i>Symphony Concerts</i>	<i>Opera</i>	<i>Chamber Music</i>
Enthusiastic towards	11	12	4
Favourable	16	17	9
Neutral	20	21	15
Hostile	29	29	47

If Britain were to join the front rank of 'musical nations', it was appreciated in 1945, then the size of the minorities appreciating music would have to grow; and for this reason alone, 'familiarising our public with the largest possible number of musical works', to use Whitfield's phrase, was not considered an adequate objective. The need to 'educate' the public—through listening to music as well as to talks about it—was always stressed; and careful attention was paid to education for people who were already interested and knowledgeable through programmes like *Music Magazine* (which dealt with the main musical events of the week in the Home Service)<sup>1</sup> and Antony Hopkins's beautifully organized *Talking about Music*.

It was well known from other listener surveys, like one carried out during the summer of 1949, that one of the main determinants of musical enjoyment was education. Adult males in the 20-29 age group who had had a university education actually put symphony concerts first in their list of listening preferences, and adult males in the 30-49 age group put them second. Yet for males in the same two age groups who had had only an elementary education they came fourteenth and fifteenth in a list of seventeen choices. (Chamber music came sixteenth for both age groups.) For adult males with a secondary

<sup>1</sup> \*See an interesting article by Julian Herbage, one of the founders of the programme, on 'The Purpose of Music Magazine' in the *Radio Times*, 6 Oct. 1950. The two other founders in May 1944 were Anna Instone and Alec Robertson, although the original idea was Nicolls's (Note of 22 March 1944). At first the programme was broadcast once a fortnight, but on 12 Oct. 1947 it became a weekly. It was 'rested' during the summer Proms. Instone and Herbage wrote a little book on the subject in 1953 which included reprints of a number of talks in the programme.

education the order for the same age groups was fifth and ninth, with chamber music coming seventeenth and sixteenth.<sup>1</sup>

Whitfield's questions were not formulated with such considerations to the forefront. Nor were the replies he received from the BBC's Music Department. The Department acknowledged, however, that 'the BBC's output has always involved compromise between ideals and practical considerations. We cannot avoid *quantity* in our output (although we can vary or reduce it from time to time, but not beyond the point where there are no substitute programmes available), but we strive all the time for *quality*, as far as practical considerations permit.'<sup>2</sup> One critic who hated compromises, George Bernard Shaw, who started by explaining that 'radio music has changed the world in England', was uneasy about the BBC's 'worst concessions to popular bad taste, real or imaginary'. The microphone, he felt, gave away all the secrets of singers—as it did of speakers—and some of them should remain secrets for ever.<sup>3</sup>

The Silvey survey of 1945 and the further inquiry of 1949 showed, as Shaw would have appreciated, that one of the main factors influencing musical appreciation was class background, mainly, though not exclusively, through its influence on the kind of education received. Whereas 29 per cent of the 'upper middle class' were 'enthusiastic' about symphony concerts in 1949, the corresponding figure for the 'working class' was only 7 per cent. Nor was there yet any sign that the 16–19 age group or even the 20–29 age group (leaving on one side those with a university education) was pointing the way to a brighter future. In the case of symphony concerts, opera and chamber music, it was the group of people of fifty years and over who were most enthusiastic. Listener Research showed in 1949 that the number of people listening to musical programmes of these types had actually fallen to three-quarters of the 1945 figure.

Of course, as Silvey was at pains to point out, class percentages, in particular, were deceptive in terms of actual audience size. The 'working class' constituted such a large

<sup>1</sup> \*'A Review of Listener Research Findings', December 1949. It was the Further Education Project Group and not the Music Department which arranged some of the musical education programmes.

<sup>2</sup> \*'BBC Music Policy, 1947', a Paper for the Board of Governors, 31 Dec. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *The Musical Times*, Jan. 1947.

proportion of the listening public that the 7 per cent of working-class listeners who were enthusiastic covered as many individuals as the 29 per cent of the 'upper middle class' and the 18 per cent of the 'lower middle class' put together. The total figures for listening to music were more impressive, therefore, than the figures when broken down. In 1945 there were over four million adult listeners in Britain who were 'enthusiasts' for symphony concerts and for opera—a far larger number than could be catered for in existing theatres and opera houses—and one and a quarter million who were 'enthusiasts' for chamber music. Although these were 'admittedly minorities', they were minorities 'of no mean size', and it could be argued convincingly that 'the demand for music in this country is now far greater than the supply'.<sup>1</sup>

The questions for the BBC after 1945 were, in fact, far more complex than those posed by Whitfield. Given the new tripartite structure of Home, Light and Third Programmes, which itself rested on cultural and social presuppositions,<sup>2</sup> how was the planning of music—and the concept of broadcasting as an educative force in relation to music—to be adapted to the new structure? In 1949, for example, Julian Herbage, who had been responsible not only for *Music Magazine* but for the 'programme building' of fourteen series of 'Proms', complained that the new structure was 'tending to disrupt the unity of the Prom Programme scheme'. 'Tuesdays and Thursdays have been unnecessarily bad nights from the box-office angle owing to pressure from Third planners to produce esoteric programmes outside the normal range of the Proms.' And if the Third had shown 'unwarranted musical snobbery' in refusing to broadcast Sibelius's *Finlandia* and Debussy's *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, the Light Programme had been very uneasy about Shostakovich's First Symphony. 'The Prom programmes are difficult enough to build', he concluded, 'without making them a Christmas Pudding which everyone has to take a hand in stirring.'<sup>3</sup>

The Head of Music in 1949 was Sir Steuart Wilson, who had succeeded Victor Hely-Hutchinson soon after Hely-Hutchinson's

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 29 Aug. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 76, 83.

<sup>3</sup> \*J. Herbage, 'The Proms—55th Series—1949', 24 Nov. 1949.

death in 1947,<sup>1</sup> and just before his retirement in 1950 Wilson made his own evaluation of the new structure. The Light Programme, he noted, started from the assumption that its 'ideal listener' to music was not going to listen for more than an hour and that he (or she) was essentially 'not a highbrow'. Yet over a six-month period Light Programme listeners had been able to hear, for example, four Dvořák and three Schubert symphonies and a long succession of piano concertos by composers 'other than Tchaikovsky'. The concerts, however, had been put on 'in the noon-hour' and in the afternoon, which ruled out most of the hes and many of the shes.

The Home Service listener had been well provided with Wednesday, sometimes Thursday, and Saturday and Sunday concerts, most of them in the evenings, and had had the chance of hearing not only 'familiar classics' but special performances of unfamiliar works, like the Berg opera, *Wozzeck*, which had previously been offered to Covent Garden and rejected. The Wednesday evening concerts had been conducted by Sir Adrian Boult and by a series of distinguished guest conductors. The Third Programme listener had been offered everything from 'Music in the Age of the Troubadours' through madrigals and 'concerts of viols' to classics of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music (and some non-classics). He had been able, too, to listen to whole works with no fear that they might overrun programme schedules.

Wilson saw in this record not so much a progression as a prodigality, but he took pride in the overall volume and range of output. His conception of his duty as Head of Music did not suit all his colleagues in the BBC, but his strong personality served them well and he himself was happy enough while in Broadcasting House to write that if Wagner had had 'a pretty free hand with Ludwig of Bavaria, I would prefer to serve the Corporation, who, despite all their checks and controls, have a considerable credit balance to their aesthetic account'.<sup>2</sup>

Questions about the influence of the tripartite structure—there was, of course, no separate 'Music Programme' and few advocated one—generated further questions ranging from what

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Wright was Acting Director during the interval.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Steuart Wilson, 'The Appetite of our Guests' in the *BBC Year Book*, 1950, pp. 20-4.

should be the place of 'avant-garde music' in the BBC's repertoire<sup>1</sup> to the status of jazz and how much time should be devoted to the as-yet unrevolutionized 'world of pop'.<sup>2</sup> Nor was the leading question about the influence on music of the structure of sound broadcasting the only main question. Although the development of television, which took the BBC cameras to Edinburgh in 1952, was not mentioned in the section on music in the BBC's evidence to Beveridge, long before 1949 policy-makers were asking how the sounds of music should and could be related to the pictures on the screen. Two other questions frequently asked were mainly organizational, although they influenced both selection and standards. Given the state of Britain's 'musical resources'—orchestras, concert halls, opera houses and so on—what were the BBC's special responsibilities? And given the policies pursued by the Musicians' Union—founded in the distant days of 1893, three years before Marconi arrived in Britain with his wireless patents—what were the restraints? In his comparison of the Corporation with Ludwig, Wilson called these 'the checks and controls'.

There is scope for a series of monographs on the different answers given at different times to these questions, many of which were considered not only by BBC officials themselves but *in camera* by the Music Advisory Committee<sup>3</sup> and openly and often memorably by writers in the pages of the *BBC Quarterly*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reith, *op. cit.*, p. 176, had stated during the very early years of broadcasting that 'broadcasters in general have as little sympathy with the so-called music of futurist and unintelligible tendencies as the real art lover has with the strange efforts of certain advanced schools of painting'. Yet many broadcasters from the 1920s onwards would have dismissed this statement as philistine. The extent of the BBC's willingness to experiment has been chronicled in detail in the first three volumes of this History, and the pre-war role of Edward Clark, in particular, as an innovator is noted in *The Golden Age of Wireless*, pp. 171–2. In *The War of Words*, pp. 581–5, there is an account of war-time music. More could have been added to this latter volume on a 1943 inquiry into the BBC's output of 'serious music' carried out by Sir Herbert Howells.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 758.

<sup>3</sup> Its meeting in July 1947 was its first since 1942. Thereafter it met two or three times a year. On 22 September 1948 (*Minutes*) it endorsed a new system of music auditions with outside assessors which had been discussed at the previous meeting on 28 April, and in 1952 it defended the system against outside attack (letter to *The Times* by Dr. Thomas Armstrong, 5 April 1952; article in the *Radio Times*, 23 Jan. 1953).

<sup>4</sup> There were several outside bodies to which the BBC always had to listen, like the Composers' Guild of Great Britain, with which the BBC was on friendly terms, particularly after R. J. F. Howgill became Music Controller in January

There was, of course, a further factor to be taken into the reckoning in the making of music policy during the period—the development of the gramophone record industry. Reith and Compton Mackenzie had agreed during the critical early years of broadcasting in 1922 and 1923 that ‘gramophone and wireless’ were ‘to a large extent a mutual help to one another’,<sup>1</sup> but the 1950s marked the beginning of a critical new period in the history of the gramophone itself and—through the medium of the gramophone—in the provision of what has recently been called ‘repeatable experience’.<sup>2</sup> It was during this period, indeed, that the word ‘gramophone’ became as obsolescent as the word ‘wireless set’. Long-playing records (LPs) had been invented in 1948, drastically to change the facilities for home listening both to classical music and to popular music; and the year 1950 saw the arrival from the United States of the first lightweight micro-groove plastic ‘discs’, the 45s, which were ideal carriers of pop music ‘singles’ to a more affluent and a more self-conscious young public.<sup>3</sup>

BBC music, classical or popular, had never depended on current commercial gramophone records or discs to the extent that most other broadcasting systems had depended upon them, although its library of records, with half a million items in 1955, was unique. There had been strictly enforced restrictions on

<sup>1</sup> See the fascinating article by Sir Compton Mackenzie, ‘How it all Began’ in *The Gramophone*, April 1973.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is that of Daniel J. Boorstin, later (1975) a Reith Lecturer, in *The Americans, the Democratic Experience* (1973), p. 385. He quotes Jacques Barzun in 1954: ‘Formerly a fashion would bury the whole musical past except a few dozen new works arbitrarily selected. Now everything is brought back to life.’ See also R. Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph* (2nd edn., 1965); O. Read and W. L. Welch, *From Tin Foil to Stereo* (1959); and P. Whiteman, *Records for the Million* (1948).

<sup>3</sup> For the inventions by Dr. Peter Goldmark of CBS, see J. Jewkes, D. Sawers, and R. Stillerman, *The Sources of Invention* (1958), pp. 324–5, and J. M. Conly, ‘Five Years of LP’ in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept. 1953. \*Questions were asked about available apparatus inside the BBC at the Operations Meeting, 16 Feb. 1954.

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1953, and the Songwriters’ Guild, set up in 1947 to represent British composers of popular music. When *Musical Opinion* (June 1953) attacked the BBC Panel which considered new pieces of music and suggested that composers found it difficult to penetrate ‘the thorn hedge of the BBC’, the Composers’ Guild replied (*ibid.*, Aug. 1953) that ‘whatever any individual composers may fear, we certainly do not feel that the BBC has any prejudice against us or any of our members’. \*From the start the Songwriters’ Guild was more critical (undated letter to Haley, Nov. 1947) and was successful ultimately in persuading the BBC to take more active steps to help British composers of popular music. See below, pp. 756–8.

'needle time' even during the war, and a new agreement further limiting use had been signed with the Musicians' Union in May 1946.<sup>1</sup> The complex story of the BBC's further relations with the Musicians' Union on this subject is chronicled in the Minutes of a Joint Consultative Committee, set up in 1949 after a series of disputes on other matters.<sup>2</sup> When the period covered in this volume ended, a number of issues concerning recording were still unresolved.<sup>3</sup> So, too, were television issues.

The Union had insisted throughout upon treating television as a 'completely separate field of employment from sound broadcasting',<sup>4</sup> and no comprehensive agreement was reached between the BBC and the Union about televised music. It was not until after the end of the monopoly and the advent of the new Independent Television Authority that the situation changed, when the ITA reached an agreement with the Union not long before the BBC's agreement on sound repeats and recordings was due to expire.<sup>5</sup> The fact that competition had this effect seemed to justify in retrospect those critics of the BBC's monopoly who claimed that while it lasted 'it exercised

<sup>1</sup> The war-time agreement on needle time reached with the Union was operated from 1 January 1942 until early 1946. The new agreement, dated 27 May 1946, limited pre-recording of BBC music programmes and prohibited categories of recorded repeats. The BBC gave evidence to the Beveridge Committee on the subject, asking for 'some modification in the restrictions' ('The Use of Gramophone Records for Broadcasting', 1 May 1950).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by W. L. Streeeton, Head of Programme Contracts, 21 June 1948; Memorandum by Sir Norman Bottomley, the Director of Administration, 29 Dec. 1948; Note by Haley, 30 March 1949; and Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 April 1949. These set out, *inter alia*, details of the 1948 dispute; of a threatened ban by the Union on all studio performances by individual players and outside orchestras from 31 July 1948; of arbitration proceedings by an independent committee set up by the Ministry of Labour and chaired by Sir John Foster; and of the acceptance of the new award by the BBC, while disputes on other matters continued. The new Consultative Committee which was agreed upon in March 1949 had four members from each side, with provision for experts to attend also if necessary. There was a further prolonged dispute in 1951-2 on BBC orchestral salaries and concerts; this was referred to the Industrial Court, which made an award on 10 Jan. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*The General Secretary of the Musicians' Union wrote to the BBC giving notice that the Union wished to terminate the Recording Agreement as from 13 Oct. 1954 (Note by Bottomley, 5 May 1947; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 12, 23 April, 3 May 1954).

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Streeeton, 21 June 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*The ITA Agreement covered the right to record for television, and the BBC's Sound Agreement was due to expire on 31 March 1956 (Board of Governors' Paper, 25 Jan. 1956). Both these dates come after the end of the period covered by this volume.



19. BBC Boogey. *Evening Standard*, 22 January 1948

upon the individual worker a power which no organization ought to be given. . . . The power of the eighteenth-century private patron, of whose iniquities we hear so much, was nothing to it.<sup>1</sup>

The orchestral policy of the BBC was determined, however, by many other factors besides the attitude of the Musicians' Union. Among them was the desire to establish precisely through its distinctive patronage a national and international position of strength in the world of music. There was also pressure, sometimes countermanding pressure, from the Regions to secure their own musical facilities and services. In some Regions BBC orchestras already existed, and in those Regions without them claims were often made for parity of treatment. The musical life of the country had never been exclusively metropolitan, it was rightly pointed out; and there were many observers of the musical scene who felt that 'the position of strength' could be secured only if there was intense local and regional activity.

<sup>1</sup> Letter by Sir Thomas Armstrong to *The Times*, 5 April 1952. 'A disagreement on some artistic matter,' he went on, 'a dispute about a fee, or the personal preferences of an official, can have the effect of excluding a performer entirely from the air.'



During the summer of 1939 the BBC had employed just over four hundred musicians in eleven orchestras, but the war itself, despite 'the boom in music',<sup>1</sup> had led to drastic reductions. The Welsh Orchestra, the Northern Ireland Orchestra and the Military Band had been disbanded, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra had been reduced in size from 119 to 97 players, 'a dreadful task' as Sir Adrian Boult, its Conductor, confessed, but one which meant 'no reduction in either output or effort'.<sup>2</sup>

Boult remained Conductor of the reconstituted Symphony Orchestra, which he knew exactly how to handle,<sup>3</sup> until his sixty-first birthday in April 1950; and if the post-war Symphony Orchestra, to use his own words, was 'not quite the superb instrument it had been in 1939', this was certainly not his fault nor that of its leader, Paul Beard, who had been with the Orchestra since 1946.<sup>4</sup> In September 1946, after the end of the season of Promenade Concerts, Boult had asked the BBC specifically and pertinently his own leading question about music policy. Did it wish to develop 'a great orchestra' or did it prefer 'a useful and efficient working body that will accede to all the demands of the various Services'? No first-class orchestra, he had pointed out, could be expected 'to perform nightly for a month programmes containing no repetitions, lasting over two hours and including novelties and works like Bartok's Violin Concerto'.<sup>5</sup>

Boult had to wait some time for a clear reply. Hely-Hutchinson, who had been Head of Music for only two years, knew well enough that working conditions for the musical profession had changed considerably since 1930 when the BBC's first Symphony Orchestra was formed. It had taken the lead then in abolishing the deputy system, and throughout the 1930s becoming a member of the Orchestra had been thought of as 'a

<sup>1</sup> J. Leeper, 'Art and Music in War-time' in the *Contemporary Review*, Aug. 1942; *The Spectator*, 23 July 1943. 'Whatever else it may have destroyed, the war has undoubtedly re-created music in our midst, affirming it a living force vital to the needs of a great people.' See also A. Briggs, *The War of Words*, pp. 582-5.

<sup>2</sup> For this and later Boult references which are not footnoted, see Sir Adrian Boult, *My Own Trumpet* (1973), p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Music Magazine* talk by Scott Goddard on Boult's sixtieth birthday reprinted in A. Instone and J. Herbage, *Music Magazine* (1953).

<sup>4</sup> For Beard and other BBC Orchestra leaders, see A. Jacobs, 'A Leader of the Orchestra' in *Radio Times Annual* (1955), pp. 34-5.

<sup>5</sup> \*Boult to Hely-Hutchinson. 12 Sept. 1946.

plum'.<sup>1</sup> After the war the situation was quite different, for eight full-scale symphony orchestras were 'competing for the favours of the London concert-going public'.<sup>2</sup> Hely-Hutchinson supported Boult, therefore, in seeking to limit the BBC Orchestra's commitments, through decisions no longer to employ it, for example, in studio opera and to reduce the number of guest conductors.<sup>3</sup> He also agreed that the pre-war practice of subdividing the Orchestra should not be revived, since it was now felt to militate against 'esprit-de-corps and cohesion'.<sup>4</sup> Yet the size of the Orchestra was not permanently restored to its pre-war figure even after the Governors had decided to do so.<sup>5</sup>

The BBC made the fullest possible use of its own Symphony Orchestra in concert programmes, including 'the Proms', and it could be regularly heard in the provinces and abroad. Some of its weekly concerts were deliberately planned to be shorter in length than pre-war concerts had been, and some were devoted exclusively to 'British Composers of our Time'.<sup>6</sup> Others introduced little-known works. Thus in July 1950 listeners could hear Berg's Violin Concerto and the Bartok Concerto for Orchestra and, in later seasons, the fifth symphonies of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, and Honegger's *King David* oratorio in a double bill with Holst's *Hymn of Jesus*.

Sir Malcolm Sargent, who succeeded Boult as Conductor in 1950, was less adventurous than Boult was prepared to be. He

<sup>1</sup> \*Hely-Hutchinson to Howgill, Acting Controller, Entertainment, 20 Nov. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *The Observer*, 2 Feb. 1947. In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* on 29 Jan. 1947, Lionel Tertis had referred to a 'mushroom growth' of 'alleged symphony orchestras'. See also Sir Steuart Wilson, 'Twenty Years of a Symphony Orchestra' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 1, Spring 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*This was agreed by the Governors (*Minutes*, 9, 23 Jan. 1947) and reported to the Music Co-ordinating Committee on 24 Jan. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*'BBC Music Policy, 1947', Memorandum of 31 Dec. 1946; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 9, 23 Jan. 1947; Music Co-ordinating Committee, *Minutes*, 24 Jan. 1947. The decision not to sub-divide was reiterated by Murrill, then Head of Music, in a Memorandum of 3 Oct. 1951, 'House Orchestras: Sound and Television': 'No advantage is seen in the re-establishment of a divided orchestra.'

<sup>5</sup> \*The restoration had been recommended in a paper of 19 June 1946, and was accepted by the Governors at their meeting on 27 June 1946. The Treasury also gave its approval both to the reconstitution and to the formation of 2 new BBC Quartet (Report of a Meeting, 10 July 1946).

<sup>6</sup> \*'BBC Music Policy, 1947', Memorandum of 31 Dec. 1946; Note and Report by Peter Crossley-Holland to Murrill, 1 Aug. 1951, 9 June 1952; *BBC Year Book, 1946*, p. 60.

believed, 'generally speaking', that 'contemporary music stopped at Dover',<sup>1</sup> and as far as contemporary British composers were concerned he rated Vaughan Williams far above the rest. The BBC paid far too little attention during this period to Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Webern, not to speak of Nono, Henze and Boulez,<sup>2</sup> but it devoted a great deal of time to broadcasting Vaughan Williams,<sup>3</sup> and fortunately it never neglected Benjamin Britten.

Some of the first post-war Sunday afternoon concerts were broadcast from the old People's Palace in the East End before it closed its doors in the early 1950s, and the war-time destruction of the Queen's Hall gave a new prominence to the Royal Albert Hall.<sup>4</sup> From 1952 onwards, however, the 'ultra-modern' Royal Festival Hall, dismissed characteristically by Sir Thomas Beecham as 'a monumental piece of imbecility and iniquity',<sup>5</sup> was used increasingly by the BBC for concerts both of classical and of light music.<sup>6</sup> Not everyone shared Beecham's verdict. For some, the main Hall, the first large post-war building in London, was 'a place of space and light and simple gaiety totally unlike anything the capital had known before'.<sup>7</sup> It could seat three thousand, and an initial controversy about its acoustics had died down by 1953 when eight special Coronation concerts were held there, with Boult, Sargent, Beecham and Barbirolli conducting two each.

For the 'Proms' the Royal Albert Hall became the traditional rendezvous during this period—many listeners believed they had never been anywhere else—although a large sum of

<sup>1</sup> C. Reid, op. cit., p. 342.

<sup>2</sup> See an interesting article in *The Observer* by Peter Heyworth, 'Music of our Times', 30 Sept. 1956: 'A metropolis such as London cannot indefinitely remain insulated from the main currents of European music of the twentieth century.'

<sup>3</sup> See U. Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W., A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (1964). Vaughan Williams died in 1958.

<sup>4</sup> See R. W. Clark, *The Royal Albert Hall* (1958), especially chapter 14, which describes *inter alia* a controversy about its use in 1947; changes made in its facilities in 1949 as a result of recommendations of BBC Engineers—the introduction of a fluted aluminium roof in time for the 1949 Proms; and the 1951 Royal Albert Hall Act. Nicolls was a member of the Wood Proms Jubilee Committee (later the Wood Memorial Trust) which during the early 1950s produced an abortive plan to rebuild the Queen's Hall.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in J. Montgomery, *The Fifties* (1965), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> *BBC Handbook, 1955*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> H. Hopkins, *The New Look* (1963), p. 277.

money had to be spent on basic building and repair work in the Hall during the first three years after the war, and a far larger sum was still deemed necessary in 1950.<sup>1</sup> The acoustics there had been greatly improved by the addition of an acoustic screen, and further improvements to moderate the 'dryness' of the Hall were made after 1945. Yet its greatest asset was the fact that it could cater for seven thousand people.

The 'Proms' themselves strengthened their traditions after 1945. The 1946 repertoire was thought by the BBC to be 'too symphonic and advanced in character',<sup>2</sup> yet most critics then and since have felt that during the first post-war decade there was far too little experiment and that Wood's willingness to introduce new music had not been followed by his successors.<sup>3</sup> In 1946 Herbage wrote in his foreword to the 'Prom' brochure that if the question were asked, 'Why take the trouble to make up a new series of Prom programmes? Surely it would be just as well to repeat last year's concerts', 'a first glance at a new Prom prospectus might seem to confirm this view'.<sup>4</sup>

The confirmation was certainly natural enough in a year like 1948, when less than ten per cent of the playing time was devoted to new works; and even as far as the 'novelties' were concerned, out of over a hundred and fifty in the period 1947-59 the emphasis was almost exclusively on 'middle-of-the-road traditional'. In 1949, indeed, Herbage complained in his frank and meticulous report that 'nothing very substantial had turned up during the past few seasons from panel readings' and recommended that 'the minimum of actual novelties should be two a week'. He was also uneasy about the problem of finding soloists: 'this season there were at least four weeks when the only available pianist of any standing was Solomon'.<sup>5</sup> In fact,

<sup>1</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, ch. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 'BBC Music Policy, 1947', Memorandum of 31 Dec. 1946. See also V. Hely-Hutchinson, 'Music Policy and Problems' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 2, July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> T. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 67 ff.; A. Orga, *The Proms* (1974), pp. 139 ff., which describes the years between 1947 and 1959 as 'the dullest period in the history of these concerts'.

<sup>4</sup> Yet compare his foreword a year later. 'Could even Salzburg, in the palmy pre-war days, offer us three orchestras, three principal conductors, to say nothing of an associate conductor, and composers directing their own works? It can safely be asserted that no such musical enterprise has previously been conceived.'

<sup>5</sup> \*'The Proms—55th Series—1949', 24 Nov. 1949.

over the years many new performers were introduced, 'a roll call of hitherto unprecedented stature';<sup>1</sup> and if the main new influence on the Proms after 1950, Sir Malcolm Sargent, was always very chary of introducing new music, he was far more amenable to doing so at BBC concerts other than the Proms.

All criticisms must be seen in perspective. The Proms re-inforced their traditions during these years—parts of them were televised for the first time in 1947—with Sargent establishing himself as an immensely popular personality both with the Promenaders and with viewers. His first post-war Prom was on 19 July 1947, the year of his knighthood, nearly three years before he succeeded Boult as Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra,<sup>2</sup> and already by then he had become a dominant figure in the country's musical life. Sargent thought of the young Promenaders as being under his tutelage, and he welcomed their exuberance. In 1953, indeed, an effort 'from above' failed to exclude the sea songs from the boisterous Last Night 'in order to prevent a recurrence of a dangerous exhibition of high spirits by the Promenaders'.<sup>3</sup> They came in even then as an encore, and were back *in situ* the following year. When Sargent addressed the Promenaders later in the year, 'with a view to effective control inside the Hall', he knew exactly how to appeal to them.<sup>4</sup>

The BBC Symphony Orchestra, which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1955, was only one of the orchestras which played at the Proms. The Royal Philharmonic (without Beecham) made its debut in 1952 and the Hallé (with Barbirolli) a year later. Beecham himself conducted during the Diamond Jubilee season of 1954. The use of other orchestras became a feature of BBC policy during this period, although it

<sup>1</sup> Orga, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-1. Prom debuts included Peter Pears (1945), Yehudi Menuhin (1946), Kathleen Ferrier (1947), Geraint Evans and Richard Lewis (1949), Victoria de los Angeles and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (1950), Sena Jurinac, Joan Sutherland and Rosalyn Tureck (1954), and Julian Bream and George Malcolm (1955).

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 738.

<sup>3</sup> \*Central Music Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 17 Feb. 1954. One speaker likened the boisterousness to an end-of-term pillow fight and hoped that it would not be entirely killed. Most members agreed.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 10 Nov. 1954; see also Ayres, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-4. At the same time, Sargent made no concessions to jazz or 'pop' (see Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 338). He said more than once that girls who swooned to Sinatra's singing should be spanked by their mothers. He obviously did not envisage mothers themselves swooning.

posed problems immediately after the war. In 1943 Thomas Russell of the London Philharmonic Orchestra had formed the National Association of Symphony Orchestras, which represented most but not all of Britain's main symphony orchestras, but a dispute about broadcasting fees, which had begun before the end of the war, kept many of them off the air until 1949.<sup>1</sup> By May 1952 Wilson was presiding over the first, very amicable, meeting of a London Concerts Co-ordinating Association, and in the Regions 'compensatory engagements' were being arranged. Thus, if the BBC gave a public concert in the West Region this usually meant that a 'compensatory date' was fixed for the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

When Sargent took it over, the BBC Symphony Orchestra was at its full strength of ninety-six players, although two years later the strings were 'weeded' and what Sargent regarded as significant changes were made in the seating arrangements in order to improve sound balance and control.<sup>2</sup> Sargent sometimes ruffled the orchestra in a way that Boult had never done.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there were many people inside the BBC who profoundly regretted Boult's departure. The Orchestra gave him a dinner at the Savoy on his sixtieth birthday, and at another London dinner Haley presented him with what he called a 'Mozart of inkstands'.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately this was by no means the end of Boult's work for the BBC: indeed, at the age of eighty-three he was to conduct the BBC's Symphony Orchestra at the Albert Hall Concert to celebrate the BBC's fiftieth anniversary.

<sup>1</sup> \*In December 1945, however, the North Region made arrangements with the Hallé Orchestra for four broadcasts, and in April 1946, after Haley himself had intervened directly, the London Philharmonic Orchestra withdrew its boycott. Continuing complaints of 'unfair competition' on the part of the BBC were replied to by Wilson (to Russell, 3 Sept. 1948) and in a memorandum by Haley, 18 Nov. 1948. The City of Birmingham Orchestra broadcast frequently on the Midland Regional Programme. There is a memorandum by Nicolls on the 1949 agreement with NASO, 13 June 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 366 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 373-4, for a very critical account by the flautist, Geoffrey Gilbert. Yet see also Sargent's article, 'On conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra', in *Radio Times Annual* (1954), p. 17: 'In one sense conducting an orchestra is like riding a horse. There must be confidence, and a gentle holding of the reins.' In the same number there is an article by Ernest Bradbury on 'The Vivacious Sir Malcolm'.

<sup>4</sup> Boult, *op. cit.*, p. 149. Boult had been Director of Music from 1930 to 1942 before relinquishing this post at his own wish to become Conductor.

Sargent's position was different from that of his predecessor. He had first been approached by the Corporation to become Conductor during the spring of 1948, when he had made it clear that he would wish to continue to travel abroad and to retain some of his existing British commitments. There was no question, he was also told, of his being expected to retire at sixty.<sup>1</sup> Other names were being considered at that time, and both Barbirolli and Rafael Kubelik were approached, but when Sargent's appointment was announced at last in April 1950 it was emphasized that he would still be free 'for much of his important work' with orchestras and choral societies. 'Sir Malcolm will be responsible as Conductor for the general state of the Orchestra,' the BBC announcement went on, 'and will discuss all the programme plans with the BBC's Head of Music [Sir Stuart Wilson] without incurring the administrative responsibility for them.'<sup>2</sup>

The other BBC Orchestras had a largely independent life. The Scottish, Welsh, Northern Ireland, Northern and Midland had all existed before 1939, but the Welsh and Northern Ireland Orchestras had disappeared during the war. The Scottish Orchestra, which had given regular public concerts during the war, had a new lease of life when Ian Whyte was freed from administrative duties to become full-time Conductor—one of his piano concertos was played in 1947—while the Northern Orchestra, conducted by Charles Groves, and on two occasions in 1945 by Beecham, reached a permanent strength of fifty players in 1946, when it performed a series of Wednesday midday 'Proms' in Manchester Town Hall.<sup>3</sup> The Welsh Orchestra, with Mansel Thomas as Conductor, was restored early in 1946—it was said to be 'basic' to the BBC's 'cultural activity' in Wales<sup>4</sup>—and the Midland and Northern Ireland Orchestras became light orchestras.

<sup>1</sup> Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 349–50.

<sup>2</sup> \*BBC Press Announcement, 4 May 1950.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1946*, pp. 78, 89; *ibid.*, 1947, p. 67; *ibid.*, 1948, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> \*Statement by A. Oldfield-Davies, the Regional Controller, who asked for more works from Welsh composers. See *Radio Times*, 1 Nov. 1946, for an article by Idris Lewis, the BBC's Welsh Music Director, 'A new BBC Orchestra for Wales'. A report on the Orchestra was prepared on 26 June 1950. When Rae Jenkins took over the conducting of the BBC Welsh Orchestra in 1950 (Music Policy and Output Meeting, *Minutes*, 21 Sept. 1950), he obviously did not find the musical situation in Wales encouraging (Murrill to Howgill, 5 Sept. 1951).

The old Theatre Orchestra was re-formed in 1949 as the BBC Opera Orchestra, and in 1952 it was re-formed for a second time as the BBC Concert Orchestra.<sup>1</sup> It had forty-five players and for the first year of its life was under the direction of Gilbert Vinter. In September 1954 the Australian conductor Charles Mackerras, who had been with Sadler's Wells for six years, took over. Among the immensely popular programmes in which the Concert Orchestra took a leading part were *Tuesday Serenade*, which had been played by the old Theatre Orchestra during the war and until 1949, *Friday Night is Music Night* and *Saturday Night on the Light*. Not all the programmes were named after the days of the week. *I Know What I Like* had a six-months' run, and the title *Music for Everybody* speaks for itself.<sup>2</sup> Chamber music on the Light Programme became popular once it was called *Music in Miniature*. Some of these programmes had very high ratings, far higher than those of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.<sup>3</sup> As for 'studio opera', it had many great successes under Stanford Robinson. As many as fourteen studio operas were produced in 1947 (as against five in 1946 and thirteen in 1948), among them *Boris Godunov*, *Falstaff* and *Elektra*, and in 1949 the Third Programme alone was asking for four operas, among them Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Sir Steuart Wilson clearly realized how difficult it was to make the BBC's rich but still limited orchestral resources fit the demands of the different programme controllers.<sup>4</sup> He and his successors were also aware of the continuing argument about

<sup>1</sup> \*A recommendation to form an Opera Orchestra with Stanford Robinson as conductor had been made by Wilson as early as 6 Dec. 1948, but it continued to meet with objections (Music Policy and Output Meeting, *Minutes*, 12 July 1949). At the same time Wilson recommended the disbandment of the Theatre Orchestra and the termination of the contract of its distinguished conductor, Walter Goehr. The change was approved by the Director-General's meeting on 22 Feb. 1949 and by the Board of Governors on 21 July 1949. The new orchestra was not 'constituted for "grand opera"' (Murrill to Wellington, 7 Feb. 1951). The formation of the Concert Orchestra was discussed at the Music Policy and Output Meeting on 12 March 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Stanford Robinson to Wilson, 8 July 1949. An important discussion had taken place on opera in October 1947 (Note by Barnes to Wilson, 29 Oct. 1947). Further important discussions were to take place in 1954 (Note by Jacob, 1 June 1954).

<sup>3</sup> See 'Providing the Best in Light Music' in the *Radio Times Annual* (1954).

<sup>4</sup> \*He wrote a memorandum on the subject dated 28 Oct. 1949, which was accepted by the Music Policy and Output Meeting (*Minutes*, 1 Nov. 1949). Murrill had complained of the 'misuse' of the Midland Light Orchestra in a note to Wilson on 19 May 1948.



how best to meet the demand on the one hand for the maintenance of 'international standards' and on the other for the support of provincial culture. There were often complaints from Broadcasting House that in music 'the whole concept of a Region and all that went with it, local public relations, prestige and autonomy' meant both heavy expenditure and a sacrifice of 'artistic merit'.<sup>1</sup> Murrill thought that it might be possible for Regions to specialize in the music which they offered to the nation, but the Regional Controllers wanted the Orchestras above all else to meet multiple Regional needs, identified on the spot. 'I do not think it gets us very far,' wrote Gerald Beadle, for example, from Bristol, 'to be told that nothing but perfection fulfils our "pledge to the listener". Our job is to make the best in a comprehensive way of a complex and imperfect situation.' To him, there was no difference between music and other Regional activities. There were inevitable Regional variations in standards, 'not only in music but in everything we do'.<sup>2</sup>

If Regional programming was one source of difficulty, the development of television remained a source both of difficulty and of opportunity. It was Murrill and Howgill rather than Wilson who had to face the implications of music in a 'television age'. The programming was planned, however, by Kenneth Wright, who became Assistant Head of Music, Television, after serving for a time as Acting Head of Music pending Wilson's appointment. Ballet and opera were television 'musts', although there was little evidence of popular interest in either; indeed, given the fact that there was only one television channel catering for a growing mass audience, there was often an outcry against both of them. Yet *Ballet for Beginners* was well received, and there was a warm welcome for Britten's *Let's Make an Opera* when it was televised from the Theatre Royal, Stratford, in 1950. One very popular regular programme was Eric Robinson's *Music for You*, a pot-pourri of classical pieces. Robinson stressed that every performance on television was a first performance 'with no second chances'. He knew all the difficulties

<sup>1</sup> \*Murrill, then Head of Music, to Howgill, 25 Oct. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Beadle, on Murrill's report to Howgill, 25 Oct. 1951. There were particular difficulties with part-time orchestras, like the West of England Light Orchestra (Report by the Director of Home Sound Broadcasting, 8 Jan.-31 March 1953).

of camera close-ups and of time lags between what the conductor heard with earphones and what the artist heard without them. Reminiscing about the early years of televised music, he recalled such heroic events as a presentation of *Faust* with the orchestra and the choir in a different studio from the cast.<sup>1</sup>

At least for as long as there was only one television channel, music on television was a much less conspicuous item in the daily bill of fare than it was on sound, and when three special reports on BBC music were commissioned in 1949 they were concerned with sound only. In retrospect, they provide a fascinating survey not only of 'output' but of the musical tastes of the three prominent people from outside the BBC who were invited to write the reports. It was Haley who suggested that they should be commissioned to follow up a similar one-month survey by Herbert Howells in 1943;<sup>2</sup> and it was Wilson who recommended Dr. Julius Harrison, composer and conductor, to deal with music on the Home Service,<sup>3</sup> Dyneley Hussey with music on the Third Programme,<sup>4</sup> and someone at first unspecified but who, it was hoped, would be 'free to listen all the time', with music on the Light.<sup>5</sup> Howgill, then Controller, Entertainment, agreed with Wilson that 'no one man could do it all now' as Howells had done during the war.<sup>6</sup> Wilson thought also that Howells's war-time report had been 'a shade too philosophic',<sup>7</sup> and, for the time being choosing to leave the Light Programme on one side, he asked Harrison and Hussey to comment on the BBC's 'choice of musical items, their suitability as a programme, considering the context in relation to the programmes of the day, the manner in which programmes as a whole are presented and their general palatability'. While he did not seek 'detailed reports on soloists', he asked the two surveyors to assess 'the standard of performance in general'.<sup>8</sup> Similar points were made to William McNaught, editor of the

<sup>1</sup> Eric Robinson, 'Conducting for Television' in *Radio Times Annual* (1955), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 18 Nov. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Harrison had conducted opera under Beecham and had been an orchestral conductor at Eastbourne before the war. During the war he had been conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra.

<sup>4</sup> Dyneley Hussey was an author and journalist and music critic for *The Listener*.

<sup>5</sup> \*Steuart Wilson to Howgill, 3 Dec. 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Howgill, 6 Dec. 1948.

<sup>7</sup> \*Wilson to Hussey, 2 Feb. 1949.

<sup>8</sup> \*Wilson to Hussey and to J. Harrison, 18 Dec. 1948.

*Musical Times*, when he was asked a little later to write the report on the Light Programme.<sup>1</sup>

Music had always been assigned a very special place on the Third,<sup>2</sup> and those who praised its record—and the work of men like Etienne Amyot—claimed that in converting ‘the idealistic dreams of amateurs, students and scholars into sober professional fact’ it had carried through ‘a small cultural revolution’, ‘the second revolution of our century in the extension of musical experience’.<sup>3</sup> Dyneley Hussey, therefore, had an attractive assignment. Harrison, also, was dealing with well-established broadcasting traditions in the Home Service, a Service which appealed explicitly to large numbers of people and set out to avoid all the pitfalls of ‘professional hobnobbing over the air’.<sup>4</sup> It was concerned throughout with what Hely-Hutchinson called ‘the main stream of music’, a phrase which recalls the BBC’s religious policy; and the main stream was thought of as ‘orchestral’.<sup>5</sup> Harrison was well qualified to assess orchestral output and the role of the Home Service.

The relationship between music on the Third Programme and the Home Service was well worth examining in 1949 and later. Indeed, before the surveys were commissioned, Christopher Sykes had tried to meet the arguments of the critics of

<sup>1</sup> \*Wilson to McNaught, 25 Feb. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *New Statesman*, 8 April 1950. The first revolution dated back to the 1920s when serious broadcasting and serious gramophone recording began to operate on a large scale. Cf. Desmond Shawe-Taylor’s prophecy of the Third Programme’s musical role in the same journal, 5 Oct. 1946. What he had already seen of the prospectus ‘dazzled his eyes’. For a later verdict, see H. Cole in *The Listener*, 25 Dec. 1975, when he referred to the Third Programme reaching out to ‘the limits of the musical universe’.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Cooper, ‘Educating the Musical Listener’ in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 2, Summer 1950. ‘Are we not living in a fool’s paradise,’ he asked, ‘if we think that excellent but often “difficult” programmes can be appreciated by any but a tiny minority except with help and explanation, comment and exegesis?’

\*Herbert Murrill often pleaded for ‘less hackneyed’ music on the Home Service (e.g. Note of 27 Sept. 1950), but the basic policy was that contemporary works should not go into Home Service, Light or General Overseas Service programmes unless they had been read by the London Reading Panel and recommended (Note by John Lowe, Head of Music, Midland Region, 12 Oct. 1950). The Panel consisted of three independent readers, but Murrill was not entirely happy about the system (Murrill to Howgill, 4 Dec. 1950). Although changes were made soon afterwards (Music Policy and Output Meeting, *Minutes*, 24 Jan. 1951), bottlenecks continued to exist (Leonard Isaacs to Murrill, 1 Sept. 1951).

<sup>5</sup> V. Hely-Hutchinson, ‘Music Policy and Problems’ in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 1, April 1946. For the BBC’s religious policy, see below, pp. 763 ff.

the Third Programme who called its musical output 'highbrow'. As Hussey was to do, he boldly defended its record on the grounds that the Third Programme had to be 'undemocratic' in a democratic Britain. 'Democracy, which is an essential part of sound political systems, has a very small function to fulfil in the propagation of culture. . . . Prestige', he went on, 'is of indispensable value to a country or civilisation.'<sup>1</sup> Defenders of the BBC's musical policy, even when they concentrated on the Home Service, did not counter-claim that what they were doing was 'democratic' but rather that it was 'comprehensive'. 'Musical programmes of great range' were needed, they insisted, 'from the established classics of all kinds and the works of serious modern composers, to folk songs and popular tunes played by the dance bands.'<sup>2</sup> And the listener had to be led through exploration from one kind of music to another.

There were far greater problems in considering the criteria behind 'light music' policy, although it was realized by 1953 that 'music in the Light Programme is, by its very nature, bound to be of increasing importance as the task of relating Sound to Television is gradually worked upon'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, what constituted 'light music' was just as difficult to state as the output of 'light music' was difficult to assess. K. A. Wright once spoke of 'a broad band of light music of varying styles',<sup>4</sup> yet the definitions were often as narrow as the assessments were awkward. 'Some Schubert, for instance, cannot be excluded, and we should be prepared to consider the sort of works Mozart wrote for social occasions. Much incidental music to plays will be eligible, such as Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* and the theatre suites of Sibelius.'<sup>5</sup> 'This programme [Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*] was a very good demonstration of what happens when a small light orchestra attempts a programme outside the range of its size or its players' ability.'<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to compare such an assessment with a note of practical advice given in 1950 to 'all dance band producers' who took part in the surviving war-

<sup>1</sup> C. Sykes, 'Birthday of the Third' in *The Observer*, 26 Sept. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*A. Stewart, then Controller, Home Service, 'Home Service Music Policy', 15 Dec. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*H. R. Pelletier, 'Music Policy in the Light Programme', 11 May 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*K. A. Wright to Collins, 16 June 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Music Policy and Output Meeting, *Minutes*, 9 April 1952.

<sup>6</sup> \*A Report on a broadcast programme of 1948.

time programme *Music While You Work*. 'The tempo of the programme should create a bright and cheerful atmosphere. Consequently all slow items should be played a little more quickly than normally so that there is a lilt. Extremely quick numbers should be avoided. . . . Singing, humming or whistling with the band is a sure sign that the programme is effective.'<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the survey, the output of 'serious music' in the Light Programme was small—8 per cent as against 18 per cent on the Home Service and 55 per cent on the Third. Yet what was being broadcast was taken very seriously inside and outside the Corporation before the reports were commissioned. If Haley was worried about percentages, Herbert Murrill, who watched all the trends, felt, as George Bernard Shaw had done, that 'the progressive vulgarization of Music' had 'reached such a stage often with our own collusion or, at least, connivance' that it was difficult any longer to lay down 'hard and fast rules'.<sup>2</sup> He had hopes, however, both for the Light Programme and for light music, adding refreshingly that he 'could not believe' that it was 'impossible for good original material to be used in the composition of dance music'.<sup>3</sup>

The three reports commissioned in 1949 were duly produced, that of McNaught being received first.<sup>4</sup> It began surprisingly with Bach, whose music, not so surprisingly, was not often played in the Light Programme. Could Bach be presented 'along a special LP groove'? 'The choice of LP music should not be a left-handed version of some other choice.' There was perhaps some prescience behind these questions, for Bach was eventually to be tailored—in a way of which the then BBC would not have approved—for new audiences. Yet Brahms received shorter shrift from McNaught. 'Nutshell definition of Light: the kind for which Brahms won't do.' After listing a large number of suitable and unsuitable works and reactions to them—he had his own black list—McNaught made a plea for more

<sup>1</sup> \*K. Baynes, *Music While You Work Organizer*, 'Music While You Work Policy', 23 March 1950. It was stressed by Douglas Lawrence, the Light Music Supervisor, on 10 Dec. 1951 that in the early morning, when listeners were 'busy with morning chores such as washing up and getting the children off to school', there should be the minimum of presentation. The programmes should be for 'hearing' not for 'listening to'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Murrill, 26 Aug. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Murrill, 21 Oct. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*W. McNaught, 'Music in the Light Programme'.

military bands, more Yehudi Menuhin, Fournier and Kentner and, above all, more 'vitality'. Some of the titles of programmes should be changed. *Music of the Masters* was right, but what of *Music in the Air* or *Music at Tea-time*, not to speak of *Album of Familiar Music*? (He might have added *Nights of Gladness*.) In the 'educational programmes', the signature tune was 'dreadful—a sudden loud minor ninth in E with trumpet on the top line. . . . A distressing moment.'

Wilson found the report 'excellent', but Murrill noted that it did not take account of 'such things as listening figures, Peak Hours or even Programme Finance' and that it assumed 'a degree of planning' for the music of the Light Programme which did not exist. 'There is no Music Assistant in liaison with Light Programme for all purposes of Music.'<sup>1</sup> There was certainly little in the Report about 'light music' as such, the kind which interested people like Eric Maschwitz; and confronted with McNaught's 'black list' of music which should not be performed, Chalmers was provoked into replying, 'I dare say each one of us would like to draw up his own.'<sup>2</sup>

Nicolls, who was more satisfied with Harrison's report, which Wellington had called 'a careful and workmanlike document', asked for all three reports to be circulated and studied 'before the memory of the broadcasts criticised is too remote to recall',<sup>3</sup> while Grisewood found the Report on the Third Programme useful and the criticisms helpful: it was valuable to have such a report 'from the standpoint of a listener rather than that of one of our own people inside the BBC'.<sup>4</sup>

Harrison's report concluded that the Home Service programmes were 'providing the listening public with little short of as good and varied a selection of music as is possible in existing circumstances within the framework of the Corporation's general policy', while Hussey stated in his introduction that

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Wilson, 27 June 1949; Note by Murrill for Wilson, 7 July 1949. The Report covered the period 6 March to 14 May 1949. Chalmers, then head of the Light Programme, complained to Nicolls, 25 Aug. 1949, that 'McNaught was not told what the Light Programme was trying to do in its output of serious music, and he consequently amasses a great deal of detail and tries to deduce our real intentions from it.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Chalmers, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> \*Undated note by Nicolls to the Board of Governors.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Grisewood, 8 Sept. 1949.

the fact that his criticisms dealt mostly with 'relatively unimportant matters' was 'perhaps the finest tribute that can be paid to the planning and presentation of the Third Programme'. The main controversial element in Harrison's report was his argument that many programmes failed in 'radiogenic appeal' because of 'the key and pitch monotony'. Whatever McNaught might feel about the title *Music at Tea-time*, Harrison had no doubts that some music was *not* suitable for the early morning: 'the more complex fugues and sonatas by Bach strike a note of seriousness or solemnity better reserved for a later hour of the day.' It was Hussey who in his report made the most sensible comment on light music. 'The notion that "light" music somehow differs intrinsically from "serious", if that is the right adjective—and the very doubt emphasises the falsity of the division—was confirmed and underlined by [the recently adopted] title of "programmes of Light Music" on the Third.' E. M. Forster had been wrong. 'Perhaps a little more mixing would do no harm and would enliven the more conventional programmes.'

These three reports on 'musical output' were not the only ones commissioned between 1945 and 1955. Not only were there several other long reports—one, for example, by Dr. Hubert Clifford on light music<sup>1</sup>—but there was a regular and extensive system of collecting reports both on individual programme selection and performance.<sup>2</sup> It was only the three main reports, however, which made their way to the BBC's General Advisory Council. The Council asked for no further change, and very properly decided, having discussed the reports, that there should be no 'degeneration' in taste 'towards levels which were

<sup>1</sup> \*'Light Music Output of the BBC, Jan.–June 1952', including a series of detailed comments on particular programmes. Dr. Clifford concluded that 'in the very best of the light music output Britain does herself more justice in this sector of music than in that of symphonic music.' Clifford, who became Head of Light Music Programmes on a limited contract on 1 Jan. 1953, made a further report on output from January 1953 to December 1954. He had worked with the BBC before from 1941 to 1944 and left it on 31 December 1954. In both his reports he advocated organizational changes inside the BBC to emphasize the distinction not between 'light' and 'serious music' but between 'music' and 'entertainment music'. The Germans used the term *Unterhaltungsmusik*, not Light Music. (Note by A. D. Lawrence, then Light Music Supervisor, 26 Sept. 1952.)

<sup>2</sup> \*F. Wade, Assistant to Controller, Music, wrote to F. L. Hetley, Administrative Officer, Music, that they were then budgeting for a week's average of 22 external reports, 8 July 1953.

unsuitable' to the BBC's 'character and purpose'. The meeting pressed, indeed, for more rather than less control of output, with one eloquent speaker begging the Music Department, in particular, to assume a closer jurisdiction over 'the musical underworld of jazz'. Once again the time-of-day of programmes figured in the criticism. 'He could not help feeling that some of the really decadent features of the national life were exhibited in the "caterwaulings" that were liable to come on in the late evening.'<sup>1</sup>

If the BBC's music policy looked right to most members of the General Advisory Council, the choice of the word 'jazz' in the demand for drastic action to stop 'caterwauling' was obviously wrong. To this critic of the BBC's 'jazz policy' 'jazz' was an all-encompassing term like 'light music'; and so, too, it seems to have been to Harrison, who reported that 'jazz belongs more to the world of entertainment than that of music', and to Sargent, who was equally indiscriminating.<sup>2</sup> Even devotees of jazz, anxious to protect it from 'the vague free and easy thinking which associates all popular music with jazz', found jazz difficult to define.<sup>3</sup>

There was, however, a genuine, if limited, demand for 'real jazz' in Britain after 1945, just as there had been before 1939; and several members of the BBC's staff, with Harman Grise-wood prominent among them, had always tried to meet it. There were new problems in doing so after 1945, however, since there was something of a 'civil war' in jazz. 'Be-bop', with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie as its founding fathers, was said by Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman not to be jazz at all,<sup>4</sup> while the revival of classical New Orleans jazz was criticized by the 'hipsters' and 'boppers' who raised the banner of 'progressive' jazz.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the commercial frontiers of jazz were always open so that there was always some justification for the looseness of language of people who did not know very much either about jazz or about commercialism. 'Be-bop' would be circumscribed for a time, as was 'folk-song skiffle', an

<sup>1</sup> \*General Advisory Council, Summary of Discussions, 8 March 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Wilson for the General Advisory Council, 27 Feb. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> D. Boulton, *Jazz in Britain* (1958), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> See a comment of a 'traditional' jazz player, 'Mezz' Mezzrow in *Metronome*, in Oct. 1946: 'If that's music, I'll eat it.'

<sup>5</sup> See Boulton, op. cit., ch. 3, "Trad" and "Mod".



offshoot of traditional jazz, which was pioneered not in the United States but in Britain by Chris Barber and Lonnie Donegan before the exciting import into Britain of 'rock 'n' roll' which had its origins in 'grassroots' black American music. It is possible, of course, to trace it far back in time through the development of American musical sub-cultures during the late 1940s. This was a period, however, when most American and British audiences—to Sargent's distaste<sup>1</sup>—were swooning to the singing of Frank Sinatra.<sup>2</sup>

The war-time *Radio Rhythm Club*, the BBC's main contribution to jazz, went off the air soon after the end of the war<sup>3</sup>—it was to return in different form as *Jazz Club* in 1947—but in December 1949 the ambitious *Kings of Jazz* series started in the Home Service. Three programmes were specially recorded for the BBC in New York and three came from Paris. Alastair Cooke introduced the first programme with Duke Ellington, and the French programmes showed not only how French jazz had survived the war and the Nazis, but how keen French jazz fans really were in post-war Paris.<sup>4</sup> One of the three English programmes in the series was devoted to Ted Heath. Here, in particular, the lines between 'jazz' and commercial pop music were blurred, for Heath was described in the publicity as one of the few British composers of dance music to write what became a *Hit Parade* success in the United States—'I'm gonna love that guy'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 735. Sinatra was mobbed by excited fans in July 1950 when he visited the Palladium.

<sup>2</sup> There is an excellent brief account of the post-war development both of jazz and 'pop music' in the *Melody Maker Special*, 'Fifty Years of Music', Spring 1976, a special number to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the periodical. See also P. Flattery, *The Illustrated History of Pop* (n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> \*A letter from Charles Chilton to Leslie Perowne, 20 June 1968, sets out the story of the BBC's involvement from a Louis Armstrong visit in 1931. *Radio Rhythm Club* started as a record programme, but it soon included interviews and commentaries from Spike Hughes and others. Constant Lambert was a link with the world of classical music.

<sup>4</sup> \*There was continuing communication between the BBC and the French jazz world—for example, in 1949 about the May 1949 Jazz Festival, supported by RDTF and the Hot Club of Paris (Peggy Miller, European Liaison Office, to McMillan, 21 April 1949). There was a further note on the French situation by Donald Maclean on 11 May 1953: 'Jazz is "happening" in Paris nowadays—RTF are broadcasting large quantities daily.'

<sup>5</sup> He and his wife had written the still often performed war-time hit, 'I never said thank you for that lovely weekend'.

This was still the era of big bands, and Heath had formed his own big band in May 1945. It was successful from the start, and some of its members, like Johnny Dankworth and Ronnie Scott, were eventually to move away on their own. Heath himself, an ex-busker, had been trombonist with Geraldo until 1945. He was drawn inevitably into the cinema as well as into broadcasting, and when the Musicians' Union and the American Musicians' Federation worked out an agreement for reciprocal touring in 1955, after twenty years of bans, Heath's band was the first to cross the Atlantic.

While the BBC was involved in many disputes with the Musicians' Union—in June 1948, for example, the Union ordered a strike by all broadcasting bands—'jazz' and 'pop music' developed separately. *Jazz Club* was first broadcast on Saturday 1 March 1947 on the Light Programme.<sup>1</sup> It was unscripted at first, which caused problems—as did its costs later, and its credits—and its many producers, starting with Mark White, followed their own individual policies. Thus Jon Foreman, who took over in August 1950, said that there would be 'no bop or "Progressive" music'.<sup>2</sup> The programme was rested from time to time—during the summer of 1947, for example, when Jack Jackson was chosen as compère of the replacement programme.<sup>3</sup> The 'hosts' varied, too, with Harry Parry and Spike Hughes prominent among them, as did the format and length: in February 1950, for instance, it was extended from thirty minutes to forty-five minutes, with a quarter of an hour of 'vocals'. One of its most interesting features was a series of outside broadcasts from 'rhythm clubs', many of which were linked after 1948 in the National Federation of Jazz Organizations of Great Britain, sponsored by the *Melody Maker*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*The plans were set out in C. F. Meehan to P. M. Dixon, 2 Jan. 1947.

<sup>2</sup> *Melody Maker*, 12 Aug. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by A. Thomson, Overseas Presentation Director, 27 March 1947. Thomson objected to the American accents of some of the British singers, which he called 'bogus' and 'cheap', in *Jazz Club*. Collins did not like the initial 'pretentious' presentation (Note by J. McMillan, 24 May 1947).

<sup>4</sup> \*The BBC was informed of the existence of the Federation in a letter of 30 March 1949. A deputation, led by Mark White, who had now become Production Manager at the Empress Hall, Earl's Court, visited the BBC in July 1949 to ask for better timing of programmes and for jazz on the Third Programme (Note by Michael Standing, 25 July 1949).

By 1950 the programme included many different live and recorded components, including 'Jazz in Britain', 'Jazz for Moderns', 'Record Shop', 'Jazz Jury', and 'My Kind of Jazz'.<sup>1</sup> 'Jazz for Moderns' was particularly interesting in that it featured small groups, among them the Johnny Dankworth Seven, and new 'pick-up groups' of musicians from various bands which 'get together at the London Jazz Clubs'.<sup>2</sup> By 1952, when there was talk of 'a great following for jazz, especially among the teen-age population',<sup>3</sup> there were two so-called 'Combined Operations' sessions.

For all the talk, however, the BBC had doubts as to the popularity of its jazz programmes, and the doubts were substantiated by reports of Listener Research. Johnny Dankworth complained as early as 1950 that modern jazz did not pay in Britain,<sup>4</sup> and trumpet-leader Humphrey Lyttelton, an early participant in 'My Kind of Jazz', admitted three years later that he was tired of trying to convert the public to jazz and would go back to part-time playing.<sup>5</sup> The revolution in the gramophone record business was to change the picture in 1955—Charles Chilton introduced more records into *Jazz Club* in April 1952—but Donald Maclean, who spent time touring metropolitan and provincial jazz clubs in 1953<sup>6</sup> and promised that the BBC's *Jazz Club* really would be a club, 'well worth visiting on a Saturday afternoon' and not just a programme,<sup>7</sup> soon concluded reluctantly that the jazz series were 'uneconomic of air

<sup>1</sup> D. Maclean, then the producer, 'The New BBC Jazz Club', undated Note of 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by J. E. Grant, 25 Sept. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Grant to the *Radio Times*, 5 May 1952. In February 1953 there were complaints of references in a programme to 'hints of dope' and of 'wayward youth' (\*Maclean to J. H. Davidson, Assistant Head of Variety, 8 Feb. 1953).

<sup>4</sup> *Melody Maker*, June 1950. In March 1951 he said he would cut out all jazz airings on the grounds that 'it is the only way to survive' (ibid., March 1951). Two months later Cleo Laine, the singer, joined the Dankworth Seven. Dankworth was voted top musician of the year in *Melody Maker*'s poll in March 1954, and, in fact, he never completely cut out jazz.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., July 1953. London's oldest jazz club opened in 1941 and closed in December 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*Maclean to Davidson, 9 April 1953. Such visits, he said, helped appreciably 'our goodwill'.

<sup>7</sup> \*Draft Statement for the *Melody Maker*, *New Musical Express*, *Jazz Journal*, etc., June 1952.

time'.<sup>1</sup> When new Monday evening jazz broadcasts were introduced in 1954, called at first *The London Jazz Scene* and later *British Jazz*, only 227 jazz fans completed the first questionnaire.<sup>2</sup> There were certainly just as many critics as there had been in 1949. Some said politely that 'modern jazz' was not to their liking; others among the *cognoscenti* complained that what they heard was 'not jazz at all'.<sup>3</sup> There were still others, however, who were developing their own cults, like the audiences who responded to Ken Colyer's Jazz Band, and these were to influence the 'youthquake' just around the corner.

Jazz had made its way into the Third Programme by November 1948 with six programmes by the Vic Lewis Orchestra. A listener to the Third Programme, when it was new, had grumbled in a letter to the *Radio Times* that if the jazz minority, then uncatered for, was only a small minority, so was the audience for the Third Programme as a whole;<sup>4</sup> while Pat Dixon, pining for more jazz from inside the BBC, had quoted Leopold Stokowski's phrase, 'jazz players are . . . pathfinders into new realms'.<sup>5</sup>

That jazz made its way into the Third Programme was right and proper, as the *cognoscenti* always knew. The real majority audience was for 'pop music', always an important element in the Light Programme, even if it was never then treated as a staple. 'Pop' was very closely related both to Variety and to dancing, and although providing music for dancing had always been a BBC activity from the earliest days of Savoy Hill, in May 1948 the Dance Band Department, headed by Mrs. D. Neilson, was closed down—she became a producer—and J. A. Davison, an Australian band-leader, took over as Assistant Head of Variety supervising all broadcasts by dance bands. This was an interesting change which suggested that, *pace* Victor Silvester, the genius of strict-tempo dance music, who never lost his popularity and whose programmes were still listened to with enthusiasm in the General Overseas Service, 'the dancing years' had gone, perhaps never to return.

<sup>1</sup> \*Maclean to Davidson, Draft Note of Aug. 1953. He complained bitterly when the programme was faded out so that cricket scores could be broadcast (Maclean to Davidson, 14 July, 5 Aug. 1953).

<sup>2</sup> \*Silvey to Maclean, 12 April 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Audience Research Report, 13 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *Radio Times*, 8 Nov. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dixon to Mechan, 8 Nov. 1946.

The launching of the Light Programme in 1945 had led for a time, however, to an actual increase in the amount of time allotted to dance bands, since dance music continued to be played regularly on the Home Service also. Stanley Black's Dance Orchestra, primarily 'a utility band for accompanying purposes',<sup>1</sup> was still employed weekly in 1945 on a dance band contract basis with Jack Hylton,<sup>2</sup> but there was a strong feeling that the BBC should have 'the best dance band in the country under its own name, in the same way as it has the best symphony orchestra'.<sup>3</sup> No band of this kind was, in fact, appointed in the immediate post-war period—although a committee reconsidered the subject in 1948<sup>4</sup>—and it was not until 1952, when the dancing years were nearly over, that a BBC thirty-piece 'all-star' Show Band was formed with Cyril Stapleton as Conductor. The title was rightly said to reflect the fact that, whereas 'in Henry Hall days' a dance orchestra offered 'music for dancing', it was not now expected to be a 'factor in the provision of entertainment'.<sup>5</sup>

Yet this was a simplified version of history. Henry Hall himself had pioneered the change-over, and while he continued to perform regularly for the BBC, he saw clearly by 1947 that 'the Big Band era' was drawing to a close: he felt, indeed, that his might well be the last orchestra to top the bill in a West End theatre.<sup>6</sup> Like Billy Cotton, who started a new BBC series in February 1949 which was described as 'dance music with accent on comedy', Hall looked for new kinds of 'act'. His *Guest Nights* introduced to a large public Variety performers who had nothing to do with music at all—the comedian Ted

<sup>1</sup> \*Michael Standing, Director of Variety, to Howgill, 12 Nov. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> \*Howgill to Haley, 4 Dec. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> \*The Committee, with Standing as its Chairman, was appointed on 9 Feb. 1948 and reported on 22 March. 'If the Corporation is ready to give a high priority to the project in terms of finance and studio accommodation,' it concluded, 'and is prepared to face almost certain demands for higher pay from existing Home Orchestras, the Committee would recommend that the project be actively pursued. Failing such a recommendation on the Corporation's part the Committee can only recommend against the project.' A further proposal by Standing 'to form a BBC Dance Orchestra' on 7 November 1950 was deferred for six months at Haley's suggestion.

<sup>5</sup> \*Standing to Howgill, 13 May 1952.

<sup>6</sup> H. Hall, *Here's to the Next Time* (1955), p. 198.

Ray, for example,<sup>1</sup> or the highly talented young Australian Joy Nichols.<sup>2</sup> Hall himself, an accomplished Variety performer—through practice if not through instinct—had a distinctive musical tribute paid to him when Vaughan Williams, with a touch of nostalgia, called the slow movement in his *Partita for Strings* 'Homage to Henry Hall'.<sup>3</sup>

With no BBC dance band comparable in its own sphere with the Symphony Orchestra in its sphere, the Corporation relied from 1946 to 1952 on 'star bands' broadcasting in eight-week cycles. An increase in the amount of air time was announced in March 1947, late-night broadcasts were restored in January 1953, and a Festival of Dance Music was sponsored at the Albert Hall in March 1955, but the policy followed was never entirely acceptable either inside or outside Broadcasting House. From outside, knowledgeable critics complained that the fare was not good enough or ample enough and that the times when it was offered were wrong;<sup>4</sup> while from inside, BBC complaints, mainly about policies pursued in the business, ranged over a wide field. In 1945 and 1946, for example, there were objections to the system of 'pooling' of musicians who 'flitted from studio to studio . . . under different batons'<sup>5</sup> and to publishers' orchestrations which had to be played in different arrangements each cycle.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205. Hall's Saturday *Guest Nights*, broadcast from the Jubilee Hall, Blackpool, gave Ray a wide audience which he extended further with his series *Ray's a Laugh*. See above, p. 546 n. 5. Hall and Ray were both in the Royal Command Performance in November 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 207. See above, p. 60. There was a break in the *Guest Nights*, but they were reintroduced by Davidson in 1949. The first of them included not only Petula Clark, a discovery of Cecil Madden (see above, p. 224), but Norman Wisdom, Max Miller and the Western Brothers. Later *Guest Nights*, produced by Alastair Scott-Johnston, included excerpts from shows like *King's Rhapsody* and *Kiss Me Kate*. *Guest Night* celebrated its twenty-first anniversary in 1955. The first Hall programme on television was *Face the Music*.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 207. It was the sort of nostalgia, Vaughan Williams said, which he felt when he occasionally heard dance music on the radio.

<sup>4</sup> *Melody Maker*, 26 Oct., 16 Nov. 1946. In later years *Melody Maker* gave detailed charts of how all the different dance bands 'aired', e.g. from 20 December 1953 to 18 December 1954. The BBC Show Band then headed the chart with 46 hrs. 10 mins. of broadcasting, followed closely by Ted Heath (39 h. 15 m.), Victor Silvester (32 h. 20 m.), Geraldo (28 h. 50 m.) and Joe Loss (20 h. 40 m.).

<sup>5</sup> \*Standing to Wellington, 3 Oct. 1945. There was an announcement in Jan. 1946 that the BBC would no longer give broadcasts to 'scratch' bands with no recognized leaders.

<sup>6</sup> \*Mrs. D. H. Neilson to P. Hillyard, 21 Nov. 1946.



*a.* Richard Dimbleby in the commentator's box



*b.* The organ-screen camera position in Westminster Abbey

15. The Coronation, 1953



a. Richard Hearne in *The Lancers*



b. Terry-Thomas



c. Frankie Howerd (with Jean Kent and Marjorie Holmes)

## 16. Three Comedians



Other perennial difficulties concerned song plugging; records that did not seem right; 'jazzing the classics'; and restrictions imposed by the Musicians' Union. There was still a BBC preference for 'essentially British sound'—this was a requirement for the new Show Band—and for 'bright robust programmes' with the minimum of 'sickly crooners, extremes of swing, over-funny orchestrations and close harmony'.<sup>1</sup> Knowledgeable critics—and some, particularly in *Melody Maker* were very knowledgeable—were not taken to very kindly; they could be dismissed as an 'insufferable but powerful trade press'.<sup>2</sup>

Song plugging was taken far more seriously by the BBC, and in 1946 it asked Henry Willink, KC, to write a report on the subject.<sup>3</sup> Willink thought that it might be possible to prosecute for song plugging, but there was decisive alternative legal advice.<sup>4</sup> On its side the Music Publishers' Association found the BBC's Dance Music Policy Committee, which 'passed' songs for broadcasting,<sup>5</sup> unnecessarily restrictive in peace time.<sup>6</sup> 'No song could become a hit on merit alone,' the Association insisted in un-BBC-like language, and since it had to be properly exploited, it needed the help of the BBC in particular, help which eclipsed all other forms of publicity. 'There was a feeling among the publishers that the BBC was prejudiced against popular music.'<sup>7</sup>

Accusations continued to be made from both sides,<sup>8</sup> but in 1947 an uneasy agreement was reached with the Music Publishers' Association, to be implemented from April 1948, that all 'plugging' would stop in return for an undertaking by the BBC to impose a 60 per cent quota of *current songs* in its dance

<sup>1</sup> \*Standing to Howgill, 13 May 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by K. Adam, then Controller of the Light Programme, 19 May 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Programme Policy Committee, *Minutes*, 26 March 1946; Howgill to Willink, 2 July 1946; Report by the Rt. Hon. Henry Willink, KC, 9 July 1946. Willink did not believe that the practice was restricted to dance music. See also above, p. 170 n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Sir Theobald Mathew, Director of Public Prosecutions, 14 Sept. 1946; Robbins, Director of the BBC's Legal Department, to Nicolls, 18 Oct. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 760.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 8 May 1946.

<sup>7</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 5 Dec. 1946.

<sup>8</sup> See above, p. 170 n. 2, for the complaints of Wing-Commander Geoffrey Cooper, MP.

music programmes.<sup>1</sup> And there was to be an independent referee, the solicitor, W. C. Crocker, to deal with all future disputants. The agreement worked well, although it did not stop allegations of evasion, 'wangling' and pressure on disc jockeys.<sup>2</sup> Nor did it convince the Music Publishers' Association that there were enough 'popular tunes' in the BBC's programmes.<sup>3</sup>

The further question of how many of the 'current songs' should be 'British' raised a different but related set of issues, for however much the BBC put its trust in 'British sound', the most powerful interests in commercial music during this period were American. For this reason alone, the Songwriters' Guild of Great Britain, founded in 1947, was determined to protect British musicians, and it put considerable pressure on the BBC.<sup>4</sup> Some of the arguments it used were chauvinist: all pointed to the dangers of a 'cultural invasion'. Yet once again there was scope for institutional conflict. Eric Maschwitz, the Vice-Chairman of the Guild, who, as an ex-official, knew the BBC well and was to return to it, told the Guild that 'in dealing with such a deeply entrenched monopoly, finesse, backed up with a careful and accurate presentation of the facts' would be more efficacious than 'strong-arm tactics'. Nonetheless such tactics were sometimes used, and Maschwitz himself did not strengthen his own case when he complained in lush language that the BBC of the 1950s was 'spilling out' American pop music 'to the semi-Americanised "teen-age" listener who in

<sup>1</sup> \*The agreement was prepared by Sir Valentine Holmes (see above, p. 320) and musical publishing interests in March 1947 (undated Note by Sir Valentine Holmes); Note of a Meeting, 20 June 1947; Robbins to Holmes, 11 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Haley to Nicolls, 26 Nov. 1948. Wing-Comdr. Cooper published his booklet *Caesar's Mistress* in Dec. 1948. On 13 Oct. 1952 Standing complained of 'the increasing pressure which has now reached fantastic proportions' on disc jockeys.

<sup>3</sup> \*There were complaints of a 'drop' in 'pop tunes' in 1949 (Standing to Wellington and Collins, 8 Nov. 1949; Circular to Producers, 14 Dec. 1950). In May 1951 Standing agreed to include 'pop numbers' from time to time in *Family Favourites* and other record programmes.

<sup>4</sup> \*Correspondence with the BBC opened with a letter of Nov. 1947 to Haley signed, among others, by Bruce Sievier, Chairman, Eric Maschwitz, Vice-Chairman, A. P. Herbert, Richard Addinsell, Haydn Wood and Eric Coates. It complained that 'in recent months' only 19 per cent of songs in BBC programmes had been British. Meetings took place on 7 Jan. and 19 March 1948, and Nicolls issued a directive on 5 April 1948 telling producers to implement the BBC's policy of encouraging British music. There were further meetings in 1948. See the *Bulletin* of the Guild, Sept. 1948.



20. 'We couldn't possibly broadcast your song until the Songwriters' Guild of Great Britain agree with the Music Publishers' Association and the Music Trade Guild that the Music Publishers' Contact Personnel Association may approach the Music Directors' Association to co-operate with the Musicians' Union, Equity and the Variety Artists' Federation to get the sanction of the Disc Jockeys' Mutual Protection Society.' *Musical Express*, 30 November 1951

these times of high wages and full employment, has an excess of pocket money to spend upon foolish, often vulgar, musical fads'.<sup>1</sup>

The Songwriters' Guild disliked programmes of the *Hit Parade* type<sup>2</sup> and pressed for 'modern ballads' by British composers. It often attacked 'the monopoly', but as Haley sensibly and pertinently pointed out: 'What they don't realise is that without a monopoly BBC to look after them, they probably wouldn't get any show at all.'<sup>3</sup> The demand of the Guild for

<sup>1</sup> E. Maschwitz, *No Chip on My Shoulder* (1957), p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Howgill, 25 Jan. 1949. The first of these programmes was Gerald's *Top Ten*, broadcast in 1946, and *Tip Top Tunes*, which stayed on the air for seven and a half years until the summer of 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Haley, 19 Jan. 1949. The Guild's *Bulletin* in July 1952 welcomed Haley's departure from the BBC: he was 'admittedly not interested in the problems of the British song writer'.

minimum quotas, which was backed by the Music Publishers' Association, was resisted by the BBC,<sup>1</sup> although relations improved in 1954 and 1955 on the eve of the break-up of the monopoly. Strident talk of the BBC allowing British song-writers to be 'literally elbowed off their own natural air'<sup>2</sup> gave way to 'Never before were our writers so dependent upon broadcasting or more anxious to provide what the BBC requires: they only look for guidance and encouragement.'<sup>3</sup> The BBC continued to defend its 'freedom of choice' in gramophone record programmes, which the Guild saw with increasing clarity as major determinants of the livelihood of British composers. 'The root of the difficulty was seen to be in persuading the Recording Companies to issue more British songs and no practical solution to this was canvassed.'<sup>4</sup>

British 'pop music' was to enjoy immense success in the future, but never on the basis of the crude protectionism advanced by interested parties between 1945 and 1955. Moreover, while these parties were talking of 'the creation of a specifically British contemporary culture in the realm of the Popular Song',<sup>5</sup> they were either unaware of or condescending in their attitudes towards contemporary culture in the making, out of which new British successes in 'pop music' were eventually to emerge. In retrospect, it is obvious that the carefully limited volume of 'pop music' put out by the BBC was treated very charily. The real revolution in the content of that music was to

<sup>1</sup> \*Wellington to the Music Publishers' Association and the Songwriters' Guild, 26 Feb. 1953, in reply to a Memorandum of 2 Dec. 1952. During the first sixteen weeks of Stapleton's Show Band programmes there had been 'a 44 per cent British ingredient' in the 800 items.

<sup>2</sup> \*The Songwriters' Guild to Wellington, 1 May 1953. The BBC was even accused of 'failing to carry out the terms of its Charter'.

<sup>3</sup> \*The Songwriters' Guild to Wellington, 4 Jan. 1954. This was in reply to a letter from Wellington, 15 Oct. 1953, in which he stated in conciliatory fashion that they shared 'a common objective' and that 'as a result both of your representations and of our own convictions' the average proportion of British music in Variety, Dance Band, Cinema Organ and Gramophone Programmes over seven months had risen to 37 per cent and in Light Music to 52 per cent. Yet as late as 5 July 1955 Eric Maschwitz was complaining to Jacob of 'the deterioration in the BBC's programmes of current popular music' and the fact that they were 'flooded with ready-made and degraded American "successes" '.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 2 June 1954. By then the Guild itself stated that 'the Variety Department is encouragingly "pro-British in its attitude"' (Victor Knight, Secretary of the Guild, to Wellington, 29 April 1954).

<sup>5</sup> \*The Songwriters' Guild to Wellington, 1 May 1953.

take place after 1955—a revolution in music which, like Plato's revolutions in music in *The Republic*, heralded a revolution in much else besides—and it was Radio Luxembourg, not the BBC, which before 1955 was most in touch with the main currents of change which Eric Maschwitz could dismiss as the 'latest fads'.<sup>1</sup>

There were already some signs across the Atlantic that new and very non-British 'sounds' were coming out of Nashville, the centre of 'country music', and other places—'sounds' which, like 'jazz', were emerging not from a white but from a black past. The disc jockey Alan Freed's *Rock 'n' Roll Party Show* had already introduced American radio listeners to rock 'n' roll during the early 1950s—Freed himself was to disappear from view after a 'payola scandal'—and Elvis Presley, recognized almost at once as a new white portent, reached the American charts in 1955 after local successes with 'Baby Let's Play House'. His appeal to young fans depended on sight as well as sound, on the movements of his body as much as on the rhythms of his music. Yet it was through his records as well as through his films that he was to build up his British audience. 'Bill Haley and his Comets' were not to strike Britain until 1956 in a bombshell visit—but 'Rock Around the Clock' was already a hit of 1955. It entered the British *Top Twenty* (Radio Luxembourg's peak programme) at the very beginning of 1955, although to place this event in proper perspective, it should be noted that in that first week of January 1955 the top of the *Top Twenty*—and 'Rock Around the Clock' was seventeenth—was Dickie Valentine's very different 'Finger of Suspicion'.

British audiences might be willing to listen to Sinatra or to the even more controversial Johnnie ('Cry') Ray, as they had listened eagerly to Bing Crosby or to Perry Como, but in that first week of January 1955, when there was still no skiffle, there were two Valentine records in the *Top Twenty* along with one by another British singer, Ronnie Hilton. In the *Radio Times Annual* for 1955 an article by the pre-war dance-band leader Jack Payne singled out Valentine, Hilton and other British

<sup>1</sup> It broadcast the 'Top Twenty' every Sunday evening. Maurice Burman in *Melody Maker*, 8 Jan. 1955, stated that 'while the BBC has been ramming light music at peak times down the throats of the listeners, R.I. has been seducing them with dance music and grabbing them away from the BBC'.

singers as stars of what he called, in language that was more appropriate for the future than for the present, 'The Golden Age of the "Pop" Singer'. Valentine, ex-Palladium page-boy, had been voted Britain's 'top singer' since 1952—he had sung with Ted Heath six weeks after getting his first professional engagement—and he was well known to both BBC listeners and viewers as a very regular performer. So, too, was Ronnie Hilton, who had made his way from the factory bench to the *Hit Parade* in an even shorter period (HMV promoted him in June 1954). A third male star, David Whitfield, had actually made his way into the American *Top Ten* in 1954, had appeared on American television, and had won a golden disc for his 'Cara Mia'. These were the 'pop' stars who counted then, and they also included one older singer with a very different background, Donald Peers, who had built up a remarkable fan club of tens of thousands.

Among the women singers who figured in Payne's article were Lita Roza, another Heath vocalist, Ruby Murray, Alma Cogan and Petula Clark. But Vera Lynn was there too. She had topped the *Top Twenty* for three months in 1952 with her song 'Auf Wiedersehen', which, like Eddie Calvert's trumpet solo 'O Mein Papa', won a golden disc. Vera Lynn was also in the *Top Twenty* in January 1955 along with the pianist Winifred Attwell who appeared very often on BBC television.

The 'culture' these artists represented was not just a pale version of American culture, although Valentine liked to imitate American stars and many of the songs the artists sang (like Winifred Attwell's tunes) were American in origin. The BBC, unlike Radio Luxembourg, was trying to steer as much of a mainstream course in 'pop' music and in *Variety* (a British conception) as in religion or politics. Indeed, looking back on the period, it seems that BBC 'pop music' was subject to almost as many controls as the British economy. Each 'pop song' had to be 'passed for broadcasting' by a Dance Music Policy Committee—not always very well attended—and lists of acceptable and non-acceptable songs (about one in thirty for the latter) were circulated to a large group of people in sound and television, including announcers as well as producers. The banned songs included not only those with what were described as 'suggestive lyrics'—'A huggin' and a chalkin'', for example,

in 1947<sup>1</sup> or 'Tonight's the Night' in 1955—but those based on classical melodies, like 'So deep is the night'.<sup>2</sup> Two songs banned for their titles were 'Get Up Those Stairs, Mademoiselle' and 'Two Old Maids in a Folding Bed'.<sup>3</sup> In many cases it was insisted that 'interpretation must be watched'.<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, many tricky problems arose and many fine distinctions were drawn. Thus, John McMillan, then Chief Assistant to Controller, Light Programme, was seeking in May 1947 to distinguish between 'burlesque and dance tempo distortion' of classical tunes, noting that while the Light Programme was not allowed to play Spike Jones's version of Liszt's 'Liebesträume' in *Family Favourites*, almost every Monday night *Ignorance is Bliss* was taking 'great liberties with one or more of the established classical works'.<sup>5</sup> Eventually after due consideration the line between 'burlesque distortion'—'clearly permissible'—and dance tempo distortion was drawn, by the Music Department, and *Ignorance is Bliss* could become 'an honest programme'.<sup>6</sup>

Given the nature of 'pop music' between 1945 and 1955, there were more problems about religion than about politics, with the Director of Religious Broadcasting being consulted about

<sup>1</sup> \*Memorandum from Pat Hillyard, 11 Feb. 1947. Later in 1947 there was trouble with 'Doin' what comes naturally' from the American musical *Annie Get Your Gun* (McMillan to Howgill, 24 May 1947). For the 1955 ban, see *Melody Maker*, May 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*A list of twelve records of adapted classical music was vetted by Herbert Murrill, the Assistant Head of Music, in June 1948. He gave admirably clear judgements. One was 'alternately scream and bark . . . an intolerable perversion', another was 'a very dreadful sound', and of a third—an adaptation of Dvořák to which he had no objections—he added, 'I can only say I see very little reason for singing it at all' (Murrill to Miss Valentine Britten, Gramophone Librarian, 28 June 1948, in reply to a request by Miss Britten, 11 June 1948).

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum by Standing, 9 March 1948. See above, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 12 May 1947. The problems of watching interpretation were almost insuperable, for as Roy Speer said of one song to C. F. Meehan, then Assistant Director of Variety, on 25 Oct. 1947, 'it is practically impossible for anyone to put the song over without creating a "double entendre" in the mind of a listener who is looking for anything suggestive'. There were troubles at the writing end also. Even one lyric by Eric Maschwitz, the most influential figure in BBC light music before the war, was carefully watched for its interpretations (Notes by Standing, 2, 16 Dec. 1947).

<sup>5</sup> \*McMillan to Chalmers, 16 May 1947.

<sup>6</sup> \*Wright to McMillan, 16 June 1947; McMillan to Standing, 19 June 1947.

songs with such titles as 'Light a Candle in the Chapel', a 'very big success' in the United States and 'very popular in Australia',<sup>1</sup> and 'From Your Lips to the Ears of God' (1953). There were political objections, however, to 'Where is my Sunday Potato?', which eventually was allowed;<sup>2</sup> and of one song passed after discussion, 'Easy Street', it was correctly noted that 'it hardly amounts to a stimulus for the export drive'.<sup>3</sup> The issues at stake usually concerned 'bad taste' rather than religious or political judgement, and listeners themselves sometimes contributed to the debate. Thus, when the Dead March from *Saul* was used as incidental music for a thriller in the Detection Club series, *A Nice Cup of Tea*, Chalmers wrote that while 'it is not, of course (as one writer alleges it is), sacred music, it has poignant associations for many and should, I think, be reserved for plays like *Cavalcade*. I think there is something in the complaint that we degraded it by using it in a thriller.'<sup>4</sup>

Fine distinctions often had to be drawn also in *interpreting* the BBC's restrictions on all advertising. Thus, a reference to 'Steinway' had to be deleted from the song 'I Love a Piano', but 'Tin Lizzie' was passed since it gave 'only very indirect publicity for Fords'. 'The model T is too antique to be contentious from the advertising point of view.'<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes Herbert Murrill was called in to give a final opinion, and one of the rare direct links between the BBC's classical music policy and its 'pop music' policy should not be lost to history. The song 'Foggy Foggy Dew' was banned from Variety programmes in November 1948 after it had been broadcast in *Family Favourites*, but it was permitted in programmes of 'folk songs or Benjamin Britten's music'.<sup>6</sup> This was thought of 'as a sensible way out'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Meehan to Rev. K. Grayston, Acting Director of Religious Broadcasting, 15 July 1947. Grayston replied that 'treatment of this kind of subject (in this way) by a dance band is entirely unsuitable'. House, however, found no objections to 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People' (8 Dec. 1948).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Standing, 2 Jan. 1948; Standing to Meehan, 30 Dec. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Madden to Howgill, 12 March 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Chalmers to Gielgud, 12 Feb. 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Meehan to Mrs. Neilson, 22 Jan. 1948.

<sup>6</sup> \*Meehan to McMillan, 15 Nov. 1948.

<sup>7</sup> \*McMillan to Meehan, 18 Nov. 1948.



If the words of songs were often a source of difficulty, there were other relationships between words and music which offered not sensible ways out but opportunities for creative achievement. In his report on the Third Programme<sup>1</sup> Hussey had an interesting section on 'The Spoken Word', and in his study *Prospero and Ariel* D. G. Bridson, the writer and producer of features, included an excellent chapter on 'Poets and Folk-singers'.<sup>2</sup> In some of his own productions, like that of Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*, Bridson commissioned music from Walter Goehr, and in talks on music, singled out by Hussey for special attention, like Edward Sackville-West's on Ethel Smyth and E. M. Forster's on references to music in the letters of Edward Fitzgerald, the Third Programme was proclaiming the unity of the arts even more strongly than the Religious Department was proclaiming the unity of Christians.<sup>3</sup>

## 5. Religion

RELIGION in 1945 was still a major preoccupation of the broadcasters. The BBC's religious policy had been well established by 1939, although the pattern of broadcasting—and in some respects the policy—changed in many ways during the Second World War, when new types of religious programmes were introduced and there was a considerable extension of religious broadcasting on days other than Sunday.<sup>4</sup>

From 1939 *Lift Up Your Hearts* started each day between 7.55 and 8 o'clock, to be followed by the Daily Service at 10.15, a regular broadcasting 'fixture' which had first been introduced

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 742.

<sup>2</sup> D. G. Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel* (1971), ch. 9. He argued the case that poetry, like music, benefited from being heard. The fact that some poets could not read their own poems well was not an argument against broadcasting poetry. 'Not many composers are virtuosos and few Lieder writers can sing, but that is hardly an argument against the performance of music.'

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 778 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Briggs, *The War of Words*, esp. pp. 621-45; \*BBC Memorandum, 'Religious Broadcasting: History and Current Practice', Feb. 1943; Central Religious Advisory Committee, 'Review of the Aims and Achievements of Religious Broadcasting. 1923-1948', 5 Oct. 1948.

in 1928 when it opened the broadcasting day.<sup>1</sup> There were three mid-week late evening services or two services and a talk or discussion;<sup>2</sup> a weekly cathedral or college evensong; broadcasts for schools and sixth forms; prayers in *Children's Hour*; and broadcasts in the Forces Programme by the 'Radio Padre'. On Sundays there were three services, which together reflected a wide spectrum of religious observance, with occasional experiments, such as dramatic interludes instead of sermons. Great enterprise was shown in the planning of programmes: thus, for example, there was a recorded service from Chungking, the war-time Chinese capital, in October 1945. The *Sunday Half Hour* of community hymn-singing was a war-time innovation which had an audience of seven million in 1948,<sup>3</sup> while the *Epilogue*, which always ended the week, stretched back continuously to 1926, the year when the Charter of the Corporation was drafted.

The war-time pattern survived in times of peace, while Dr. J. W. Welch, the Director of Religious Broadcasting, regularly restated (in vigorous and up-to-date language) the need to appeal not only to churchgoers but to listeners who had no particular church or chapel allegiance.<sup>4</sup> Welch, who had been Director since 1939, was succeeded in 1947 by the Rev. F. H. House. There was no major change of direction,<sup>5</sup> although there was a certain change in emphasis. Both Directors were of the opinion that 'the true task of religious broadcasting' was 'missionary and evangelistic',<sup>6</sup> yet whereas Welch was always seeking to move one step ahead of the churches in his 'insights'

<sup>1</sup> The Morning Service was supplemented by *Five to Ten* in the Light Programme (9.55-10 a.m.) from 11 Dec. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> The Litany, which had been broadcast each week between D Day and the end of the war in place of one of the weekday services, was no longer broadcast regularly.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Review of the Aims and Achievements', 5 Oct. 1948. A BBC Hymn Book was published by the Oxford University Press in 1951 and a Psalter by the SPCK in 1948 (with a preface by House).

<sup>4</sup> *BBC Year Book, 1947*, p. 40: 'Increasingly, religious broadcasting seems to do what the churches cannot do.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Barbara Ward had suggested the choice of a layman, whose experience had not been restricted to 'ecclesiastical circles' (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 Sept. 1946).

<sup>6</sup> F. H. House, 'Some Aspects of Christian Broadcasting' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 2, 1950, p. 102.

and in the practices of religious broadcasting, House was more anxious to reflect the actual thought and worship of the churches as they were.

Both men were fully backed by the Central Religious Advisory Committee<sup>1</sup> and by Haley, who in an important address of 1948 on 'Moral Values in Broadcasting' told the multi-denominational British Council of Churches, which had invited him to speak to them, that 'We are citizens of a Christian country, and the BBC—an institution set up by the State—bases its policy upon a positive attitude towards the Christian values. . . . It seeks to safeguard those values,' he went on, 'and to foster acceptance of them. The whole preponderant weight of its programmes is directed to this end.' While it was not 'an inherent duty of broadcasting to make people join the Christian faith,' Haley explained, that is to say 'the duty of the BBC in everything it does', it was 'the duty of religious broadcasting, of course'. The 'of course' is as significant as the more general statement of Haley's own philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC made much of the importance of the task of making 'Britain a more Christian country'. According to the Central Religious Advisory Committee, this task was fourfold—first, to maintain 'standards of truth, justice and honesty in private and public life';<sup>3</sup> second, to explain what the Christian faith was, 'to remove misunderstanding of it and to demonstrate its relevance today'; third, to lead 'non-church-goers' to see that any really 'Christian' commitment involved active membership of an 'actual church congregation', while at the same time giving 'church-goers' a wider vision of what church membership involved; and finally—and not least in importance—'to provide

<sup>1</sup> In 1946 the Archbishop of York, Dr. Garbett, was succeeded as Chairman of the Committee by the Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. C. S. Woodward, who was succeeded in turn in October 1951 by the Bishop of Bristol, Dr. F. A. Cockin (\*Press Note, 3 Oct. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Haley, 'Moral Values in Broadcasting', 2 Nov. 1948, pp. 7, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Cross-reference was made in 'Review of the Aims and Achievements' to T. S. Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939). It was argued in this important book that only the community of believing Christians could be expected in certain aspects (e.g. regulation of morality) to conform to the standards of Christianity. This view was to be challenged in 1963 by D. L. Munby in his *The Idea of a Secular Society*. Eliot was always greatly admired in the BBC: R. A. Rendall, for example, described his British Academy Lecture on Milton as 'probably the most successful talk ever given' (\*Board of Governors, Minutes, 1 May 1947).

opportunities for that challenge to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord which is the heart of "conversion"'.<sup>1</sup>

'The business of religious broadcasting', the Central Religious Advisory Committee concluded, in what still reads like a manifesto, 'must be to reflect and proclaim "the faith of the Church" as it is actually found in the Bible and in the living traditions and liturgical life and preaching of the visible Christian Churches. Religious broadcasting must of necessity concentrate on those fundamental doctrines of Faith which are embodied in the creeds and held in common by all churches "within the main stream of historic Christianity". There should be the utmost charity in references to conflicting interpretations of the Faith, and actual sectarian controversy should not normally find a place "on the air"; but room should be found from time to time for representatives of different Christian traditions to make positive statements of their distinctive convictions, and broadcasters should be constantly on their guard against the dangers of fostering a kind of "disembodied Christianity" or "radio religion"'.<sup>2</sup>

There was room in this agenda or manifesto for an exploration of the social context in which the Christian religion could best flourish in Britain—the kind of exploration which Archbishop Temple had always encouraged—yet the emphasis was less on the corporate role of religion than on individual religious experience. The latter could be enriched, it was felt, both by specifically religious broadcasts and indirectly by other broadcasts, like plays or discussion programmes, which might, indeed, have an even greater influence on the 'religious faith of listeners'. In this connection, the same distinction was being drawn as that between 'educational' and 'educative' programmes.<sup>3</sup>

In both cases, also, there was considerable concomitant debate about the significance of the broadcasting medium itself. For

<sup>1</sup> \*'Review of the Aims and Achievements', 5 Oct. 1948. A special place was still left, as it had been since the earliest days of broadcasting, for serving the needs of 'the sick and the elderly', but it was noted at the same time that the early attempt by the BBC to present 'a thoroughgoing, optimistic and manly religion' (see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), p. 228) sounded somewhat 'dated'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 804. 'Adult Religious Educational Broadcasts' for closed audiences were contemplated in 1948.

Welch, 'communication' was the heart of the Christian mission, and the right slogan was 'communicate or perish'.<sup>1</sup> Dinwiddie, the Scottish Director, who subsequently wrote a history of religion by radio, chose different language. For him there was a 'mysterious affinity between worship and wireless', and an apposite slogan was 'tune in to God's wavelength'.<sup>2</sup> Haley's final advice to the British Council of Churches was to get someone to talk to the Council about 'the nature of the medium'.<sup>3</sup> The very concept of 'broadcasting' suggested New Testament analogues, and Welch liked to feel that through broadcasting the good seed could fall not only on naturally good soil but on many kinds of ground which the Churches had not been able to cultivate. In the years after the war he thought of his chief task as using the medium to reach 'as many people as possible who are outside the churches'.<sup>4</sup>

This was not quite the same task, however, as that of making Britain 'a more Christian country'. As an early post-war BBC series of talks on this subject suggested, this was not an easy mission to identify, however much it was being discussed. Was it simply a question of numbers? What about the intensity of individual or group commitment? What about pluralism of values both in British society as a whole and in the broad span of religious institutions themselves? How were the sanctions of the law related to the moral imperatives of Christians and non-Christians? Originally, the series had been thought of in terms of talks by Christian speakers as different in their political views as Canon Charles Smyth and R. H. Tawney (with G. M.

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Welch, 'Religion and the Radio' in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 3, Oct. 1946, p. 105: 'The single purpose of religious broadcasting is communication. Engineers and technicians are primarily concerned with the transmission of sound: a religious broadcaster is primarily concerned with the communication of what he believes to be the truth.'

<sup>2</sup> M. Dinwiddie, *Religion by Radio* (1968), p. 46. There are intimations of this view in Reith's *Broadcast over Britain* (1924), and Reith wrote an introduction to Dinwiddie's book.

<sup>3</sup> 'Moral Values in Broadcasting', p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> He referred to the BBC doing 'what the Churches cannot do, but are anxious to see done'. See his University Sermon of 8 Nov. 1942, quoted in 'Review of the Aims and Achievements', and Dinwiddie, *op. cit.*, p. 93, which refers to the Church of England's Report 'Towards the Conversion of England' (1945). This Report, which was dedicated to Temple, had little to say about radio. A Church of Scotland Minister asked why the BBC did not set up a 'Conversion Bureau'. See below, p. 781.

Trevelyan talking on 'manners', 'the influence of Christianity on the day-to-day conduct of our life together'),<sup>1</sup> and although few of the first-choice speakers accepted the BBC's invitation to take part, the speakers eventually chosen did not shirk the difficult issues. Some of them questioned whether Britain still was a Christian community and talked not of dedicating a whole country to one shared faith but of a Christian 'leaven' in society.

Similar issues figured prominently in the report of a small commission set up by the multi-denominational British Council of Churches in 1948 to consider from a Christian point of view the influence of broadcasting on the life of the nation.<sup>2</sup> Working in two 'sections', the first under the chairmanship of Dr. F. A. Cockin, the Bishop of Bristol, who was also chairman of the BBC's influential Central Religious Advisory Committee, and the second under the chairmanship of the Rev. Professor John Marsh, the commission produced a report which preceded the Beveridge Report by several months; and its report was adopted by the Council in October 1950. The first section, the members of which included Dr. Kathleen Bliss, Dr. Marjorie Reeves and Professor C. A. Coulson (R. H. S. Crossman was a consulting member), considered 'the responsibility and standards of the BBC, whether it can be claimed that its standards should be Christian and how they can be maintained and expressed'. The second, which included K. G. Grubb, the Rev. R. Selby Wright, the war-time Radio Padre, and the Rev. E. C. Unwin, had as its complementary terms of reference to 'consider what broadcasting in the United Kingdom can do as a religious undertaking and to examine the nature and limits of its work as such'.

The Council noted a trend in Britain towards 'the acceptance of liberal values' and the rise of 'secular materialism'. Toleration was in jeopardy, and it was the duty of the churches to press for 'free religious discussion' as Welch always had done. It was significant, indeed, the report claimed, that 'the most persistent pressure for free religious discussion on the air', was

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare this series with a parallel series, 'Man in Society', arranged by the Central Committee for Group Listening. The 'experts in human sciences' to be brought before the microphone were far less well known than the 'experts' contemplated for the religious series.

<sup>2</sup> \*Rev. R. D. Say to Collins, 2 Jan. 1950, setting out the terms of reference of the Commission and asking for a meeting.

now coming from 'the leaders of the Religious Broadcasting Department of the BBC themselves'. 'Underlying the surface evidence of social crisis . . . there is a fundamental struggle for the recovery of genuine conviction, and a deep division of belief over the nature of the convictions on which a democratic society in its modern industrial and technological form can be based. It is on this level that Christianity must make its claim to be heard.'<sup>1</sup>

This 1950 report, the product of much careful discussion, forecast some of the tendencies which were to transform attitudes to both religion and morality during the late 1950s. Between 1945 and 1950, however, there was one major change initiated by the BBC, following earlier war-time changes. The BBC's pre-war 'Sunday Programme policy' was explicitly disclaimed. Haley himself, following in the footsteps of Ryan, talked of 'Sunday entertainment' as a 'just need' of BBC listeners. While mentioning 'invisible restraints' which would still be present, 'the strict sabbatarian rules', he went on, had deliberately 'been abandoned'.<sup>2</sup> In fact, there were slightly fewer religious programmes than there had been during the war, and the programmes became more stratified. Both in 1944 and 1948 two hours and fifty minutes were being devoted to religious broadcasting on Sundays, but on weekdays the total fell from five hours twenty minutes to four hours forty minutes.<sup>3</sup>

As for the stratification, Haley's philosophy of the cultural pyramid was warmly welcomed by the Central Religious Advisory Committee, since it seemed to have a direct and immediate relevance to religious broadcasting. It pointed to the need for identifying and appealing to 'target audiences', and the British Council of Churches Report went on to call it a 'useful' illustration which served 'to bring the various programmes of the Religious Broadcasting Department in review'.<sup>4</sup> Canon Demant dissented, however: 'the Christian thinker

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity and Broadcasting* (1950), p. 14. Barnes reported an interview with Kathleen Bliss on 14 Oct. 1948 in which she argued strongly first that 'free discussion was essential to Christianity' and second that 'the value of a Christian item in the general programme was enormously more valuable than the routine Christian broadcast' (Barnes Papers).

<sup>2</sup> 'Moral Values in Broadcasting', p. 8. For the war-time changes, see *The War of Words*, pp. 131-4.

<sup>3</sup> 'Review of the Aims and Achievements', 5 Oct. 1948.

<sup>4</sup> *Christianity and Broadcasting*, p. 35.

would criticize the idea of a cultural pyramid aspiring upwards on the same grounds as he would criticize the Scandinavian ideal of children being healthy, happy animals on whom spiritual values could be grafted later by the educational system.<sup>1</sup>

There was an increasing and related interest among religious broadcasters (including Demant) in audience research, stimulated by Robert Silvey's enthusiasm. In 1948, for example, the Central Religious Advisory Committee noted how at one end of the spectrum the *People's Service* on the Light Programme, 'an attempt to convey the most elementary Christian truth through non-ecclesiastical language, hymns and very brief prayer', had four million listeners, while at the other end of the spectrum Third Programme religious broadcasts, 'a highly specialised mission to the intelligentsia', might reach only a few thousands. The *Sunday Half Hour* of community hymn-singing had an audience of seven million, 'admittedly largely of "nostalgic" interest', while *Think on These Things* on the Light Programme had an audience of three to four million. The three Home Service Sunday services in the middle of the spectrum had an audience of one and a half million each.

*Christian News and Commentary*, which was thought by Welch and House to have 'potentially a wider appeal' than a million listeners, raised the interesting question of the relationship between times of broadcasting and size of audience. First started in 1945 by Dr. Nathaniel Micklem on Sunday afternoon—he was to be succeeded by the Rev. John Foster of Glasgow—it lost much of its audience when it was moved to a week night, and went off the air in 1947. Not surprisingly, the British Council of Churches described the 'loss of this programme' as being of 'great moment . . . for it gave them a place to articulate their judgments on current affairs, and to inform the public about their many-sided activities'. At the same time, it warned against controlling programme policy through the Listener Research Department. 'We trust that the Corporation will always carry some programmes which are "unpopular" if judged by the criterion of numbers listening alone.'<sup>2</sup>

'Sacramental broadcasts' were introduced experimentally in 1949 only after sharp differences of opinion had been ex-

<sup>1</sup> Note of a Meeting, 29 Sept. 1948 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>2</sup> *Christianity and Broadcasting*, pp. 24, 38.



pressed,<sup>1</sup> but the term 'experimental' was soon dropped in this connection. The BBC continued to press that members of the Central Religious Advisory Committee should 'consult their churches on such matters',<sup>2</sup> but at a further meeting in 1950 the Bishop of Gloucester remarked that 'the fear of irreverence had been completely overcome' and Mervyn Stockwood, later to become a Bishop, claimed that 'the long-term results' of broadcast communion 'were entirely different from those which followed other broadcasts'. They were 'a blessing to the great many people who are ill' and 'brought back to the sacrament' people who 'had dropped right away'. The Dean of Belfast, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Religious Advisory Committee, went even further. 'There was evidence of an evangelistic effect in that a number of people listened who had never been communicants and who had heard the service for the first time.'<sup>3</sup>

How successful were the post-war religious broadcasters in strengthening the appeal of Christian programmes? Comparative audience research figures for 1945 and 1948 show a sharp drop in listening to the Home Service's two Sunday services from 25 per cent of the total potential adult audience to 12 per cent—but over the same period the number of listeners to the Light Programme's *People's Service* and the *Sunday Half Hour* increased from 21 per cent to 33 per cent. The total Home Service and Light Programme audiences for all Sunday religious broadcasts increased from 50 per cent to 56 per cent. In week-day broadcasting, there was a marked decline from 27 per cent to 14 per cent, with the audiences for the Tuesday Evening song and the Tuesday Evening Talk falling to a small third of what they had been (1 and 2 per cent respectively).

A more detailed analysis of audience reactions, based on six thousand interviews relating to two typical Sundays in March and May 1948, showed that 37 per cent of the adult

<sup>1</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 1 March 1949. The representative of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Chairman of the Welsh Religious Advisory Committee were unhappy about the move, as was the Scottish Religious Advisory Committee. The Board of Governors was in sympathy with the new policy (*Minutes*, 8 July 1948).

<sup>2</sup> \*A statement by R. A. Rendall, then Controller of Talks, made at the Central Religious Advisory Committee (*Minutes*, 1 March 1949).

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 7 March 1950.

population heard at least one main religious broadcast on any given Sunday. Eighteen out of every hundred listened to a religious service on Sunday mornings, thirteen to the *People's Service*, and five to the Home Service broadcast. At 7.45 p.m. three of these eighteen, along with two more who had not heard the morning service, listened to the evening service. Twelve of these twenty, along with seventeen more who had not listened to any Sunday services, listened to *Sunday Half Hour* and/or *Think on These Things*.

In terms of social class, working-class listeners were in the majority in listening to all religious programmes, a four-to-one majority in the case of *Sunday Half Hour* and the *People's Service*, and a five-to-two majority in the case of the Home Programme's Evening Service. There were more women listeners than men in each case,<sup>1</sup> and the biggest listener age-group in every case was that of the over-fifties.

Churchgoers were only a minority of the audience for every Sunday broadcast and often a very small minority, in the case of the *People's Service* possibly as small as one tenth.<sup>2</sup> To Welch and House this was the most significant piece of statistical evidence. Yet the total audience of thirteen million (37 per cent of the adult population) listening to BBC religious programmes on Sundays compared well with a churchgoing population estimated at between two and four million (7 to 15 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that a conference held in 1950 calculated that as many, if not more, people were 'hostile' to

<sup>1</sup> The fact that the ratio was nearly even in the case of the Home Programme's Evening Service suggested that listening to this programme was a family affair. The proportions of young people (16-19 and 20-29) listening to the *Sunday Half Hour* and the *People's Service* were thought somewhat grudgingly by House to be 'on the whole rather encouraging'. He compared them with the numbers given after an inquiry made in 1941.

<sup>2</sup> These estimates were based on a different inquiry involving a listening panel of 3,600, a predominantly middle-class group of keen listeners.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Listener Research Reports LR 48/818/1030/1031/1125; 'Review of the Aims and Achievements', 5 Oct. 1948; *The Observer*, 25 July 1948; B. S. Rowntree, *English Life and Leisure* (1951), ch. XIII, which describes the results of Church Censuses in High Wycombe in 1947 and York in 1948, and on pp. 362-6 discusses religious broadcasting. Rowntree's comparisons were long-term. In 1901, one adult in seven had attended an Anglican Church on the Sunday of a Census, whereas in 1948 the figure was one in twenty-one. See also K. Slack, *The British Churches Today* (1961), T. Harrisson, *Britain Revisited* (1961), and D. L. Edwards, *Religion and Change* (1969).

Christianity as were regular churchgoers, and that the hostile category was increasing slightly. Even given that there was still a background of Christian upbringing, the conference added that it would be 'wise to assume that most listeners are largely ignorant today of the Bible, the main tenets of the Christian faith and of the history of the Church'.<sup>1</sup>

Out of 117 BBC correspondents who were regular listeners to religious programmes in 1948, 21 said that they knew directly of individuals who had been 'brought to active church membership, partly at least through listening in'. A bigger number, however, 34, knew directly of individuals who made listening a substitute for public worship and of 28 who made it an excuse for not attending church.<sup>2</sup>

One extremely interesting point of a different kind emerged from the inquiries. When correspondents—the proportion of Anglicans was somewhat overweighted—were asked in what ways 'Church people' were helped by broadcasting, 54 said that 'thinking as Christians about social, political and international issues' was important and 50 pointed to 'attitudes to reunion' (as against only 38 who mentioned Bible reading and 40 'saying their prayers'). These socio-political and ecumenical influences were more significant in the light of what was to come later than the current and continuing effort to 'evangelise Britain'.<sup>3</sup> As the British Council of Churches Report put it in 1950, 'The BBC provides an excellent opportunity to hear speakers of different denominations, and to enter into varied traditions of worship. We think that these opportunities should be reinforced in the life of the local churches, by the churches interpreting their manner and form of worship to each other, and by sharing in each other's worship from time to time. In this way the life of the ecumenical movement will be strengthened.'<sup>4</sup>

Although the broad 'missionary purpose' of religious broadcasting was always emphasized by Welch and by House, there was a parallel discussion during the late 1940s about the rights

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a conference called by the Religious Broadcasting Department at Whann Cross (4–6 June 1950).

<sup>2</sup> \* Review of the Aims and Achievements', 5 Oct. 1948, section III.

<sup>3</sup> One fifth of the correspondents felt that taken as a whole the religious broadcasts did not give sufficiently definite teaching about the 'Faith' by which the Churches live and that there were inadequate links with 'the actual Churches'.

<sup>4</sup> *Christianity and Broadcasting*, p. 45.

of access of non-Christians to the microphone. The Governors had considered this question on Welch's suggestion during the war in 1944,<sup>1</sup> and it was at their request that the Central Religious Advisory Committee put it on its agenda in 1946. After a lively debate in June 1946, a resolution was carried by a large majority that 'the Committee do not feel able to advise a general opening of broadcasting facilities to anti-Christian speakers, but are of the opinion that some further experiments should be tried in giving opportunities for the sincere representatives of non-Christian views to explain these views'. At the same time, the Committee almost without discussion decided 'to advise the Corporation to continue its present practice of confining religious broadcasts to the main stream of the Christian tradition'.<sup>2</sup>

This was not the last word. After a Rationalist deputation, which included MPs, met Haley on 15 October 1946, he prepared a paper for the Governors tracing the evolution of the BBC's religious policy back to its beginnings, yet pointing out that many of the issues to be settled were not even primarily religious ones. 'The freedom of the microphone, the responsibility of a monopoly broadcasting organisation towards minorities within the community, and the granting of protection and privilege to Belief as against Intellectual Doubt are all involved,' Haley wrote in a paper which looked back bookishly to Montaigne, Milton, Locke, Hume, Morley and Mill as much as to the Old or New Testaments. 'To the Director of Religious Broadcasting and the Central Religious Advisory Committee the stress is primarily on sustaining and encouraging religious faith; to the Rationalists the issue is largely one of liberty.'

Haley identified five issues. First, had the Rationalists and others a 'prescriptive right to the microphone' on the grounds, as they suggested, that the BBC was a monopoly with a duty towards all minorities? His answer was no. It was impossible to cater for all minorities. Yet a 'new and deliberate step' should be taken to 'widen the opportunities of liberty' on the Whiggish ground that 'the whole history of the BBC has been a controlled progress towards the freest possible expression of serious and

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 2 Nov. 1944; see also A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), p. 702.

<sup>2</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 18 June 1946.

responsible thought'. What could not be provided as a 'pre-scriptive right' could be offered in the name of fairness, and Haley quoted the words of Bertrand Russell, a member of the deputation, that he had listened for so long to clergymen telling people that only the spread of Christianity could avert the decay of morals that he felt entitled to put the opposite proposition.

Second, would controversial religious broadcasts contribute to 'the general well-being of the community'? There could be no agreement on what 'the general well-being of the community' really meant. Yet 'the general lesson of history' was that 'repression of thought does not lead to general well-being'.

Third, could there be controversial broadcasting without wounding Christian susceptibilities? Haley thought that this was a matter of degree. Some susceptibilities certainly would be wounded, even if the Governors established a 'code of courtesy and conduct'. Moreover, however large a step the Corporation took, it would not satisfy Rationalists in the long run. Meanwhile, an effort would be made to debase the controversy and the BBC's position would be misrepresented as 'an obscurantist defence of established religion'. 'From reason to sneers' was but a short step. It could even be 'a matter of intonation'. 'And the Corporation cannot expect from the general body of the churches that support in this matter which it would expect from other bodies in similar intellectual work in other fields.'

In answer to his fourth and fifth questions—'If Rationalists are to be given their say, can similar facilities be withheld from unorthodox Christians?' and 'Should the BBC broadcast services of the beliefs outside the mainstream of Christian tradition?'—Haley asserted that 'it is difficult to allow . . . two extremes to the microphone and to ban the people in between'. He emphasized, however, that it would be complicated and controversial to allow talks 'on a representative basis' from speakers of unorthodox sects or to broadcast their services.

His conclusion, like the conclusion to his address on 'Morals and Broadcasting', drew attention to the qualities of the broadcasting medium. 'It has been said that it should be the duty of the BBC to spread Christianity. It has to be asked whether for an organisation such as this there can be any higher duty than

the search for truth.' The great advocates of freedom of thought and expression from Montaigne to Mill had never dreamed of a medium as 'potent and all-pervading, and as indiscriminating' as broadcasting. 'The problem cannot be dissociated from this medium. This does not in any way relieve the Corporation of its duty to the truth, but it must condition the pace at which it can pursue it.'<sup>1</sup>

Fortified by Haley's advice, the Governors considered the whole set of issues which he had raised at their meeting on 28 November. They also had at their disposal a memorandum from the youngest, one of the best informed, and one of the most interested Governors, the Roman Catholic, Barbara Ward. After full discussion, they decided not to change the existing policy concerning services but to allow for 'statements or explanations of a wide range of religious beliefs or Rationalist affirmation' provided there was 'nothing destructive' in them. 'Controversy', they laid down, should be confined to challenging statements made in round-table discussion.<sup>2</sup>

There was, of course, no broadcast round-table discussion about the Governors' discussion. It had taken place behind closed doors, and it was not until some months later that an article in the *Radio Times* set out the conclusions the Governors had reached. 'The Corporation's highest duty . . . is towards the search for truth. The Governors recognise that this must involve the broadcasting of conflicting views . . . but the controversy, which is bound to be incidental to the primary purpose, shall not wound reasonable people or transgress the bounds of courtesy and good taste. The BBC will exercise its editorial responsibility to this end. . . . All broadcasting in the field of religion, philosophy and ethics must be imbued with a deep seriousness and high purpose, and truth must be sought in such a manner that it will be prized and respected wherever it is found.'<sup>3</sup>

This was doubtless a rather pretentious message for most

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 'Religious Broadcasting and Controversy', 15 Nov. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 28 Nov. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *Radio Times*, 14 March 1947. Cf. a comment of Kathleen Bliss (14 Oct. 1948) as recorded by Barnes: 'Christians regarded this country as a frontier and were far more concerned with Christians acting as Christians in the various secular walks of life than in securing representation of the Church as an institution' (Barnes Papers). The Christian Frontier Movement took this position.

readers of the *Radio Times*. It was welcomed, however, by Welch and later by House as a challenge. 'It does not affect directly the main output of the Religious Broadcasting Department; it may well affect the climate in which the Department does its work.'<sup>1</sup> In a further *aide-mémoire* asked for by the Governors, Haley himself also used the word 'climate' and stressed the need to assess 'public reaction' to 'experimental' broadcasting bringing in all religions or, perhaps, though the point was not expanded, none. He stressed, however, as he always did, that the BBC's decision was final. In any clash of values the BBC should be the arbitrator. 'The Corporation can accord to no religious body or sect any automatic right to be represented in any particular talk or discussion or to nominate any speakers in such broadcasts. In all cases it will be for the BBC to decide what belief is to be presented and who is to present it.' Numbers should certainly not provide the only criterion. 'The intellectual or spiritual eminence of a speaker can be more important than the size of his following.'<sup>2</sup> However much the BBC might look at audience statistics, even in relation to its religious programmes, in the implementation of its 'high purpose' of 'seeking after truth' it would make its own judgements.

The first fruits of the new policy were soon apparent. Earlier Talks programmes in 1945, 1946 and 1947 had dealt with themes like *What can we learn from the War?*, *A Christian takes Stock*—the Archbishop of Canterbury introduced this series, and one of the speakers was the Hon. Francis Pakenham (later Lord Longford) on 'The Conditions of Progress'—or D. R. Davies's *The World we have Forgotten*, 'a reminder of the dimension of eternity'. Now in May, June and July 1947 there were Home Service talks on *What I Believe* and a later series in October, November and December on *Belief and Unbelief*. No 'incidents' followed these early 'experimental' programmes, but the average audience was so small (4 per cent) that all the high-powered argument which preceded the decision to start

<sup>1</sup> \*'Review of the Aims and Achievements', 5 Oct. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*'Aide-Mémoire on the BBC's Policy towards Controversy in Religious Broadcasting', 1 Jan. 1947. The Governors unanimously accepted this *aide-mémoire* at their meeting in January (*Minutes*, 9 Jan. 1947). 'While they have no responsibility for the new policy, they will watch the experiment with interest and understanding of the motives which have prompted it.' The phrase 'have no responsibility' is a remarkable one (CRAC, *Minutes*, 4 March 1947).

them seemed remote from the actual facts. There was certainly little reason to argue for hours why it was desirable to have Lord Lindsay and Professor Long discussing on the Third Programme whether 'we are free to do good' or have Father Coplestone debating 'the existence of God' with Bertrand Russell.<sup>1</sup>

The whole question of controversial religious broadcasting was to be re-examined by the Governors in 1950, the year of the British Council of Churches Report which praised the Head of Religious Broadcasting for his tolerant approach.<sup>2</sup> Yet a somewhat different approach was implicit in the title of the chapter on religious broadcasting in the *BBC Year Book* for 1950—'religious broadcasts must be good radio'.<sup>3</sup> From now on, at least—and television was to accentuate the change—BBC Governors (and perhaps Bishops) tended to judge issues somewhat differently from broadcasting 'professionals'.

At their meeting on 3 October 1950 the Central Religious Advisory Committee discussed a request from the Governors for advice about the policy of 'limiting religious broadcasts to bodies "within the mainstream of historic Christianity"'.<sup>4</sup> At least one Governor—E. C. Whitfield—had said, a year earlier, when the Governors were discussing Christian Science, that he did not know what the phrase meant.<sup>5</sup> It had been used since 1936 to keep off the air not only Christian Scientists but Unitarians, British Israelites, Christian Spiritualists and Swedenborgians,<sup>6</sup> and it was of obvious interest to Beveridge. No Jewish or Muslim services had ever been broadcast either, though there had been Jewish talks 'on the eve of the greater Jewish festivals'.<sup>7</sup> The BBC had defended its policy in its evidence to Beveridge, arguing—through the Central Religious

<sup>1</sup> \*The Rationalists, nonetheless, pressed from time to time for a further extension of the new policy. The Board of Governors received, for example at its Meeting of 4 March 1948, a letter on the subject from Alderman Joseph Reeves, writing on behalf of Rationalist MPs.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 768.

<sup>3</sup> *BBC Year Book*, 1950, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 3 Oct. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 6 Jan. 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*'The Main Stream of Historic Christianity', Paper prepared for the meeting of the Central Religious Advisory Committee, Oct. 1950. There was a suggestion in this Paper that restrictions on broadcasting by particular religious bodies before 1936 were 'theological' and those after 1936 more 'historical'. The Unitarians, however, continued to be almost completely excluded under the new dispensation.

<sup>7</sup> \*Ibid.



Advisory Committee itself—that ‘if broadcast services were no longer to be exclusively “Christian”, there would be no other point at which it would be logical to draw a line and it would be necessary to include broadcasts by every kind of religious organisation short of those “offensive to public taste or disruptive of public order”’.<sup>1</sup>

There was a sharp difference both between the position in Britain and the United States in 1950 and between Britain and some other countries in the Commonwealth. Minor sects, many of them fundamentalist, made the most of their opportunities in the United States to spend money to win converts and to attract far more money in return, while in Australia 85 per cent of the religious services were allocated to different religious bodies strictly on the basis of the number of their adherents as shown in the Census returns.

After setting up a small sub-committee, which included Dr. Bliss, Dr. Manson, Dr. Leslie Cooke, and a Roman Catholic representative, to review all the arguments, the Central Religious Advisory Committee decided in March 1951 to reaffirm the policy that ‘home broadcasts of acts of worship and devotional and instructive talks’ should continue to be confined to bodies within the ‘main stream’. This policy, it held, was ‘consistent with the BBC’s general conception of its moral responsibility’, ‘a recognition of the special place of the Christian tradition in British life’ and a ‘corollary of the demand for opportunities for Christian worship and instruction’. The exclusion of Unitarians and Christian Scientists was also confirmed, even though the Bishop of London favoured a British version of the Australian system.

The Beveridge Committee had considered that ‘to adopt anything like a mechanical adjustment of time in religious broadcasting to the number of adherents of particular churches’ would run counter to all sensible religious broadcasting policy. Yet it did not give a clear line on any of the larger issues facing the BBC, issues which it described characteristically as being of ‘considerable difficulty’. After quoting Haley on ‘the Christian State’, it supported the ‘case for continuing the present arrangements’, yet it diverged from Haley in blurring the difference between fostering ‘Christian values’ in broadcasting

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

in general and 'the inherent duty' of religious broadcasting 'to propagate the Christian faith'. Its half-proposal for a 'Hyde Park of the Air'<sup>1</sup> was based partly on a demand for more discussion of controversial religious topics under the auspices of the Talks Department, 'as approved by the Governors in 1947'.<sup>2</sup>

On one constitutional matter, it angered the Central Religious Advisory Committee which strongly criticized some of its findings.<sup>3</sup> The Report insisted, perhaps too forcefully, that the role of the Committee should be advisory only (as it went on to admit that it already was) and that the Governors of the BBC should not divest themselves of their immediate as well as of their ultimate responsibility. While the Committee itself wished to remain purely advisory and rejected a Roman Catholic proposal (expressed in the Roman Catholic written submission to the Beveridge Committee)<sup>4</sup> that it should acquire greater authority and strengthen its role *vis-à-vis* the BBC, it disliked the language in which the Beveridge Report was couched. The phrase 'we are prepared to accept the continuance of religious broadcasting', coming, as it did, from an 'entirely lay committee', had an 'unintentionally arrogant ring';<sup>5</sup> and a suggestion that the doctrinal difference between orthodox Christians and Unitarians was of little importance if 'spiritual values' were right was thought to blur the point that the preaching of the Gospel necessarily included 'definite teaching about God and man'.<sup>6</sup> It also appeared significant that on the contents page of the Report religion was listed not among Beveridge's 'fundamental questions' but among those which he called 'secondary', and that in the 'hundred recommendations' a complex argument was vulgarized in the clause 'the object of religious broadcasting should be conceived as that of maintaining the common element in all religious bodies'.<sup>7</sup> House had

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116 (1949), para. 257, p. 66. See above, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 254-8, pp. 65-6.

<sup>3</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 19 June 1951.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 254, p. 65. The Roman Catholic evidence is printed in Cmd. 8117, pp. 419-23. See also *The Tablet*, 1 July 1950, 'Catholics and the BBC'.

<sup>5</sup> See *Church Times*, 26 Jan. 1951. Reeves, of course, was a member of the Committee (see above, p. 296).

<sup>6</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 19 June 1951.

<sup>7</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 252, p. 65.

always been emphatic that it was not the policy of the Religious Broadcasting Department to look for 'any "lowest common denominator"'. 'A form of radio religion' was the last thing he wished to develop.<sup>1</sup> He believed firmly that for 'evangelistic' religious broadcasting to be effective it had to be followed up by personal contact between listeners and members of local churches.

When the Governors turned to the future of religious broadcasting in 1951, they went deeply into 'the issues of considerable difficulty' which Beveridge had shelved, and they devoted far more attention—if belatedly—to television as well as to sound than they had ever done before. Hitherto, television had tended to be outside their mainstream, to use the familiar metaphor. For long, too, it was outside the mainstream of the Religious Broadcasting Department. Welch had told the Central Religious Advisory Committee in February 1946, before the Television Service started, that 'there was not much that religion could rightly contribute', although it might be possible to include 'ceremonies such as enthronements, drumhead services, religious plays and religious documentaries'.<sup>2</sup> A few months later, when the new service was starting, he made a very similar statement.<sup>3</sup>

The 'visual' was subsequently somewhat neglected, as many people inside the Television Service persisted in the belief that religion did not make 'good television'. A number of religious films produced outside the BBC were televised in 1947 and 1948, but it was not until the spring of 1948 that a 'propaganda' film produced by the Church of England's Film Commission, *Our Inheritance*, was televised. It was described by Collins as 'the first deliberately proselytising programme which Television will have put out', and it was 'referred, therefore, to the Director-General' for his comments.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally, particular television productions for which the religious Department was not

<sup>1</sup> *The Tablet*, loc. cit. The Church of Scotland was just as hostile to such a conception as the Roman Catholic Church. The Rev. R. W. Falconer had organized in 1950 a Scottish Radio Mission and reclaim of lapsed church members. See his account *Success and Failure of a Radio Mission* (1951). The Governors accepted House's approach and that of the Central Religious Advisory Committee (\**Minutes*, 25 Oct. 1951).

<sup>2</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 28 Feb. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Collins to House, 12 March 1948.

directly responsible were singled out by House and his colleagues as especially good. For example, *The Eye of the Artist: The Life of Christ*, a programme for which Mary Adams was responsible, was very warmly praised.<sup>1</sup>

Only one religious service was televised before 1948—a service of consecration of a War Memorial chapel at Biggin Hill airfield on 15 September 1946, six years after the Battle of Britain—and there was only one television news film—of the Bishop of London's visitations. In 1947 the Coventry Nativity Play was televised from a studio at Christmas, and Dr. Donald Soper gave a seven-minute religious talk on New Year's Eve. But, in general, there was more inhibition than adventure. On the occasion of the Royal Wedding, for example, the processions and other events outside the Abbey were televised, but the actual solemnization of the marriage was not. This time it was the Church authorities which were responsible, as they were on several other occasions.<sup>2</sup>

Although the BBC stated that 'the fundamental religious policy of the BBC is the same for television as for sound broadcasting',<sup>3</sup> there was little enterprise in early programming and all the emphasis was placed on the word 'experimental'. Of course, there was only one channel, the number of viewers was small, and equipment (particularly for outside broadcasts) was in very short supply, but there were divided opinions at first—both inside and outside the BBC—about how far and how quickly to go in relation to future planning. 'We tend, in television,' wrote Michael Henderson of the Outside Broadcasts Department, 'to try an idea or programme out on the general public. If it meets with disapproval, we modify or drop it. When religious beliefs are involved, I feel we should advance much more carefully.'<sup>4</sup> 'Talking heads' were not thought to make 'good television', least of all when they were in a pulpit; and the sense of 'reverence', not to speak of 'holiness', was either not shared universally or was felt impossible to communicate. The Broadcasting Commission of the British Council of

<sup>1</sup> \*House to Collins, 1 April 1948. There were also programmes on the social or missionary work of churches.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Progress Report*, 1 Oct. 1947 to 29 Feb. 1948, Appendix B.

<sup>4</sup> \*Michael Henderson to S. J. de Lotbinière, 26 Sept. 1949.

Churches, while expressing a desire in 1949 to know more about 'the general policy of the Television Service with particular reference to religious broadcasts and the special difficulties which they raise',<sup>1</sup> itself emphasized that the 'special difficulties' remained many-sided and frustrating, as they had been during the early years of broadcasting.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike most outside bodies, the Commission took a positive line. It pointed out correctly that television had ceased to be 'a local curiosity' and that 'before long it will be a nationwide medium of communication'. This was the real challenge. If the door for religious programmes on television was wide open, 'the door must be entered'.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, most bodies wanted to keep the doors firmly locked. Thus, the authorities at Westminster Abbey were particularly nervous, although St. Paul's made an unsolicited offer of a service in 1948.<sup>4</sup>

When requests were made in December 1949 by the Churches Film Council for an article on 'religion in television' to appear in a new magazine, the moment was felt to be 'premature',<sup>5</sup> and House wrote to Colin Beale, then working with the Council, stating that all that could be said was factual—that certain developments had taken place, and that there would be 'further experiments' during the next twelve months.<sup>6</sup> As late as 1952, indeed, after seeing a church service specially devised for television, invited observers felt that there was 'a danger of giving viewers snappy . . . services' which would make them disappointed if they went on to 'real' church services, 'even drive them away'.<sup>7</sup>

It had taken a long time for the BBC, supported by the Central Religious Advisory Committee, to 'get round to

<sup>1</sup> \*Rev. R. D. Say, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches, to Collins, 2 Jan. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*When a number of bishops said that the Sunday Children's Hour at 3.30 would reduce attendance at Sunday Schools, the time was changed to 4 o'clock (*Progress Report*, 1 Oct. 1947 to 29 Feb. 1948).

<sup>3</sup> *Christianity and Broadcasting*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> A service from St. Paul's was broadcast on Christmas Day 1951 (see below, p. 786) and the opening service of the Festival of Britain was broadcast from there on 3 May 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*House to Collins, 30 Dec. 1949; Collins to House, 3 Jan. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*House to Beale, 11 Jan. 1950.

<sup>7</sup> \*Colin Beale, 'Comments on the Television Sub-Committee Meeting', 23 May 1952.

television church services'.<sup>1</sup> In February 1948 the Committee had at last agreed—unanimously—with a proposal of the Bishop of London that the BBC should have 'a completely free hand in experimenting with different types of televised acts of worship',<sup>2</sup> and thereafter House felt it practicable to go ahead on a very limited budget with tentative plans for a broadcast on Christmas Day 1948 and a series of epilogue programmes in the autumn to prepare the way for further experiments.<sup>3</sup> No further religious service was broadcast, however, until Christmas Day 1949—from the Royal Hospital at Chelsea (which made 'good television')—and there were no epilogues until 18 March 1951. Clearly there were obstacles still to overcome inside and outside the Corporation. The Chelsea broadcast was also thought to have 'fulfilled the highest expectations from the religious point of view',<sup>4</sup> but this was only one example of success. Referring to a broader range of future problems, House pointed, for example, to the difficulties concerning the balance of denominational broadcasting. The Roman Catholics might be anxious to televise High Mass, 'as they have done in France and the U.S.A.'—in 1948 the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham had expressed their interest—but other denominations, whose church services were lacking in 'ceremonial', concentrated on the sermon, and were often held in 'buildings of little artistic interest', might feel that they had inadequate counter-appeal.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the timing of televised religious programmes would require careful consideration. 'For twenty-six years BBC policy in sound has been not to broadcast services during normal church hours.' Could this policy be perpetuated in an age of television?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Madden to McGivern, 25 Dec. 1947; Note by Collins, 9 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 24 Feb. 1948. CRAC did not consider the question of televising the sacramental services of different denominations until March 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*House to Collins, 1 April 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by House, 4 Jan. 1950. House recognized the difference between 'the television point of view' and 'the religious point of view'. The Television Service had approved of the Chelsea project because there would be a satisfying contrast between the faces of the Pensioners and the choirboys.

<sup>5</sup> \*Later in January 1950 he suggested that if there were to be a service at Whitsuntide it should either be a united service or a service from the City Temple conducted by Dr. Leslie Weatherhead who headed 'the polls for popularity of religious broadcasters' (House to Collins, 20 Jan. 1950).

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by House, 4 Jan. 1950.

On the technical side, there was for long no specialist producer of religious programmes,<sup>1</sup> although Cecil McGivern came to believe strongly that 'television could do a great deal towards the cause of religion and teaching and spreading the Christian way of life', and Peter Dimmock gave good specialist advice about outside broadcasts—for example, before and after the broadcast from the Chelsea Hospital. 'There should not be too much "clever-clever" changing of shots during a religious O.B.,' he urged, and there should be no need for commentators unless there were special features like processions.<sup>2</sup> If the choice for the producer were between 'looking into the window of a church from outside' and placing the camera in such a way as to encourage the viewer to think of himself as a member of the congregation actively present in the church, there was no doubt that the second line of action should be followed. But there were more detailed points to watch, and McGivern, with the full backing of House, went on to press for the appointment of a television assistant for religious programmes.<sup>3</sup>

This appointment was made at last in August 1951, when Colin Beale, who had earlier been in correspondence with the BBC on behalf of the Churches Film Council, was invited to join the BBC staff. Later that year he was in touch with Norman Swallow, who had produced interesting television programmes like *Speaking Personally*, which Beale felt employed techniques 'which might well be applied to Religious Television',<sup>4</sup> and by January 1952 he had produced a wide-ranging report on 'the scope and character of religious television'. There were still no specialist religious television producers, and House himself had been seconded for 'a month in the country' during the autumn of 1950 to 'study television technique': his memoranda discussing this experience commented knowledgeably on the choice of camera angles and the rhythms of cutting.<sup>5</sup>

A wider range of televised religious programmes was introduced late in 1951 and in 1952. Beale even dreamed of

<sup>1</sup> \*Collins to House, 17 Jan. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 31 March 1950; Dimmock to Collins, 10 Jan. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*McGivern to Collins, 31 March 1950; House to Collins, 13 June 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Beale to Swallow, 3 Dec. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*House to Collins, 5 Dec. 1950, 3 Jan. 1951.

transforming 'the epilogues'—McGivern for once pointed to the costs<sup>1</sup>—and pressed for 'a judicious combination of experimental forms and straightforward programmes'. 'The straightforward programmes', he added, might well have 'experimental' speakers.<sup>2</sup> Early in January 1952 he listed some of the transmissions made during the previous month—services from St. Paul's and Wesley's Chapel, City Road; carol singing from Westminster Abbey, Tolworth County Secondary School, and Trafalgar Square; a talk by the Congregationalist, Dr. Leslie Cooke (who had earlier given epilogues); and a meditation before the crib by Father Agnellus Andrew, Adviser (Roman Catholic Broadcasts), North Region, a true pioneer of religious broadcasting who soon became a well-known figure to a large television audience; an Epiphany feature programme with pictures and music; Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners* and Wynyard Browne's *The Holly and the Ivy*; a specially written children's nativity play by Phyllis Cummins, *A Time to be Born*, the story of Christmas depicted in mime with carols by the choir of Holy Trinity, Brompton; and a Swedish film, *Early One Morning*. While this was an exceptionally large number of programmes, Beale believed that the span of programmes was still too narrow. There was 'an excellent opportunity', he felt, to extend the span in the light of studies of the relative appeal of the different types of programme now being transmitted.<sup>3</sup>

George Barnes, after succeeding Collins as head of Television, told the Central Religious Advisory Committee, in the very same month as Beale was pointing to 'the excellent opportunity', that while television would become 'national' by the end of 1952, it was still at the stage of 'communication' rather than of 'artistic creation'. He also drew attention to the continuing lack of 'alternative programmes'. This was not a charter for new development, although Barnes behind the scenes was extremely interested in the problem of 'how to televise the worship of God' and understood most of the obstacles.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, the Committee concluded that 'no modification

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern to House, 4 Mar. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Beale to House, 7 Feb. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Colin Beale, 'Note on Religious Television Transmissions', 17 Jan. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> Barnes to the Rev. E. H. Robertson, 1 Jan. 1954, and Robertson to Barnes, 6 Jan. 1954 (Barnes Papers).



was required for television in the general principles on which religious programmes in sound only have been carried out'.<sup>1</sup>

Important changes were, in fact, impending at this time, if not in the principles at least in the practices of religious sound broadcasting. The Governors at their own request considered two important papers—with a note by Haley attached—at three meetings in October and November 1951 and January 1952.<sup>2</sup> The first paper was mainly historical, but the second, specially commissioned from Dr. Kathleen Bliss, looked to the future of 'controversial' broadcasting in a new way. Her report, prepared with the help of Dr. J. H. Oldham, suggested the substitution of the term 'fundamental debate' for 'controversial religious broadcasting'—and the new choice of phrase, which would have pleased Beveridge, proved acceptable to the Governors—and she also recommended more adventurous policies. 'The object', she was to argue later, 'was not to promote controversy between "Christians" and "non-Christians", but to foster fruitful conversations over barriers which were very high indeed.'<sup>3</sup>

Whatever might have been said in favour of such an approach, it was less likely to win the wholehearted support of militant 'Rationalists' than it was of militant Christians. Bradlaugh Bonner, the Public Relations Officer of the Rationalist Press, led a vigorous attack which preceded the Beveridge Report and Dr. Bliss's new initiative and which continued after both of them. Bonner was a member of a deputation of the Parliamentary Committee for Freedom of Religious Controversy, headed by Lord Chorley and including Alderman Joseph Reeves, which met Lord Tedder, Haley and Professor Barbara Wootton, representing the BBC, in October 1951. One of the objects of this deputation—'controversial religious discussion between teams of believers and unbelievers'—was clearly different from Dr. Bliss's object, though there was room for some

<sup>1</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 31 Jan. 1952. The Committee continued to accept the idea of occasional televised Communion Services provided that Regional Advisory Committees were consulted first. It was agreed that consideration should also be given to the televising of the Service of Baptism.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 25 Oct., 22 Nov. 1951, 17 Jan. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 24 Oct. 1952. Dr. Bliss identified 'four basic attitudes to human life' which demanded serious consideration—Marxism, 'secular humanism', 'behaviourism' (or 'naturalism'), and Christianity.

conciliation of them; and the BBC did not approve another of the objects—the setting up of a parallel committee to the Central Religious Advisory Committee, ‘on which would be represented those religious sects too unorthodox to be represented or accepted by CRAC, and ethical and humanist organisations’. Like the deputation itself, which included Lord Dowding, representing the interests of Spiritualists, it would inevitably have been a very heterogeneous body.<sup>1</sup>

When the idea of such a committee was put forward again in a letter to *The Times* in May 1952—with Bertrand Russell as a signatory—Mary Somerville, the Controller of Talks, remained equally unconvinced.<sup>2</sup> The BBC refused to meet a further deputation in November 1952 on the grounds that there was nothing new to say, but the newly formed Humanist Council continued to press the case in 1954.<sup>3</sup> The then Director of the Spoken Word, Harman Grisewood, who had had many informal discussions with Barnes and House about the ‘ethics’ of all ‘purposive broadcasting’, rejected proposals for humanist contributions to *Lift Up Your Hearts* and the broadcasting of an Ethical Service.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Dr. Bliss’s labours had not been unproductive. One of the results of her recommendations was a series of discussions, *Encounters of Belief*, broadcast in 1953. They were described by Mary Somerville as ‘among the best of the kind ever put on at this level’.<sup>5</sup> Some of them ran into difficulties. Thus, one on Communism created a furore behind the scenes, including problems for the *Radio Times*, and had to be cancelled after the refusal of Roy Pascal to take part with Edward Crankshaw in debate on the Marxist view of history.<sup>6</sup> Such

<sup>1</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 18 Oct. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 16 May 1952; \*Miss Somerville to Harman Grisewood, 23 May 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Bonner to Nicolls, 28 Nov. 1952; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 22 Jan. 1953; Lloyd to Grisewood, 22 June, 8, 19 Nov. 1954; Lloyd to Miss Somerville, 22 Jan., 20 April 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \*Grisewood to Lloyd, 17 Nov. 1954. For Grisewood’s considered views, see his book *Broadcasting and Society* (1949), published by the Student Christian Movement Press. House devoted a Cambridge sermon to the subject: see the *Cambridge Review*, 5 Nov. 1949. The text came from II Corinthians 10, verses 4–5, ‘The weapons of our warfare are . . . mighty before God . . . casting down imaginations . . . and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.’

<sup>5</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 3 March 1953.

<sup>6</sup> The broadcast was announced for 3 March 1953.

dangers had been anticipated from the start, and it required all Kathleen Bliss's determination to see the series through. Haley had told Sir Lawrence Bragg in November 1951 that this was 'about the most difficult field into which the BBC has yet moved'.<sup>1</sup>

Haley welcomed the challenge, and he was particularly interested himself in talks on 'moral values in modern society'. 'Large numbers of people, especially of the younger generation', he told the Central Religious Advisory Committee in January 1952, 'had little appreciation of moral values, and . . . were disposed to reject teaching . . . put forward in a purely Christian context.' It was to meet their needs that he suggested a possible 'series of secular talks and readings on moral values in modern society, to be open to contributions by both Christians and non-Christians'.<sup>2</sup> The Central Religious Advisory Committee unanimously welcomed the idea (in the form of an experiment) while expressing 'considerable doubts' as to whether it would succeed. Did a 'sum of common values' really exist, some members asked, while others thought that it would be difficult for Christians 'to dissociate their views or moral values from their religious convictions'.<sup>3</sup> One change suggested by the Committee was immediately accepted by Haley and the Governors—the substitution of the word 'ethical' for the word 'secular'. The Governors encouraged Haley to go ahead, omitting the words 'primarily to those who reject Christian tenets' which had figured in the first draft.<sup>4</sup> The words 'Not Third: Home or Light' are scribbled in ink on the side of one of the copies of the paper submitted to the Governors in February. The result of the proposal was the launching of a series of twelve talks in the Light Programme entitled *Question Mark*.

Whatever the needs, the response in this case was disappointing. The prime requisite of the talks—each ten minutes in length—was to examine through the eyes of different speakers, Christian and non-Christian, 'the kind of behaviour which has come to be respected and admired in our civilisation—kindliness, consideration for others, courage, truthfulness,

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Sir Lawrence Bragg, 27 Nov. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 17 Jan. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 31 Jan. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 28 Feb. 1952.

justice, honesty, faithfulness, social responsibility, and all forms of dependability, etc.<sup>1</sup> The very first task, however, that of finding twelve speakers, proved exceptionally difficult. Edgar Lustgarten led off on 'Keeping One's Word', to be followed by Lord Hailsham on Chastity—and Professor J. Z. Young, recent Reith Lecturer, on Truthfulness. Dr. Taylor, a member of the Beveridge Committee, spoke on Humility, and William Clark, then of *The Observer*, rounded off the series with 'Family Loyalty'. The average audience was only 2.4 per cent, with Sam Pollock, an experienced broadcaster on industrial and political matters, attracting the largest audience when he spoke on 'Loving One's Neighbour'.

Very little correspondence was elicited, and there was no evidence that 'apathy' had been stirred. Of its total audience, which spanned all social classes, there were more young (16–29-year-old) listeners than old. Only 2.4 per cent were over fifty. It was clear that the series, which demanded a great deal of staff and time, did not tap very many people who were not already believers in Christianity or 'who were seeking a faith which they were conscious they lacked'.<sup>2</sup> For Mary Somerville, the lesson was to work through discussion, dramatization and stories rather than through talks,<sup>3</sup> while the Controller of the Light Programme, when challenged about the timing, wrote revealingly that 'if the customary planning between, say, 7.30 and 10.00 p.m. were to be interrupted by a ten-minute talk on an ethical subject, there would be a risk of causing resentment sufficient to defeat the purpose of the series'.<sup>4</sup>

As the television audience was built up, similar questions began to be raised concerning its evangelizing mission or, at least, its power to stimulate a new interest in religion and ethical matters. By September 1952 Beale was suggesting a 'Questions and Answers' series on behaviour, in which a clergyman would be questioned by four laymen, the questions not being known in advance. He also hoped for programmes at one end of the scale on archaeology and at the other on contemporary religious architecture. 'Throughout the country there

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Haley, 13 Feb. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report on *Question Mark Talks Series*, 19 March 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 3 March 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report on *Talks Series*, 19 March 1953.

are now quite a considerable number of examples of church architecture of a completely new style which is different from anything which has been associated previously with religious architecture.' There might also be some 'instructional programmes', including 'What goes on in Church'.<sup>1</sup> A pioneering series on race relations followed in 1953 along with *The Rising Twenties*, a deliberate appeal to youth.

When Barnes addressed the British Council of Churches in September 1952, he noted that it was already devoting a large part of two of its sessions that year to television. If the television habit were allowed to become 'an addiction . . . a narcotic, so that people in quantity gave up their normal pursuits for it, it would be dangerous'. So long, however, as 'people continue to read newspapers and books, to listen to the radio, to go to the cinema, to garden, to sew, and to go to see things happen' everything would be all right. There were 'misgivings' about the amount of it, and the BBC would have to develop it 'sensitively'. Meanwhile, there should be no 'over rapid development' and, as far as religious television was concerned, there was also a lack of programme hours so long as there was no alternative programme. Religious television, Barnes argued, was not an 'optional extra' and there had to be experiment to discover 'ways of conveying the Christian message through television broadcasting' other than religious services.

The hours available, however, were 'less than one seventh of those during which the Sound services operate',<sup>2</sup> and in the autumn of 1950 J. Ormerod Greenwood was appointed to the staff of the Religious Broadcasting Department to explore means of securing 'a greater use of the imagination in expressing the Christian faith through broadcasting'. He did not see the future of religious broadcasting simply as an increase in the number of outside broadcasts from churches and chapels.<sup>3</sup> It was at his suggestion that a very lively Scriptwriters' Conference was held at Broadcasting House, with the indispensable help of Val Gielgud, in May 1952. The object was not so much to exchange experience as to bring into existence a group of

<sup>1</sup> \*Beale to McGivern, 5 Dec. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Address by George Barnes to the British Council of Churches, 24 Sept. 1952 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>3</sup> \*J. Ormerod Greenwood to Miss Somerville, 20 Nov. 1951.

scriptwriters with professional standards similar to that group which had been built up by the Schools Department, 'though on a smaller basis'.<sup>1</sup> Among those present were Gielgud, who spoke on 'Religious Drama for Radio To-day', Louis MacNeice, Kathleen Raine, Antonia White, Robert Kemp and Edward Livesey. W. R. Rodgers was one of the first speakers on 'the importance of not being earnest', and Terence Tiller of the Features Department, who had also been very active behind the scenes, was in the chair for the first of three work groups on 'fable and parable'. The second was on 'historical and documentary' and the third on 'special audiences'.<sup>2</sup> House told the participants that he was inviting them 'quite frankly to contribute to an enterprise which can properly be described as "the propagation of the Faith"', an appeal to 'a generation of listeners whose hearts and minds are too often cribbed, cabined and confined by the material circumstances of their lives'.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that the conference was almost exclusively concerned with the spoken word was an obvious limitation, however. So, too, was a frank note before it took place from Mary Somerville, which should be set alongside Barnes's comments. She gave her necessary approval to the gathering, but added, 'I would, however, deprecate any special publicity being given to the conference in case it might give rise to an impression that there is an expansion of Religious Broadcasting in view.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Greenwood to House, 28 June 1951. This note, setting out the idea of a conference, was very forceful in its language: 'The Authorised Version of the Bible and the Prayer Book make a straitjacket for the writer on religious themes. They cannot be used with freedom in script-writing any longer. When I see the 2nd person singular I reach for a rejection slip. The opposite danger is "homeliness and chumminess"—often combined most oddly with the language [described above]—like a man with a wing collar and running shorts worn with patent leather shoes.'

<sup>2</sup> \*House to Miss Somerville, 4 March 1952, outlining the purposes of the conference, with appended list of acceptances. 'The objects of the Conference would be to stimulate interest, to remove misapprehensions, to prevent waste of time by the submission of unsuitable scripts, to promote liaison between those concerned within the Corporation and outside, and to discuss one or two specific proposals such as the preparation of a "People's Life of Christ" for broadcasting in the Light Programme.' House to Greenwood, 17 April 1952, dealt with final details. Notes on the conference were circulated soon after it had taken place. Rose Macaulay had hoped to take part, but did not do so (Rose Macaulay to House, 14 May 1952).

<sup>3</sup> \*House, Draft of a Statement, 10 May 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*Miss Somerville to House, 11 March 1952.

The Light Programme was very much in the minds of those who were seeking to pursue the enterprise of 'propagation of the faith'—not, House insisted, to be confused with 'propaganda in the bad sense'.<sup>1</sup> Yet in 1952 and 1953 it was the rise of the television audience which confronted the BBC's Religious Broadcasting Department with its greatest opportunity. 'Sound Radio in the face of a very similar problem,' Beale wrote in July 1953, 'has evolved, *inter alia*, the *People's Service* and *Sunday Half Hour*, in the Light Programme. Television now has to find its answer to the same problem. The answer may prove to be something very similar to a televised version of the *People's Service*, but not necessarily so by any means. The form may well include religious drama, it may include discussion of extracts from films, or hymn singing, etc. Obviously not all those possibilities will enter into one transmission, and even after considerable experimentation we may well decide that the form should be varied from time to time.' Care should always be taken 'to prevent our thinking keeping too close to the Sound parallel'.<sup>2</sup>

There were still only twelve outside broadcast services each year (excluding national, ceremonial and regional transmissions), a figure which was maintained but never increased throughout the whole period dealt with in this volume. They covered the Church's main festivals, as well as 'normal' services, and were expected to maintain 'a reasonable balance' between denominations and regions.<sup>3</sup> Beale related this limited provision both to listeners' wants and needs. He believed that in television, as in sound, viewers could be classified as (a) 'churchgoers (housebound as well as active)', (b) 'fringers' or the 'lapsed', and (c) 'complete outsiders'. Twelve broadcasts, he stressed, were quite inadequate to cover 'the Church's year', the denominations, the regions and the three different categories of viewers, and for this reason alone there had to be a careful identification of priorities. It was doubtful whether the 'fringers' or the 'lapsed' would be sufficiently affected by the current transmissions to bring them back to church or into church for the first time. On the other hand the great majority 'liked' the

<sup>1</sup> \*House, Draft of a Statement, 10 May 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Beale, 'A Television People's Programme', July 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

transmissions and felt they had been generally helped by them. The effect of the transmissions on complete outsiders, whose experience of religion might be no more than attendance at weddings or funerals or what was learned in scripture periods in school, remained speculative. 'It is indeed possible', Beale felt, 'that the Church's normal services of worship designed for the regular attender, may merely confirm the outsider in his belief that Christianity is completely irrelevant or misguided superstition, or definitely "not for him".' He welcomed the modification or relaxation of the first conventions of religious broadcasting and the 'consequent gain in spontaneity in the programme'.<sup>1</sup>

More 'People's Programmes' on television were developed—though the term was not used publicly—in 1953 and 1954, and on 21 June 1954 Beale, who invented it, was appointed to a new post of Religious Broadcasting Organizer, Television, which he was to hold until his retirement in 1969. The programme allowance remained, however, at only £240 a quarter,<sup>2</sup> and there was great difficulty in making sufficient scheduled programmes 'in view of the very heavy demands during the summer on outside broadcast equipment', mainly for sports broadcasting.<sup>3</sup> In June 1954, for example, a series called *Faith Forum*, already approved, had to disappear when the number of proposals for half-hour People's Programmes each quarter was cut from four to two.<sup>4</sup> Twelve outside broadcasts each year was still the ration—three from London, three from the West or from Wales, and two each from the Midlands, North, and Scotland. Denominationally this was thought of as five Anglican programmes, three Free Church programmes, two Roman Catholic and two Church of Scotland programmes.<sup>5</sup> In a fascinating private letter to Barnes, who asked his advice in

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Mrs. J. R. Spicer to Beale, 15 Dec. 1953. The figure had risen to £275 a year later (Mrs. Spicer to Beale, 12 Nov. 1954). £40 was then being spent on each Epilogue.

<sup>3</sup> \*Beale to McGivern, 12 March 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Beale to McGivern, 29 June 1954. The programme *Christian Forum* made its debut later in 1954. Beale paid a tribute on the production side to the Rev. Martin Willson of the Religious Broadcasting Department. Willson had been present at the Scriptwriters' Conference of 1952.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Beale, 9 July 1954. It was not always easy to maintain a regional balance (Note by Beale to the Regional Programme Assistants, 19 May 1954).



January 1954, the Rev. E. H. Robertson, Assistant Head of Religious Broadcasting, got behind the quantities. What he thought was above all necessary was the creation in the viewer of 'an attitude of participation in worship': 'contrivances of the cameras' were not enough. For his part, Barnes was more satisfied with arrangements for televising the Mass than with those for televising the Anglican Matins, 'ingeniously produced' at best, 'as if it were a swimming gala'.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to 'standard religious' services—one from the studio was tried out in Welsh in 1954, without a congregation<sup>2</sup>—there was an increasing number of Communion services. The successful broadcasting in 1953 of the Coronation Service, including the Holy Communion, undoubtedly encouraged more sacramental broadcasting,<sup>3</sup> including a High Mass in 1954 from Leeds Roman Catholic Cathedral and a Free Church Communion service from Roby Congregational Church in Manchester. Easter Communion from Chichester Cathedral in 1955 was the first Communion service at a major religious festival. From Scotland came a 'Church dedication', a programme on which the Scots 'had set their hearts',<sup>4</sup> and in February 1954 the Chaplain to the University of Edinburgh could be seen and heard putting questions to students.<sup>5</sup> There were also documentary programmes in 1954 on Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, and a Salvation Army programme called *Missing from Home*; and House and Beale were planning interviews with four church leaders (with Noel Annan thought of as a possible interviewer).<sup>6</sup>

The subject matter of Epilogues was diversified during this period as were the speakers, who ranged from Mrs. Fisher, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to Billy Graham and 'Dobson

<sup>1</sup> Barnes to Robertson, 1 Jan. 1954; Robertson to Barnes, 6 Jan. 1954 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>2</sup> \*Beale to McGivern, 20 April 1954. House and Beale, who heard it, understood only two words in the sermon—Gandhi and Mickey Mouse. They did not know why these characters were included.

<sup>3</sup> For the Coronation Service, see above, p. 457. For the well-disposed attitudes of the Vatican to television, see the *Universe*, 11 June 1954, and above, p. 784.

<sup>4</sup> \*Beale to McGivern, 30 April 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Schedule of Religious Broadcasts, 1 Oct. 1953 to 30 Sept. 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*House to Miall, 15 March 1954; Beale to Miall, 14 Sept. 1954. Miall to House, 22 Sept. 1954, explained that the interviews were being put off until 1955.

and Young'. Billy Graham had already taken part in a discussion with Malcolm Muggeridge on *Panorama* in May 1954, and there were many influential supporters of his conversion campaigns on both sides of the border. There was renewed interest, indeed, in 1954 in 'pre-evangelistic' and 'evangelistic' broadcasting both on television and sound. A conference on the subject was held at the request of the Central Religious Advisory Committee in March, with the Bishop of Bristol in the chair, and following two meticulously organized Missions to Scotland<sup>1</sup>—the second in 1952—a 'London-in-Essex' Mission was held in the autumn of 1954. It was the 'considered opinion' of the leaders of the churches in the London-in-Essex area that the broadcasts 'made a vital contribution to the local Missions'.<sup>2</sup>

There were always doubts about 'considered opinions', even of church leaders, and in December 1954 a thorough sociological study was made concerning listeners and non-listeners to religious broadcasts.<sup>3</sup> The lines of inquiry were laid down by the Audience Research Department, which also prepared the final report for publication in 1955, but the fieldwork was undertaken by the Gallup Poll. During the first fortnight of December 1954, 1,859 people were interviewed, a representative sample of the population of Great Britain over the age of sixteen. There was a high degree of co-operation, even though it had been thought that the matters raised might be of 'so intimate a nature' that respondents would be inhibited. Indeed, 'the serious nature of the enquiry was appreciated and people seemed anxious to be helpful'.

The results showed that 37 per cent of the sample were frequent listeners, 31 per cent occasional listeners, and 32 per cent non-listeners to religious broadcasts. The breakdown by age and sex was as follows:

<sup>1</sup> See Dinwiddie, *op. cit.*, pp. 96 ff. Of the radio programmes, Dinwiddie concluded (p. 101), 'The net result was that almost every item attracted or repelled, the usual pattern of radio items.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of 20 July 1953 setting out the arrangements for the Mission; Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 24 Oct. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Religious Broadcasts and the Public', 1955.

## LISTENING TO RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMES

	<i>Frequent Listeners</i>	<i>Occasional Listeners</i>	<i>Non- Listeners</i>
	%	%	%
Men	29	30	41
'Housewives'	44	33	23
Other women	36	29	35
Whole sample	37	31	32
<i>Age group</i>			
16-20	22	28	50
21-29	25	33	42
30-49	35	32	33
50-64	39	33	28
65+	54	21	25
Married	37	32	31
Single	25	30	45
Widowed and divorced	51	26	23
Persons living alone	39	32	29
Anglicans (993 in sample)	41	32	27
Nonconformists (264)	46	29	25
Roman Catholics (155)	22	34	34
Presbyterians (155)	37	29	34
Other denominations (124)	42	33	27
No denomination (130)	3	17	80
<i>Social Group</i>			
I (94 in sample)	33	32	35
II (408)	36	35	29
III (1,106)	36	31	33
IV (251)	43	21	26
<i>Owners of</i>			
TV sets (599 in sample)	32	35	33
Sound but not TV (1,144)	42	29	29
Neither (116)	13	26	61

The table shows that more than half of the 'frequent listeners' were housewives, and that the frequency of listening increased with each step up the age scale and down the social scale. Single people were less frequent listeners than the married, and the widowed far more frequent listeners than either. In terms of denomination, the Nonconformists were the most frequent listeners and the Roman Catholics the least; further figures showed that whereas among the listeners only 1 per cent claimed no denominational affiliation, such 'non-denominationals' constituted nearly 20 per cent of the non-listening group. Further figures also showed that among the frequent and occasional listeners (68 per cent of the total) it was the Light Programme items—*Community Hymn Singing* and the *People's Service*—which were mentioned first. Of every hundred people who said that they made a practice of listening to *Community Hymn Singing*, the most popular of the items, thirty-five said that they also made a practice of listening to the Morning Service, forty-two to the *People's Service*, and twenty-five to the Evening Service. Twenty-five per cent of the frequent and occasional listeners said that they had heard *Lift Up Your Hearts* that morning and 25 per cent *Five to Ten*.

A valuable attempt was made in this survey to estimate qualitative as well as quantitative responses. Two out of five of the 68 per cent said that they had been 'helped in the past' by radio preachers: *Lift Up Your Hearts* and *The Silver Lining* were singled out as favourite programmes, and the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, the outstanding pre-war preacher, still stood out as a name<sup>1</sup> (although Billy Graham shared second place with Dr. Cuthbert Bardsley, then the Bishop of Croydon). When the 68 per cent were asked *why* they listened to religious broadcasts at all, 43 per cent of the respondents gave as a main reason that they found them 'comforting', the original reason given during the 1920s by Reith.<sup>2</sup> The 'opportunity for worship at home' came last. With each step down the social scale the importance of religious broadcasts as 'a reminder of younger days' increased. The youngest age group—that from 16–29—

<sup>1</sup> He was Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields from 1914 to 1927. \*On 18 Aug. 1949, when television services were being discussed, Cecil Madden wrote to de Lotbinière: 'I am quite sure that one day we shall do it [televised services] and will be able to discover our own Dick Sheppard.'

<sup>2</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 272–5.

attached most importance to the 'helping' function of religious broadcasts. 'They help me to understand what Christianity means' came first (as it did for the 30-49 year group) and 'they help me to cope with daily life' came second (as it did for all age groups).

Questions were also asked about churchgoing. Frequent churchgoers were much more prone to listen than non-churchgoers, but there were significant variations according to which service the BBC was transmitting. The Sunday Morning Service depended most on churchgoers and the *People's Service* least. On weekdays the audience for *Lift Up Your Hearts* included about a third frequent churchgoers and a quarter non-churchgoers and that for *Five to Ten* consisted of frequent, occasional and non-churchgoers in fairly equal proportions. There was no evidence that non-churchgoers welcomed religious plays more than religious talks or discussions, although the churchgoers did.

Taking the statistics as a whole, 12 per cent of the sample were both frequent churchgoers and frequent listeners to religious broadcasts, 8 per cent combined frequent churchgoing with occasional listening, and 5 per cent were classified as frequent churchgoers but non-listeners to religious broadcasts. Of the opposite group, 10 per cent of the non-churchgoers frequently listened. Obviously 'any wholesale generalisation such as that "only churchgoers listen to religious broadcasts" or that "listeners to religious broadcasts don't go to church" was untrue.'

Haley's interest in 'moral education' was also pursued in the survey. *Some* attendance at Sunday School seemed to have been almost universal: only 6 per cent of the sample had never gone. Yet for each step down the age scale the proportions of those going to Sunday School for a short time or never at all increased. The inquiry may well have been made near a turning point in British social history. A substantial minority of parents felt, for example, that they should take their children's wishes into account before deciding whether they should attend Sunday School. Of those who had never been to Sunday School themselves, two-thirds still approved the idea of their children going, and of non-churchgoers about half gave unqualified and a quarter qualified approval of religious instruction in day schools. Six out of ten non-churchgoers said that they 'used to go'.

A series of questions set out to probe 'ethical' motivation for conduct, though the evidence the answers provided is not easy to interpret. 'Enlightened self-interest' figures most prominently with all groups, but non-churchgoers seem to have been less concerned with 'authority' and more with 'pleasure' than churchgoers. Perhaps the most interesting conclusion was that a quarter of the people who did not go to church and did not listen to religious broadcasts nevertheless asserted that they tried to be 'honest, truthful and kind' because 'religion told' them to be so.<sup>1</sup>

The period ended not with a survey but with controversy. There were, indeed, two controversies which revealed that beneath the surface there was perhaps less goodwill and mutual understanding than the commissioned survey had suggested. In January 1955 Mrs. Margaret Knight, lecturer in psychology at Aberdeen University, gave a series of three programmes in the Home Service from 'a Humanist point of view', and these were followed by a discussion with Mrs. Ralph Morton, wife of the Deputy Leader of the Iona Community. Mrs. Knight had suggested the series to the BBC as early as 1953<sup>2</sup> and it had been discussed thoroughly with Dr. Kathleen Bliss. Yet it engendered a Press furore—much of it crude in content and melodramatic in style—and an angry protest from no less a public figure than Sir Winston Churchill. After her second broadcast Mrs. Knight was said to have been 'smuggled' out of the studio.

'Mrs. Margaret Knight is a menace,' wrote the *Sunday Graphic*. 'Great stuff for a Christian country, this.'<sup>3</sup> 'The BBC is an officially appointed body and has much less right to broadcast an uncontradicted attack on Christianity,' thundered the *Daily Sketch*, than it would have to broadcast 'an uncontradicted attack on the Royal Family and the principle of monarchy.' Breathlessly it reported in its news column that 'officials at the Vatican' were preparing a report which would go to the Pope, adding that the Vatican's Secretary of State had said that 'We did not believe it possible that such a respected organisation as the BBC would permit such a thing.'<sup>4</sup> 'For the sake of the

<sup>1</sup> \*'Religious Broadcasts and the Public.'

<sup>2</sup> Her first letter was written on 7 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Sunday Graphic*, 9 Jan. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 13 Jan. 1955.

children', Mrs. Knight, who had spoken at ten o'clock in the evening, should be kept off the air. For the *Daily Express* Mrs. Knight's broadcast on 'Morals without Religion' was 'an explosive attack on Christianity',<sup>1</sup> and for Peterborough in the *Daily Telegraph* 'one large slab of atheistical propaganda'.<sup>2</sup> The *Daily Express* was unimpressed by the fact that the series would wind up with a discussion in which Mrs. Morton would put the opposite point of view. 'If Mrs. Knight has torn a hole of doubt in 10,000 and more beliefs by her one broadcast,' it stated tersely, 'then it might be impossible to patch that hole in two weeks' time.' The *Daily Telegraph* pointed to the advent of competition for the BBC. 'It is astonishing to hear such views broadcast at a time when the Independent Television Authority has just been charged by Statute to see that programmes do not include anything likely to be "offensive to public feeling".' A riposte by Cassandra in the *Daily Mirror*, in which Mrs. Knight's talk was called 'bold and brave', was couched in equally strong terms.<sup>3</sup>

This was the kind of row which the Press liked. One newspaper rightly said that Mrs. Knight had filled more newspaper space even than the British climate.<sup>4</sup> It led House to make a factual statement that he had not sponsored the broadcast and the Archbishop of Canterbury to say that he had not heard it.<sup>5</sup> The BBC revealed that the letters which had been received for and against had been about equal.<sup>6</sup> Yet the Bishop of Barking, the Rt. Rev. H. R. Gough, made a public statement which by-passed all the talk that had been going on for years in the Central Religious Advisory Committee: 'You cannot have a good moral code without a good religious basis.'<sup>7</sup> The most remarkable outburst, however, came from Churchill, who had

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Jan. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 7 Jan. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 Jan. 1955, with the *Daily Worker* concurring, 10 Jan. 1955. Cf. Michael Foot in the *Daily Herald*, 21 Jan. 1955: 'Her still, small voice has blown through the stuffy, smog-ridden atmosphere of the BBC like a typhoon.' Gilbert Harding took the same line in *The People*, 16 Jan. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Express*, 7 Jan. 1955; *Sunday Dispatch*, 25 Jan. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Herald*, 13 Jan. 1955. Six out of seven Regional Controllers had 'opted out' of taking the talk in their programmes (*Daily Express*, 14 Jan. 1955).

<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Knight gave her own letter count (*News Chronicle*, 27 Jan. 1955): 55 per cent were favourable and 31.5 unfavourable.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *News Chronicle*, 13 Jan. 1955.

been approached by Dr. Neville Gorton, the Bishop of Coventry. He declared himself 'all for free speech and free thought', but attacked the BBC for giving Mrs. Knight 'the opportunity of using an elaborate mechanical [*sic*] process perfected in recent years to plunge into millions of homes and pour out a selection of hackneyed assertions which must have caused pain to many people of all ages'.<sup>1</sup> All Churchill's distaste for broadcasting came to the surface. There were 13,872,633 'instruments to receive broadcasting messages' scattered throughout the country and individuals were being 'overborne by the machine with all its plugs, knobs and switches and the organisation which markets the stuff'. Later he spoke of the 'clumsy misuse of robot machinery' and 'new gigantic and ever more powerful scientific agencies'.

Any broadcast which could provoke Churchill to write such a letter obviously had its point. It was a passionate diatribe against the mass media of communication viewed simply as media, although in a quieter covering letter to Sir Ian Jacob he somewhat changed his tune. 'The responsibility for the use of the vast machinery of radio and TV is at once formidable, novel and perpetual. In this case I think there would have been no trouble if the topic had been part of a rather high-grade programme like the Third Programme. What vexed me was the millions of humble homes affected.'<sup>2</sup>

The voices of calm were few. The talks, given at 10 p.m., were, because of the publicity, listened to by far more people than would otherwise have heard them, but they did not convince most of the listeners. In Manchester, for example, a straw poll conducted by the *Evening Chronicle* showed that 91 per cent were 'against her ideas'.<sup>3</sup> The same newspaper quoted the Rev. Eric Saxon, Rector of St. Ann's, who had previously been in charge of religious broadcasting in the North Region and who stated now that he was sure that the BBC was right to allow Mrs. Knight to express her views. So, too, did the Rev. Donald Soper, who pointed out that Christians would do themselves harm if they assumed that the Christian faith was a hothouse plant which needed to be protected against all weathers. 'The

<sup>1</sup> \*Letter of February 1955 sent to Sir Ian Jacob.

<sup>2</sup> \*Churchill to Jacob, 20 Feb. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Chronicle*, 13 Jan. 1955.



extent of the publicity is surprising and disturbing,' said Mrs. Morton, who said that she shared the Rev. Donald Soper's opinion.<sup>1</sup>

In treating Mrs. Knight as if she were Barbara Kelly or Marilyn Monroe—a point made by Sir Arthur Bryant—the Press revealed its own sense of news. By contrast, it had almost ignored the first international conference on religious broadcasting at Chichester in October 1950 when representatives of religious broadcasting in ten countries discussed such themes as 'the mass for the sick', 'missionary broadcasts', 'sermons in sound' and 'letter box for the cure of souls'.<sup>2</sup>

There were no difficulties between Protestants and Roman Catholics at this meeting, although just before House retired as Head of Religious Broadcasting in September 1955 there were sharp Roman Catholic criticisms of an Easter broadcast, *Family Portrait*, by the American writer Lenore Coffee.<sup>3</sup> House's successor, the Rev. R. McKay, declared himself anxious from the start to be in 'as close touch as possible with our widening schedule of programmes'. He was aware of 'the limitation of programme time' allowed religious broadcasting, but wished to deal with a large audience 'with confidence in our material'. There was room for experiment, but experiment 'controlled by an overall purpose'.<sup>4</sup> McKay went on to announce a considerable extension of religious television, including a new cycle of

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Herald*, 14 Jan. 1955. The Archbishop argued later that there should be more outspoken religious controversy (*New Statesman*, 22 Jan. 1955). Cf. *The Spectator*, 21 Jan. 1955: 'The attacks on Mrs. Knight do Christians little credit'; and Sir Kenneth Grubb in the *Daily Telegraph*, 21 Jan. 1955: 'It is a Christian responsibility to listen with care to what Mrs. Knight and those who march with her have to say.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Notes on an Informal International Conference on Religious Broadcasting, 9-13 Oct. 1950. This was a genuinely interdenominational gathering at which House spoke on 'The Aim of Religious Broadcasting in Britain'. A *verbatim* Report of the Proceedings was prepared.

<sup>3</sup> *Universe*, 15 April 1955, where the play is described as 'offensive in any circumstances'. It attacked House personally for praising the play in the *Radio Times*, although House had had little to do with its choice. Cardinal Griffin protested to Jacob on 23 April 1955. There was a controversy on the subject in the letter columns of *The Times* and Jacob was criticized for making an apology (*Christian World*, 12 May 1955). See one letter of 13 May 1955 stating that Cardinal Griffin was wrong to protest and Jacob wrong to apologize: it had been a fine piece of theatre. The Secretary of the Congregational Union called Jacob's statement an 'obsequious capitulation'.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by the Rev. R. McKay, 30 Sept. 1955; the Rev. G. M. P. Hamilton to the Rev. R. McKay, 20 Dec. 1955.

religious plays by Joy Harrington about the life of Christ (planned while House was Head of Religious Broadcasting and filmed in Palestine), of five-minute religious items in the July children's programmes, Sunday night epilogue, and twenty-four new discussion programmes a year, some of them with the title *Christian Forum*.<sup>1</sup>

This extension was related to the first preliminary thinking about the place of religious broadcasting within a competitive broadcasting system. The Central Religious Advisory Committee, it was felt, should continue as it was, 'an Advisory Committee of the BBC, appointed as at present by the BBC', even though 'one advisory body rather than two would be in the best interests of religious television'.<sup>2</sup> In order to secure one body, there might in the longer run have to be two sub-committees, one BBC and one ITA. Yet in religion, as in sport, there was a place for the competitive spirit. 'Would you please note . . .', Beale was told by the programme planners in August 1955, 'that a strong team will be required for *Christian Forum* as it is scheduled the day after the opening of commercial television.'<sup>3</sup>

## 6. Education

IF THE BBC's religious policy stayed 'main stream' between 1945 and 1955, there had always been many different currents in the BBC's approach to education, one of its three major obligations—along with information and entertainment—in its first Charter drafted in 1926. One of the currents was Reithian philosophy, the philosophy which had linked together in the very beginning education and religion. Along with the philosophy, there had always been the vision of creating a richer culture which still inspired both Haley and Mary Somerville. When the war ended, Miss Somerville, a woman of 'great insight, imagination, sympathy and courage', had been Director

<sup>1</sup> \*Press Release, 19 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Central Religious Advisory Committee, *Minutes*, 28 Oct. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Mrs. J. R. Spicer to Beale, 3 Aug. 1955.

of School Broadcasts for sixteen years, and she had left a powerful personal impression at every stage in the story before moving to be Controller of Talks.<sup>1</sup> She had been picked out by Reith, but it was Haley who was to pay the most eloquent public tribute to her in an address at her Memorial Service in 1963. When she retired from the BBC in 1955 at the age of fifty-eight—when radio was rapidly losing staff and audiences to television—a BBC favourite quip ran that this was the ship leaving the sinking rats.

Pride in achievement ran through the BBC's education services which, as the Beveridge Committee was told by the Association of Education Committees, were unmatched elsewhere in the world 'in the high quality of planning and execution'.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was never forgotten that BBC success depended on 'wise delegation by the Corporation of responsibility . . . to a body broadly representative of the best educational opinion in the country' and 'a policy and organisation based on continuous and intimate co-operation between broadcaster and teacher'.<sup>3</sup>

Almost from the start, the role of educational broadcasting had been conceived of not as a substitute for classroom teaching but as an adjunct to it, and teachers always played an important part in the work of the subject committees which reported to the Central Council for School Broadcasting. This body, founded in 1929, mandatory not advisory, was an indispensable instrument if the BBC was to operate effectively at 'the listening end', and the BBC was not allowed to make any broadcasts to schools unless the Council, reconstituted in 1947 as the School Broadcasting Council for the United Kingdom, alongside separate Councils for Scotland and Wales, requested it.

Since 1935 its Secretary had been A. C. Cameron, a former Director of Education for Oxford, who had as his chief assistant R. C. Steele, and together they had built up a smoothly working system of co-operation with the BBC's own production department. Cameron retired, however, for health reasons in April 1945 and was replaced by R. N. Armfelt, who in his turn left

<sup>1</sup> See 'Teaching by Radio', an article on 'thirty years' work in the schools' in *The Times Radio and Television Supplement*, Aug. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Cmd.* 8116 (1951), para. 269, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times Radio and Television Supplement*, Aug. 1954.

the BBC in 1949 to become a Professor of Education at Leeds.<sup>1</sup> The fact that this last move was thought of as 'natural' was testimony to the BBC's reputation. The treasured link with teachers had always carried with it other necessary links with institutions for teacher training, colleges and universities. It seemed 'natural', too, that when Armfelt left the BBC he should be succeeded by Steele. BBC education had a strong sense of tradition.

In 1945, the Central Council was under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Richards. It included three representatives of the Ministry of Education; one of the Scottish Education Department (there was then a separate Council for Scotland); two of the Association of Directors and Secretaries for Education; one each from the County Councils Association, the Association of Municipal Corporations, the London County Council, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland, the Association of County Councils in Scotland, the Federation of Education Committees (Wales and Monmouth), and the Association of Education Committees in Northern Ireland; four from the National Union of Teachers and one each from eight other schoolteachers' organizations; two from the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education; and one extremely influential figure, Dr. W. P. (later Lord) Alexander, from the Association of Education Committees. There were also seventeen 'nominated members', among them E. Salter Davies, whose interest in educational broadcasting went back to the earliest days, and G. T. Hankin, who had been a key figure on many pre-war committees. The reconstitution of 1947 did not change this stress on representativeness, and Sir George Gater, who replaced Richards as chairman of the new body, had been a member both of the original BBC National Advisory Council on Education and of the 1929 Council. He was thus 'within the tradition' himself.

Representation mattered also in other BBC education bodies, each with its own professional competence and its own vision, even if the vision was sometimes fixed in the past. The Central

<sup>1</sup> When Cameron was appointed after a major reorganization, Reith wrote in his diary, 'I have always wished the Council to be more independent of the BBC and this looks like getting down to it' (6 June 1935). See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1964), pp. 211 ff., for the story in outline.

Committee for Group Listening (again with a separate Scottish Area Council, but with no executive powers) was presided over by Principal J. H. Nicholson of Hull University College and included Dr. Alexander (one of the few overlapping members), W. E. Williams of the British Institute of Adult Education, and Ernest Green, General Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association. The group listening movement, which was to be hailed by the Beveridge Committee as 'a frontal attack on passivity', had its origins during the first decade of broadcasting and had collected its largest audiences of over two million during the war when it was associated with a *Living and Learning* series, backed by leaflets.<sup>1</sup> In 1945, however, there was much doubt, as there had often been before the war, as to whether the group listening movement was an effective instrument of post-war educational policy.

Educational broadcasting for listeners who had long since left school was to become a major preoccupation of the BBC at a later stage in its history, but in 1945 attention was quite naturally focused on the urgent needs of one single group among them—those men and women serving in the Forces. The special 'scheme' designed to cater for them was rightly described in 1946 as 'an adventure in education', since it was in a spirit of adventure that its organizers, producers and performers took part in it.<sup>2</sup> The idea of educational broadcasts specifically designed for the Forces had first been mooted—not by the BBC but by the War Office—in May 1943, when it was suggested that radio should be used during the 'demobilisation period';<sup>3</sup> and within the next few months an Inter-Services Committee on Educational Broadcasting was set up with W. E. Williams, then Director of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, as Chairman. It met for the first time on 31 July 1944 and produced its first outline scheme in three months.

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 8116 (1951), para. 285, p. 75; A. Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 707–8; *The Times Educational Supplement*, 26 Dec. 1942, 5 June 1943; M. Gorham, *Broadcasting and Television since 1900* (1952), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 219, 346; F. Hemming Vaughan, 'The First Listening Group?' in *The Listener*, 30 Nov. 1932; R. S. Lambert, *Ariel and all his Quality* (1940), p. 51; Cmd. 8117 (1951), Appendix H, p. 402.

<sup>3</sup> \*V. Alford, 'BBC Forces Educational Broadcasts, 3 Sept. 1945 to 21 Dec. 1946'. See also T. L. Hawkins and L. J. Trimble, *Adult Education—the Record of the British Army* (1947), pp. 354–8, and N. Scarlyn Williams, *Education in the Forces, 1939–1946* (1949).

Whereas during the war items had been included in Forces Education which were designed to raise morale more than to extend knowledge,<sup>1</sup> plans for the 'demobilisation period' could concentrate on specific educational objectives. Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War, had long been determined to include re-education for civilian life as an element in the Release Scheme, and in the early part of 1943 he had set up a small committee under the chairmanship of Lord Croft, then Under-Secretary of State, to streamline existing organization and to commission a definitive set of proposals to be implemented when the war ended. These were prepared by Philip Morris, the future Governor of the BBC,<sup>2</sup> who became Director-General of Army Education later in the year. Not surprisingly, radio, with its power to leap great distances, was envisaged as a necessary medium of Forces Education when British Forces were scattered throughout the world. It was also considered as the cheapest form of education which could be provided.

As far as the BBC was concerned, Forces Educational Broadcasting presented the Corporation with an exceptional opportunity. As *The Listener* put it before the war ended, 'educational' was almost 'too narrow a word', since the courses would have 'the very broad aim of fitting the men and women of our fighting services for the transition to civilian life'. The broadcasts continued until the summer of 1952, far longer than *The Listener* anticipated, although by then the audience had dwindled to seven thousand Forces listeners and the special Forces Education Unit inside the BBC had long since disappeared.<sup>3</sup> At the peak of the scheme, however, the BBC could address educational broadcasts for the first time in its history to large numbers of adults, meeting in groups roughly comparable in size to

<sup>1</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 797-8.

<sup>2</sup> A Central Advisory Council for Forces Education had been set up early in the war and held its first meeting in January 1940. The report of the Heining Committee on the Educational, Welfare and Recreational needs of the Army was completed a few months later. It argued that 'the Army is a community with its own life and should develop its own resources, whether for education or entertainment'. A small Educational Directorate was brought under the Director-General of Welfare and Education early in 1941, and the Army Bureau of Current Affairs was set up in July. This body exerted an important influence in quickening interest in often controversial current affairs. See A. Calder, *The People's War* (1949), pp. 250-2.

<sup>3</sup> \*Miss Somerville to Haley, 8 May 1952; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 June 1952.

classes in a school, with the additional challenge that listening conditions were even more diverse within the Forces than they were in school classrooms.<sup>1</sup> Men about to be demobilized, it had been assumed at the outset, would have compulsory education of six to eight hours a week and would listen to the Forces Educational programmes during their working day.

The scale of the exercise was extremely impressive. A special Forces Educational Unit, operating from 63 Great Portland Street, was created inside the BBC in February 1945, with N. G. Luker, then a Pilot Officer in Operational Training, as Manager, and with a team at his disposal which included an administrative officer, eleven producers, and eleven secretaries. The average programme cost was first set at £145, but this figure soon proved unrealistic. The amount actually spent in 1945 was just below £400.

The team quickly got to work, and from 3 September 1945 to 21 December 1946 there was a continuous flow of eighteen twenty-minute programmes a week—twenty minutes was the maximum time it was thought Servicemen could 'take'—covering an extensive range of subjects and presented at the microphone in different, even contrasting, ways. The broadcasts could be received on the Light Programme (on long wave)—immediately after *Housewives' Choice*—with simultaneous transmission on certain General Overseas Service short wavelengths; and in addition transcriptions of many of the programmes were flown out each week by the Royal Air Force for local rebroadcasting by Forces Broadcasting stations serving the Mediterranean, the Middle East Land Forces and the South-East Asia Command.<sup>2</sup> It was left to the Services themselves to provide sufficient receiving sets of a suitable type, to advertise the programmes, to secure the best possible listening conditions, to arrange for the training of instructors in the use of the broadcasts, and to provide listener research information for the BBC Unit.

When the news of the ending of the broadcasts was announced in 1952, a correspondent of *The Times Educational*

<sup>1</sup> For the peak, see N. G. Luker, 'Five Months of Forces Educational Broadcasting' in *Adult Education*, vol. 18, June 1946, pp. 163-70.

<sup>2</sup> Until 16 Sept. 1946, when the Third Programme was in the last stages of preparation, Forces Educational broadcasts were carried only by a high-power transmitter at Hamburg on 456.8 metres normally used for the British Forces Network Programme.

*Supplement* rightly suggested that the announcement would stir conflicting sentiments. For some it would recall 'spells of boredom, endured only because they were an alternative to "square bash"'. Others would be reminded of 'their resentment that some congregation of brass-hats should have tried to force grown men and women back to school'. Others again would remember with gratitude 'a feeling of being brought briefly into touch with some show of "culture" in an atmosphere, geographical and spiritual, which had suggested that the things of the mind or of the spirit were either dead or infinitely remote'.<sup>1</sup>

The Unit was interested in every kind of positive reaction from Servicemen and set out in a manner which might not have appealed to Lord Croft to encourage ideas to spring from below, although it never at any stage put much trust in broadcasts concerned with direct vocational training: such training, it was thought, could be better carried out in other ways. The original curriculum was rich and varied, with Music and Literature included as well as Economics and Current Affairs. Producers were exhorted eloquently to make listeners feel 'both the firm and the solid satisfaction to be had from things of the mind and spirit'.

The programmes were arranged in cycles of six weeks with a 'request week' every seventh week. 'Facile popularization' was deliberately avoided, but 'the blackest crime in broadcasting', it was held, was 'to be dull'. The contents of the first cycle—Series I—which opened on 3 September 1945 with a talk on Samuel Pepys, included *English* I, II and III; *Music Review*; *Home Interests*; *Industrial Magazine* ('Job in Hand'); *Clear Thinking*; *French*; *Science* I (*General*) and II (*Man's Place in Nature*); *Social History*; *General Citizenship* (with, amongst many others, Douglas Houghton speaking on 'A Penny on the Rates'), and *Geography of the Air*.

Early broadcasters included Bernard Hollowood and Graham Hutton on Economics; G. M. Young and a very young myself on History;<sup>2</sup> Sir Cyril Burt on 'Clear Thinking'; Dr. Dudley

<sup>1</sup> \*'Forces Broadcasts: End of Educational Programmes' in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 29 Aug. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> I wrote and took part in all the first six social history programmes with Harry Ross as producer. I was still serving in the Army when I was invited to do them and when I made the first three of the series.



Stamp on Geography; Jennifer Wayne on Law; E. R. Thompson, the BBC's Parliamentary Correspondent, on Politics; Reginald Jacques, Herbert Murrill and Desmond Shawe-Taylor on Music; E. M. Stéphan, the experienced pre-war broadcaster, on French; and Nesta Pain and Professors D. R. S. Watson, Gordon Childe and F. le Gros Clark on Science. The long list of people giving either one broadcast or several broadcasts in a series included J. D. Bernal, Dorothy Pickles, J. F. Horrabin, Margot Heinemann, Hugh Seton-Watson and Frank Owen. Hugh Carleton Greene spoke on 'The News behind History', A. L. Rowse and Jack Simmonds took part in an unscripted discussion on 'Do great men make History?', and Frank Gillard described how the British Army had revived opera in Naples, 'exploding the theory', he said, that there was 'a fundamental antipathy between the British public and opera'.

Programme Supervisors included S. W. Bonarjee, who was to stay in the broadcasts until the end and then to pass into Current Affairs, Harry Rée, Harry Ross, George Steedman, Lionel Millard, Robert Waller, Asher Lee, Evelyn Gibbs, Geoffrey Earle, Sam Pollock, Archie Clow and Richmond Postgate. Bonarjee has stressed the pioneering attitude of the scriptwriters and broadcasters even during the later years of the scheme, when the number of broadcasts transmitted each week had been drastically cut. Thus, the earliest attempts at covering party political conferences in the history of British broadcasting were made for the Forces; and many broadcasters who subsequently became well known in other fields, like George Scott and Robert McKenzie, started their BBC careers with talks to this limited audience.

Careful attention was paid in Broadcasting House to the first critical reactions from the Forces—that some of the broadcasts were 'too quick'; that some of them contained too much material; that some were too difficult; that more detailed information was needed in advance in barracks and camps about what was going to happen; that one of the biggest practical problems was the low incidence of serial listening.<sup>1</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> Luker and Major W. L. Thomas, Army Education Group, visited Germany in the second month of the scheme to collect reactions in the British Army of the Rhine. There were also visits to the Home Guard, and Inter-Service Conferences were held, the first on 5 Dec. 1945.

was ample evidence of appreciation of the broadcasts, however, and none to support the view that troops listening in groups (representing a cross-section, educationally and otherwise, of their Units) would not or could not 'take' a twenty-minute straight talk without frills. Much of the dramatization in the first programmes was highly ingenious, but much of it, too, was unnecessary from an educational point of view, and the first reactions confirmed that dramatization had been overstressed. As far as content was concerned, not surprisingly *English I*, *II* and *III* had a less responsive audience than *Industrial Magazine*, which was spoken of as 'right on the target' for all ranks, intensely preoccupied as all ranks then were with their return as un-numbered individuals to civilian life.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the analysis of these reactions, one *English* programme was quietly dropped, a Basic Economics series was added, and more attention was paid to planning single broadcasts than to producing further series. Later, however, there were to be interesting series on *Contemporary Russia and America*—it had a mixed reception—on *France Today*, on *Home Town*, on *Club Activities*, recordings of a wide range of 'on the spot' leisure activities in British towns and cities, and on *Previous Experience Unnecessary*, discussions of job opportunities for men and women with no previous training.

In January 1946 Luker returned to his post as Assistant Director of Talks, and Vincent Alford—from the same BBC department—took his place.<sup>2</sup> Luker's parting words included the judgement that, leaving on one side *ITMA*, 'broadcasting as a means of communication must be of the utmost simplicity to be effective at all'.<sup>3</sup> The straight talk was understood by Servicemen, he believed, provided that the speaker showed conviction as well as knowledge. From the administrative angle, Luker's work with the Unit had demonstrated that there were 'solid advantages in an organisation based on the function of the broadcast rather than on the type of programme'. The 'sense of exhilaration in working for a definite audience rather than for the general listener' had been immense. Yet Luker

<sup>1</sup> \*Alford, 'BBC Forces Educational Broadcasts'.

<sup>2</sup> Luker retained his membership of the Inter-Services Committee on Educational Broadcasting.

<sup>3</sup> He also regarded some of Norman Corwin's programmes as an exception (\*Report of 6 Jan. 1946).

pointed out, too, that there had been a great deal of 'eavesdropping'—by listeners outside the Forces—to the extent of as many as half a million listeners a day.

Luker's successor had to face the problem not only of falling numbers of listeners—the Japanese War had ended far more quickly than had been anticipated and demobilization had been greatly speeded up—but of rapid turnover and shortages of instructors and inadequate supplies of wireless sets, even obsolete ones, in camps, airfields and at sea. Yet because conscription continued, there were large numbers of new soldiers who required very different educational treatment: they joined the Forces when they were only eighteen and a half years old; many of them had had their school education interrupted by the blitz and by evacuation; some of them, it was claimed, lacked 'even the rudimentary attainments of the primary school'.<sup>1</sup>

When the number of weekly programmes was reduced in January 1947 from eighteen to six, Alford left the BBC and the Unit as such ceased to exist. Yet the opportunity was taken in these completely changed circumstances to begin another kind of interesting educational experiment. In May and June 1949 Dr W. D. Wall of the Institute of Education at Birmingham University—working with Professor P. E. Vernon and, from inside the BBC, J. M. Trenaman—carried out a number of 'intelligibility tests', using batches of recruits selected from different levels of intelligence and social background. Forces' listening to a *Plain English* series and to single talks in series on *Science and Everyday Life* and *The Making of the Novel* was carefully monitored to test listeners' comprehension and interest. The general results of the first survey were (not surprisingly) that while the programmes studied were approximately suitable in level for groups of average intelligence and education and 'succeeded in getting across . . . what they set out to teach', for backward groups 'problems of intelligibility and relevance' were 'acute'.<sup>2</sup>

A further large-scale inquiry was launched in January 1950

<sup>1</sup> The last National Service Act was passed in 1955 and the last National Servicemen were called up in 1960.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*Report on the Effectiveness of Forces Educational Broadcasts', Sept. 1949. Previous work on 'intelligibility' had been carried out in the United States. See *Nature*, 11 Nov. 1950.

and continued until the beginning of May. Four thousand listeners from the Forces took part and completed tests which included writing précis of talks in the listener's own words and answering questions relating to the ease or difficulty of listening to broadcasts and the extent of interest and involvement. Vernon, who was assisted by his wife, presented his conclusions in a Paper to the British Association. So, too, did Trenaman, who had reached somewhat similar conclusions in relation to a sample of the general listening public. The conclusions were to have considerable influence on the subsequent development of further educational broadcasting.<sup>1</sup> And they were to have a long-term influence also—through Trenaman's pioneering work, interrupted on his early death but carried on by others—on the effect of television on politics and society.<sup>2</sup>

The work of Vernon and Trenaman inspired immediate Press comment in 1950. Thus, in an article headed 'A Revealing Verdict', the *Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph* directed attention to their comment that 'just over half the people who listen to educational broadcasts derive little or no knowledge from them—even if the broadcasts are at a comparatively elementary level, such as the Forces' Educational broadcasts in the Light Programme.' The moral seemed obvious. 'Scrap the lot.' 'The mere provision of educational facilities' by itself had 'meant nothing'. 'The Press and the Cinema are often criticised by superior persons for under-estimating the general level of intelligence of their customers. Dr. and Mrs. Vernon's investigation appears to indicate that newspapers and film are in closer touch with popular taste than are the B.B.C. and C.O.I. and W.E.A.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> British Association Paper read before Section J., 5 Sept. 1950. Vernon also summarized his conclusions in the *BBC Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 4, 1950. Trenaman concluded that parallel tests of reading and listening to Service broadcasts showed that it made no significant difference whether or not material was communicated through the written or the spoken word. Both media were equally effective as far as immediate impact, retention after a lapse of time, and capacity to apply ideas to new situations were concerned. See also *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Summer 1951. Further studies starting from this base included W. A. Belson's 'An Inquiry into the Comprehensibility of *Topic for Tonight*' (1952) and a BBC Further Education Experiment, 'The Length of a Talk', July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 682. Trenaman's essays are collected in *Communication and Comprehension* (1967). See also J. M. Trenaman and D. McQuail, *Television and the Political Image* (1961).

<sup>3</sup> *Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph*, 5 Sept. 1950. See also the *Daily Express*, 6 Sept. 1950. For less value-ridden comment, see the *Evening Standard*, 5 Sept. 1950,

This, however, was not the moral Vernon and Trenaman drew. They wanted more effective communication, not a simple reliance on the ability of the Press and Cinema interests to judge what people really wanted. When, they asked, had the Press or the Cinema carried out similar tests? And was not the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, published in Leeds, where Trenaman was eventually to work, quite right to be sceptical about the judgements of some of its contemporaries: 'Listeners [are] probably much more intelligent than has been suggested.'<sup>1</sup> From nearby Huddersfield came the proper comment that 'the BBC may reflect that if only slightly less than half the listeners benefit from their educational talks, their efforts are worth while.'<sup>2</sup>

By the time that Forces Educational Broadcasts were phased out in 1952, 'Further Education' (endowed with capital letters) for a large section of the population had been developed along new lines. The Central Committee for Group Listening had been wound up in 1947—'unwept, unhonoured and unsung', it was claimed<sup>3</sup>—but the Beveridge Committee was unwilling to abandon hope of 'broadening the educational appeal' of adult broadcasting.<sup>4</sup> 'We do not know whether the time is yet ripe to re-establish an Advisory Council for Adult Education,' it stated in 1950—one of its many 'we don't knows'—'but the time is certainly ripe for the Corporation to invite all others who are interested in spreading adult education and using the possibilities of the microphone and the television screen [a new factor] for it, to come into conference with them as to how this

<sup>1</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 7 Sept. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 9 Sept. 1950. The validity of Vernon and Trenaman's methods was to be questioned later in a paper by John Scupham, then Head of School Broadcasting, 'Some Reflections on the Use of Statistical Methods in Enquiries relating to Broadcasting', 25 June 1952. See also W. Allen, 'The Question of Intelligibility' in *BBC Quarterly*, vol. VII, no. 3, Autumn 1952, pp. 147-51.

<sup>3</sup> WEA Evidence to the Beveridge Committee, Cmd. 8117, para. 15, p. 402. See also *The Times Educational Supplement*, 19 March 1949, where it was stated that the number of organized group listeners had never exceeded 26,000 and that they had been 'discussing' broadcasts in 'an unreal situation'.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, para. 285, p. 75.

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and the *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Sept. 1950. A reader of the *Daily Express* (Eric Bruton) wrote to the editor objecting to the newspaper's comment. 'It is a waste of money,' he said, 'investigating the stupidity of the majority and a waste of time pandering to it on the BBC by simplifying talks. We shall end up by all being stupid.'

can best be done.’<sup>1</sup> Such an invitation was never sent, but there were some changes in organization and attitudes inside Broadcasting House after the Beveridge Report. In its final ‘verdict’ on the BBC Forces Educational Broadcasts in 1952, *The Times* noted that the BBC proposed to replace Forces Educational Broadcasting by ‘some similar adult educational series, and presumably to link this series with other adult educational activities’ and added, doubtless on the basis of inside knowledge, that ‘it would be well to give some such feeling of independence to the department charged with the management of these programmes old and new’.<sup>2</sup>

Some time earlier, indeed, the BBC had already started what it called ‘the Further Education Experiment’, organized by a separate unit of the Talks Department. It was headed by Jean Rowntree, who was assisted by Trenaman and Helen Arbuthnot,<sup>3</sup> and it was concerned from the start not simply with sponsoring new ‘Further Education’ programmes but with surveying BBC output as a whole in the light of the educational needs of the broadest possible audience. They were a dedicated trio, thorough in all they did. Thus, they approached as many as nineteen thousand listeners during the course of the ‘Experiment’ in an effort to assess the impact of broadcasting, and four categories of evidence were considered—listeners’ impressions, as expressed in questionnaires, in street interviews and at meetings; objective tests of listeners’ knowledge and understanding of particular broadcasts; observations of tutors and of BBC Education Officers; and the opinions of a wide group of consultants, including academics, librarians, booksellers, and WEA and other adult education tutors and organizers. Among the particular programmes on which ‘objective tests’ were carried out were *The Plain Man’s Guide to Music*, current affairs items in *Woman’s Hour*, and further Education series on Science, Citizenship and English.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 286, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times Educational Supplement*, 29 Aug. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of 1 May 1951.

<sup>4</sup> There was a marked difference in understanding of the *Woman’s Hour* current affairs talks on the part of members of the Women’s Institute and Townswomen’s Guilds on the one hand and of members of women’s social clubs run by the National Council of Social Service on the other. Yet it was estimated that 75 per cent of the audience for *Woman’s Hour* came from the second group (\*‘Report on a Two Year Experiment’, May 1951).

It was not easy to conduct the Experiment at a time when there were so many doubts about the future scale and scope of educational broadcasting, and about the pattern of Regional and national broadcasting. First, while the experimenters could point to necessary changes in scope and scale, Haley was concerned from the start about whether the BBC would be able to afford to implement them. There were serious limitations both on space and resources. How would it be possible to provide 'a still more expensive kind of broadcasting during a time when we may have to make cuts?'<sup>1</sup>

It was certainly easier to lay down objectives than to guarantee means, and at a Spoken Word Meeting in October 1951 three conclusions were reached. First, 'the purpose of Further Education should be to enable each individual to live a fuller and richer life', and, second, 'Further Education could be said to apply to all aspects of serious broadcasting, irrespective of subject, and should not in broadcasting be tied to any curriculum devised by workers in the outside Further Education field.'<sup>2</sup> The second of these conclusions wisely blurred the distinction between 'educational' and 'educative' programmes, but a third conclusion immediately sharpened it again. 'The essence of Further Education broadcasting could be summed up as (a) communication with a primarily educational intention; (b) the techniques to achieve this; and (c) certain associated activities such as the study of the audience, advance publicity, pamphlets, possible consultation with Further Education Authorities etc.'<sup>3</sup> The reference to 'Further Education Authorities' carried with it not only a sense of formality but a concession to institutionalization through a wide range of existing and often rival representative institutions, some official and some not.

There were many practical difficulties in the way of planning an appropriate 'experimental' programme schedule within the BBC itself even for selected 'closed audiences', such as coal miners, who were as interesting to the experimenters at that time as they were to the economists or the sociologists. Yet

<sup>1</sup> \*Haley to Miss Somerville, 24 Sept. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Spoken Word Meeting, *Minutes*, 18 Oct. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid. Cf. a Note of 19 March 1949, 'The limits of what is and what is not educational are nowhere more difficult to draw than in broadcasting.'

visits were successfully arranged to mining areas,<sup>1</sup> and special experimental programmes were produced, like *Miners at the Microphone*, which were designed to appeal to miners as a group. The reactions of such 'closed audiences', it was felt, had something in common with audiences for school broadcasts;<sup>2</sup> and a careful study of them would quickly identify, it was believed, both difficulties of comprehension and failures of communication between broadcaster and listeners.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it might be possible to deduce from such specific reactions more general recommendations about future broadcasting strategy. 'No planner of educational programmes', the experimenters concluded, 'can afford to ignore the question of *level*, and in particular the diversity of educational levels among Home Service listeners. . . . The gap between production on the one hand and the listening public on the other is far too wide.'

With the Education Act of 1944 in mind—and the definitions in the Act of what constituted Further Education—the experimenters also organized an inquiry into the current interests of young people—again with sample questionnaires and with special programmes. They set out to try to answer the basic question, 'do they make up a distinct audience?'<sup>4</sup> The results showed that while young people enjoyed mostly the same programmes as their parents—plays and Variety came at the top of their preferences—they wanted 'more sport', disliked 'humour of the old music hall type', and wanted broadcasting to deal with 'quick moving, constantly changing situations'.<sup>5</sup> A very few years later there would have been more talk of 'pop music' and of 'teenage culture', and no one would have dared to catalogue the preferences of 'youth' on the basis of conclusions derived from a simple questionnaire.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This experiment was carried out on the advice of Dr. Revans, then working with the National Coal Board.

<sup>2</sup> \*'Report on a Two Year Experiment', May 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> \*'A Youth Inquiry', Jan. 1951. The 1944 Education Act had required local authorities to submit detailed plans for further education.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid. The biggest difference of opinion with their parents about existing programmes was their positive response to *Jazz Club* and their negative response to *Have a Go*. They also welcomed *Hit Parade* as well as sports commentaries and were more interested than their parents in classical music. See also above, pp. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup> \*When the report on the third experimental series appeared in May 1950, Mary Somerville, then handling the responsibilities of the Director of the Spoken Word, wrote to Haley, 5 July, that this showed 'how devastatingly super self-



As it was, even in 1951 before the widespread impact of television, there seemed to be only limited possibilities for preparing special 'educative' sound programmes for teenagers who had just left school. Despite the growth in the number of day-release schemes since 1945, the experimenters reached the conclusion that 'educative' broadcasting could reach this age group only out of working hours. They recommended, therefore, that 'Younger Generation' broadcasts, which had begun in 1949 with the magazine programme *On Our Way* (not to be confused with *Down Your Way*), should be extended to meet the needs of the fifteen- to twenty-year range, a very broad range indeed. Most individuals in this group had left school at fourteen or fifteen, and most of them, it was recognized, were 'outside the reach of [Further Education] organisers'. The Light Programme, not the Home Service, seemed the proper service through which to try to reach them.<sup>1</sup>

The work of the experimenters had friends in high places, and ambitious proposals for Further Education were outlined in a Board Paper of May 1952 which, despite worries about available resources, was approved by the Governors a few weeks later.<sup>2</sup> A new Further Education Group was to be set up within the Talks Division in order both to plan programmes and to take ample stock of future 'listening—and information'. All Forces Educational programmes were to stop, as was the existing 'Younger Generation' series.<sup>3</sup> Instead there was to be one Home Service programme a week (with Regional support) for the 'ex-grammar school audience, usually under forty, and the potential grammar school type without grammar school education', and alongside it a wide range of new further

<sup>1</sup> \*'A Youth Inquiry', Jan. 1951; Miss Rowntree to Miss Somerville, 31 March 1952, where it was pointed out that this recommendation was not new. It had appeared in almost the same words in the Hadow Report of 1928, 'New Ventures in Education', but it had 'remained a dead letter, partly perhaps because the problem of educational levels was not fully explored'.

<sup>2</sup> \*'Further Education', 15 May 1952; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 June 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 807.

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critical we can be when objective evidence is forthcoming'. 'Was the presentation liked?' was one question considered. 'On the whole the answer is no,' was the candid reply. The report went on, however, to note that 'the lower levels got most from the programmes'.

educational fare for the rest on the Light Programme, including a run for six months of a new thirty-minute serious 'magazine'.

Announcements about the range of programmes were to be made in future well in advance in a free publication *Listen and Learn*, which had already been produced 'experimentally'—note the regular recurrence of words based on 'experiment'—and care was to be taken to ensure that the new programmes would 'unite good radio and good reading'.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of setting up an Advisory Committee for Further Education Broadcasting, which Beveridge had hinted might be useful, was turned down explicitly, but it was agreed very properly that 'contact should be kept, nationally and regionally, with the Further Education world'.<sup>2</sup> The whole project was to be reviewed once more at the end of two years.

This new policy, announced in a Press Release of August 1952, rested on many culture-bound assumptions—about 'streaming', for example, and about broadcasting not being taken over by other adult educational agencies, and these assumptions rested in turn on deeper assumptions about levels of intelligence and social planning. Yet the social purpose of the experimenters was not in doubt, and it was social purpose which was given the main emphasis in the Press Release. Further Educational Broadcasting was to exploit the capacity of radio 'to reach into every home'. 'The special educational opportunity of radio is . . . to interest and stimulate those who at present make little or no use of the educational facilities provided by other agencies.' There was only one brief reference to television which was soon to transform the picture. 'Because of the limited hours and the experimental nature of television, no special contribution is at present offered. The decision on this matter is for the future.'

<sup>1</sup> \*Note on a Press Release, 'Further Education by Means of Broadcasting', 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 'The BBC recognises that the National Institute of Adult Education is in a unique position to provide valuable help and criticism and proposes to make full use of the services it offers.' Joseph Trenaman was to be Further Education Liaison Officer (Note on Administrative Arrangements, by Miss Somerville, 1 Aug. 1952). The BBC further recognized the unique position of the Institute at a meeting between Grisewood and John Fulton, then the Institute's Chairman, on 25 March 1953, but reiterated both its unwillingness to introduce formal consultative machinery and its continuing desire to consult with all adult education bodies not necessarily through the Institute.

There was relatively little Press comment on the Release. Yet even before it had been put out, John Beverley in the *News Chronicle* had argued the case for a 'BBC Night School' for Forces and civilian listeners alike and had received a warm response from readers. A subsequent poll, which showed that 54.5 per cent of the respondents had listened to Forces Education broadcasts, recorded also that 40 per cent of the respondents wished in future for 'night school' programmes twice a week. English was at the top of the desired subject list (75.5 per cent), followed by Languages, History and Current Affairs.<sup>1</sup> Years were to elapse before some of these ideas were put into effect. Yet a few readers of the *News Chronicle* rightly objected to the phrase 'night school': they even suggested the idea of an 'Open University'.<sup>2</sup>

For all the enthusiasm in London, the BBC's new scheme did not go down very well in the Regions, and after many complaints had been received—several of them suggesting that the Regions were already on their own initiative 'filling the gaps' revealed in the investigations of the experimenters—it became clear that many of the Regional Controllers were only imperfectly aware of the Governors' decision in June 1952.<sup>3</sup> Even after Jacob had attended the Regional Controllers' Meeting to explain why the BBC had to rely on 'the professional responsibility of a group of people who were experts in this particular field',<sup>4</sup> misunderstandings, if not disagreements, persisted. The Regional Controllers were upset when, in the second year of the experimental scheme, it was made obligatory on them to transmit one half-hour programme each week during the winter; and at a meeting in April 1954 they told Stewart, the Controller of the Home Service, that half an hour of Further Education on top of 'statutory and "moral" musts', where they had no choice, not only reduced their own freedom to plan programme schedules but 'overweighted the Regional

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 20, 25, 27 Aug., 3 Sept. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 Sept. 1952. One suggested 'Evening Institute'. Another preferred 'Chart for Adventure' as a title or 'It makes you think'. Several suggested the need for examinations. For earlier ideas of an 'Open University', see *The Golden Age of Wireless*, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> \*Regional Controllers' Meeting, *Minutes*, 1 Oct. 1952, 4 Feb. 1953; Grisewood to the Regional Controllers, 22 Jan. 1953; Note by Andrew Stewart, 26 Jan. 1953; Report of a Meeting between Grisewood and the Regional Controllers, 4 March 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Regional Controllers' Meeting, *Minutes*, 15 April 1953.

Home Services with spoken matter'.<sup>1</sup> At a further meeting with Jacob in July 1954 they urged that Further Education broadcasts from London should be optional, not compulsory, for Regions.<sup>2</sup>

The Director-General believed that such suggestions 'struck at the root of the Corporation's Further Education policy' and urged the Governors not to change it. They did not. When the Further Educational Programme was reviewed, as had been promised, at the end of two years, the Governors confirmed 'that for the policy to be properly carried out, national coverage must be guaranteed'.<sup>3</sup>

The organization—like the policy—also remained unchanged. The Unit was to remain in existence within the Talks Department, backed by a senior producer and five other producers. Programmes were to be arranged in series so as to have 'a cumulative effect', and they were to differ from the rest of programme output 'not by reason of their subject matter or of any specially didactic approach, but in their planning and preparation'. One programme a week was to be broadcast on the Home Service for twenty-six weeks each year, and the more substantive Light Programme production was to include a six-months' series, three times a week, of 'Younger Generation' programmes<sup>4</sup>—the term survived, like the forbidding term 'the young'—the magazine programme, and a current affairs element in *Woman's Hour*. Other programmes were to be introduced by agreement with Programme Controllers, and they were to include a weekly series on musical appreciation throughout the winter months of 1954-5 and a language series in 1955. All the main programmes were to be advertised in advance in *Listen and Learn*.<sup>5</sup> All these projects went ahead, and when the audience reactions were collected in 1954 and 1955, they were regarded as extremely encouraging.

While Further Education was given such support, School

<sup>1</sup> \*Stewart to Wellington, 14 April 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of a Meeting, 7 July 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 16 Sept. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*'These programmes', it was stated, 'have been heard by a high proportion of young people for whom they were intended.' ('Further Education, Note by the Director-General', August 1954.)

<sup>5</sup> This publication had appeared twice a year, and 250,000 copies of each number had been distributed free to public libraries.

Broadcasting, the main staple of BBC educational activity, constantly widened its range between 1945 and 1955. This was a decade when there was far less debate about educational policy than there had been during the war or was to be during the 1960s. The Butler Act of 1944 was being implemented, and the foundations of school broadcasting were, of course, secure. In 1945, broadcasting to schools was already in its twenty-first year, a recognized element in the national provision for education. The broadcasts had been of very special value, moreover, during the war, and no one could deny their importance at a time of large-scale evacuation of children from their homes and often from their schools, the strains and stresses of school life in the country as well as in the cities,<sup>1</sup> and the drafting of teachers to the Forces. The number of 'listening schools' had risen relatively slowly from just over 11,000 in 1939 to nearly 15,000 in 1945, but the programmes provided covered a very wide range and in 1947, the year of the reconstitution of the School Broadcasting Council for the United Kingdom, the increase in the number of listening schools was higher than in any previous year in the Council's history. This was the year also when Richard Palmer produced the first full-length survey in book form of the subject.<sup>2</sup> Palmer carefully traced the development of the educational broadcasting service from what Richards called its 'cautious and slow' early stages—when at times the obstacles loomed larger than the opportunities—through to 1947, when two-fifths of the schools in England and Wales were registered for listening.<sup>3</sup>

The reconstitution followed eight meetings of a Machinery

<sup>1</sup> See *The War of Words*, pp. 115–17, 705–6. When school broadcasting was cut out during the great frost of 1947, it was made clear beyond all possible doubt that the public at large considered that the school broadcasting service was valuable enough to be maintained in a social emergency (R. Postgate, 'Broadcasting for Schools' in *The Fortnightly*, Feb. 1950).

<sup>2</sup> R. Palmer, *School Broadcasting in Britain* (1947).

<sup>3</sup> Before working with the School Broadcasting Council Palmer had been a Lecturer in Education at Liverpool University. At least one of the popular newspapers, *Daily Mirror*, 21 July 1947, seized less on the general educational aspects of the story as told by Palmer than on his brief assessment of the value of 'sex talks' in school. 'Children listen best when radio gives a sex talk' was one of its headlines. Yet the same newspaper also pointed out that there was 'intense interest by children about to leave school in talks by young people on their own experiences in finding jobs and settling down in the adult world'.

Revision Sub-Committee and several meetings of a Policy Revision Sub-Committee, each setting out to plan for the future as well as to evaluate the past.<sup>1</sup> 'The new Councils', it was stated in September 1947, 'face not only the educational problems of adapting school broadcasts to changing needs, but also a problem in public administration—that of securing effective working association at all levels between . . . the various branches of the educational world and . . . an independent public Corporation.'<sup>2</sup> The role of the Councils, like that of their predecessors, was to 'shape the BBC's educational programme policy' through their meetings held twice each year and, above all, through the meetings of their sub-committees;<sup>3</sup> and it was for this reason that the BBC continued to finance them just as it had financed their predecessors since 1929. It reiterated its view, grounded in experience, that no organization holding the position in the community which the BBC held should 'have the power to broadcast to the schools without a Council, representative of the educational world, to guide it'.<sup>4</sup>

Some limited modifications were introduced in the light of post-war conditions. It was felt desirable in 1947 to extend the old partnership between the BBC and the teaching profession by developing 'a more effective liaison with H.M. Inspectors'. This, it was felt, would 'associate school broadcasting more clearly with the national system of education'.<sup>5</sup> This policy was already being implemented before the new Councils met,<sup>6</sup> but it took time to mature. It was not until 1952, indeed, that the Ministry of Education issued an official pamphlet, prepared by its own Inspectors, in which generous tribute was paid to the BBC's record and headmasters were urged to take into account the range and timing of school broadcasts when they were settling the organization of studies before a new school year began. The pamphlet included detailed evidence, very encouraging to the School Broadcasting Council, which suggested

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of the Machinery Revision Sub-Committee, 23 Oct. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Press Notice of 25 Sept. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid. The description of the constitution was issued on 23 July 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> \*Report of the Machinery Revision Sub-Committee, 23 Oct. 1946.

<sup>6</sup> \*Two BBC officials met Sir Martin Roseveare at the Ministry of Education in October 1946 (Note of a Meeting of 23 Oct. 1946).

that children's powers of critical appreciation had been sharpened as a result of listening to school broadcasts.<sup>1</sup>

It was felt necessary as 'more effective liaison' with the Inspectorate was achieved to assert more strongly than ever the 'independence' of the Council *vis-à-vis* the Ministry of Education as well as *vis-à-vis* the BBC. 'Both the BBC and the Council are completely independent of the Ministry,' a senior BBC official wrote in 1947, adding that it was important also to remember that there was 'a long established and cherished tradition in English education that each school should devise its own curriculum and settle its own methods of carrying it out'.<sup>2</sup> 'Neither the central nor the local Education Authority seek to direct what should be taught, nor who, nor when.'<sup>3</sup> This was the system through which the BBC had always had to operate.

The second kind of independence—that of the Council from the BBC—raised different issues. The BBC, as we have seen, felt that it needed a body which would not only be 'representative of the main educational organisations in the country',<sup>4</sup> but which would be thoroughly knowledgeable about actual 'school conditions'; and Haley reiterated this need just before the war ended.<sup>5</sup> The new 1947 Council, therefore, had twenty-two out of its thirty-six members nominated by bodies outside the BBC. It was designed to be less 'formal' and more efficient than the old Council and to operate through a strong executive and a cluster of hard-working sub-committees, each with a majority of teacher members.

The BBC's School Broadcasting Department, which produced and presented the educational programmes, remained

<sup>1</sup> HMSO, *School Broadcasts*, March 1952. See also *The Times Educational Supplement*, 14 March and the *Manchester Guardian*, 10 March 1952. Earlier still, in 1949, Postgate had seized upon a passage in a Ministry pamphlet, 'Citizens growing up at Home, in School and After', as 'a most significant change in the official attitude to the contribution of school broadcasting to education'. The passage was cited in the evidence of the School Broadcasting Council to the Beveridge Committee.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Rendall, 'School Broadcasting and the Ministry of Education', 8 April 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Notes on School Broadcasting in Britain, 1947', 20 May 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report of the Machinery Revision Sub-Committee, 23 Oct. 1946. See above, p. 805.

<sup>5</sup> \*Statement to the Central Council, 11 April 1945.

an indispensable part of the apparatus, of course, and arrangements were made in 1947 for an increase in its establishment, for regular attachments of Council staff to it (and *vice versa*), and for longer-term financial and manpower planning. By 1955, indeed, it had a staff of sixty-five people, three more than the Council's staff at the time of the Beveridge Report, including a core of specialist producers. Council and Department were always seen as working together in close harmony, but when Gater asked Haley directly in 1948 to explain exactly whether the Council was 'independent' of the BBC or not, Haley bypassed the question. 'Constitutional status was less important than behaviour: the Council had behaved very independently at times and the Corporation hoped it would go on doing so.'<sup>1</sup>

There was one important change in the terms of reference of the Council's sub-committees, each of about fifteen members, for they were now called upon to deal not with different school 'subjects', as they had done before, but with different 'age groups' among schoolgoers. This was an interesting and significant change; the beginning of a shift from a discipline-based to a developmental approach to school education.

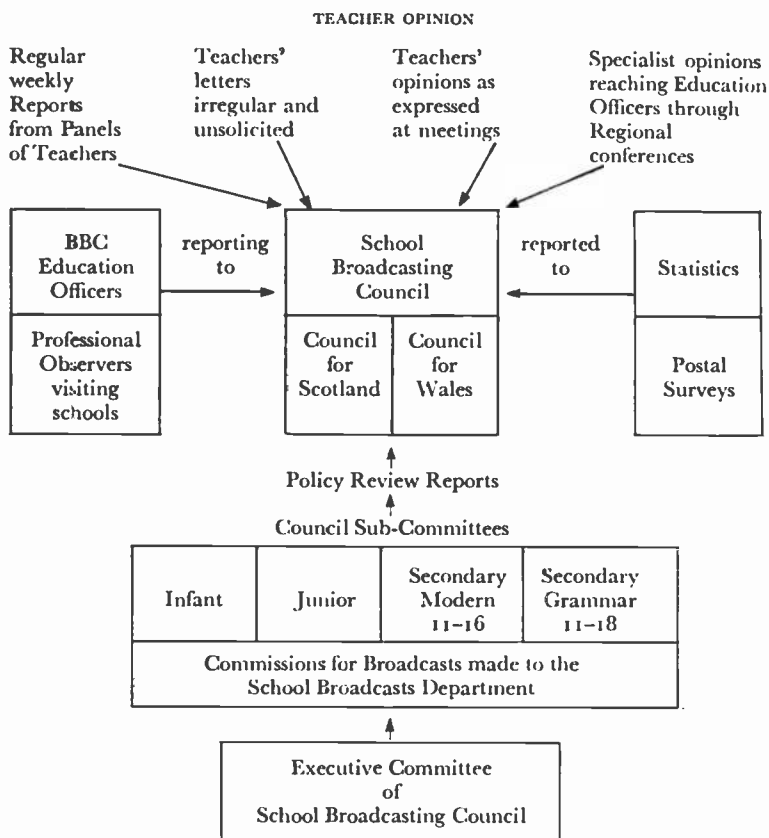
Important though it was to have the right structure, it was even more important to have the right process for preparing educational programmes. The success of school broadcasting depended after 1947, as it had always done, on the insights and skills of producers working in close co-operation with teachers within a carefully prepared annual timetable. Each individual broadcast, therefore, was 'the result of a series of acts of multiple planning and authorship', for there was always prolonged initial discussion before a 'commission' was made, further discussion before the idea behind the broadcast commission was translated into a script, and a thorough review after the programme had been broadcast. 'Broadcast-taking' was treated as seriously as 'broadcast-making', and the school audience was studied continuously and methodically, with fifteen Council Education Officers reporting back to London about reactions at 'the listening end'. They also held occasional conferences, including one in 1954 on the effect of broadcasting on dull and retarded children.

<sup>1</sup> \*General Advisory Council, Summary of the Discussion, 8 Dec. 1948.



These arrangements, set out in diagrammatic form below, called, it was correctly stated, for 'a high degree of understanding, co-operation and forbearance on the part of all concerned'.<sup>1</sup>

THE FLOW OF IDEAS, 1948



This flow diagram, revealing as it is, does not reveal anything, however, about philosophy or about style. Much of the immediate post-war national drive in education—following the 1944 Education Act—was concentrated in secondary modern schools rather than in grammar schools, although it took time

<sup>1</sup> \*R. Postgate, 'The School Broadcasting Service', 25 Nov. 1948.

for the needs of the secondary modern school to exert a dominant influence on the work of the BBC. The shift from the 'discipline-based' to 'developmental' sub-committees facilitated adaptation, for a very early post-war Ministry of Education pamphlet, *The New Secondary Education*, had cautioned teachers in secondary modern schools, catering for the biggest section of the age group, to remember that 'they are going to teach pupils rather than subjects'. When the Council's sub-committees, to use the jargon of the time, became 'school- and child-orientated', starting from the presupposition that school broadcasting was 'much less a medium of instruction than a means of extending and enriching the child's environment',<sup>1</sup> the revolution had begun, and it was not to stop, of course, inside the secondary modern school.

Great attention, however, continued to be paid by the BBC to the requirements of grammar schools.<sup>2</sup> A writer in *The Times Educational Supplement* might argue that 'a nightly rendezvous with the Third Programme' would be 'the best recipe for the cultural education of sixth forms',<sup>3</sup> but talks to sixth forms—including talks for those first year sixth-formers who did not wish to go on to university—were a basic element in BBC provision.<sup>4</sup> It is significant, nonetheless, that even in the BBC's grammar school programmes, more attention was paid to arousing interest and stimulating discussion than to covering a 'subject'. There was a sense, indeed, in which such an approach was inherent in school broadcasting, independent of the particular educational philosophies of the day. School broadcasts were not designed to replace the teacher but to support him or her in the regular school round.

In 1947, when the outline of the first post-war programme of broadcasts was accepted, each broadcast was deliberately conceived of 'not as a lesson but as something which the class

<sup>1</sup> \*'Notes on School Broadcasting in 1947', 20 May 1947; see also K. V. Bailey, *The Listening Schools* (1957).

<sup>2</sup> \*'Listening in Grammar Schools', 19 Oct. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28 Feb. 1952. The article was an interesting one. Its author complained, for example, that sixth-form pupils studying languages were not told that 'Caen and Cologne are in ruins' or that France has been liberated and Germany occupied. 'The responsibilities of topicality have been skillfully eluded.'

<sup>4</sup> \*'Talks for Sixth Forms and for the General Sixth', 10 Oct. 1954.

teacher can build into his own teaching'.<sup>1</sup> Although some broadcasts took the form of 'straight talks', there were many more in the form of 'plays, dramatised stories, fantasies, or performances of literary and musical material'. Their explicit aim was usually 'not directly didactic or instructional', but 'to arouse and guide the children's imagination and interest'.<sup>2</sup> The broadcasts were planned as series within a framework of three terms, each of ten to twelve weeks, with specific 'commissions' being issued in October and the complete annual programme for the school year being published the following June. A subsidiary object of each series was to present radio as an art form in its own right and to encourage selective and critical listening.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the wide range of weekly programmes, there were daily ten-minute news commentaries and twice-a-week religious services for schools.

Although the new sub-committees were school- and child-centred, the School Broadcasting Council still carried out yearly reviews 'subject by subject'. These were part of a five-year plan which started in 1947 with a review of Science and Religious Instruction broadcasts for the sixth forms of grammar schools, and which continued in 1948 with a review of Music and History, at the primary school stage, and a review of History and Social Studies at the secondary stage in 1949. A general review in 1952 completed the cycle, and covered developments in every subject and for every age group. Each review covered teachers' notes and pupils' illustrated pamphlets as well as broadcasts.

'Social Studies' provides a good example of the kind of useful review of an interesting field which was then being taught in some schools for the first time. Long before the Schools Council was set up by the Government to consider teaching fields and methods, the BBC's School Broadcasting Council was considering Social Studies as a 'field' and relating it at one end of the educational process to earlier school studies, such as History, and at the other end to the range of new opportunities for teachers created by the extension of the school leaving age to

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by R. Postgate, Head of School Broadcasting, 25 Nov. 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.; 'Chain of Processes in School Broadcasting', 1949.

fifteen and its possible later extension to sixteen.<sup>1</sup> The Social Studies Review described, for instance, how a series called 'For the Fourteens' had taken the place of an earlier series called 'Panorama' (a title soon to be employed elsewhere).<sup>2</sup> Both series were very carefully and critically reviewed, as was 'The World of Work' which had taken the place of an earlier series on Citizenship.<sup>3</sup> The quality of this report was outstanding, and it took full account of suggestions made by listeners to BBC programmes without being restricted by what they had said. So, too, did *English and Broadcasting in Primary Schools* and *English and Broadcasting in Secondary Schools* which explained frankly why all attempts to stimulate reading and writing among school-children by broadcasts had failed.<sup>4</sup>

It is not always easy to say whether the BBC through the School Broadcasting Council was reflecting new tendencies in teaching or whether it was itself initiating them. It is beyond doubt, however, that it was very successfully diffusing new ideas. The quinquennial review of 1952 showed that there was significantly more broadcasting for schools in 1952-3 than there had been in 1947-8—thirty-six series (with four repeats) as against thirty-one (with one repeat)—and that the additional series were concerned in about equal proportions with primary and secondary schools. It showed, too, that at both primary and secondary levels more extensive provision was now being made for older than for younger children, and that as many as ten programmes a week were being broadcast exclusively for thirteen- to fifteen-year-olds. The number of 'listening schools' had increased to 26,778 in 1953-4 from 14,794 in 1945-6. The figure for 1955 was 28,000, when it was claimed that 'extensive use was being made of the broadcasts even when reception was not consistently good'.

Given that the BBC could not afford to allot any more time

<sup>1</sup> \*'Social Studies in Secondary Schools', June 1950.      <sup>2</sup> See below, p. 993.

<sup>3</sup> There is an interesting article on the 'For the Fourteens' series in *The Journal of Education*, Nov. 1950: '“For the Fourteens” will contribute to general education without being tied to specific curricular subjects. . . . It takes into account the interest of children in the modern world outside the school, recognises the concern of teachers to give additional significance to education to children in their final year at school, and tries to encourage the spirit of enquiry and to arouse increased awareness of values by posing questions for discussion.'

<sup>4</sup> \*See also, for example, 'English and Broadcasting in Secondary Schools', June 1951.

or resources to school broadcasting, the only ways of changing the size of the BBC's output in 1952-3 would have been to reduce the length of individual programmes from twenty minutes to fifteen, to plan fewer series, and to offer more repeats. The balance of the output was, of course, more open for modification. Some teachers felt—and it was one of the few serious criticisms of BBC output—that the composition of the programmes still reflected a tendency 'to starve' the less able child at the expense of the more able and the small school at the expense of the big school. Such criticism was to have a marked influence on future policy. Some of the issues—and the problems—were discussed in July 1954 at a Study Course for producers and directors of educational and cultural television programmes organized jointly by the BBC and UNESCO. The conference dealt not only with 'formal' educational programmes for schools but with 'educative' programmes designed both for children and adults.

Television figured at the conference, although progress with educational television in Britain was slow and at times uneasy. There were forceful opponents, inside and outside the BBC, even of initial 'experiments' with television. Among them was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher, a schoolmaster by origin, who hit the headlines in 1952 when he described television for schools as 'nothing less than a perfect disaster' because it drove 'yet another wedge' between the teacher and the pupil. On this occasion it was *The Times* which rallied to the defence of educational broadcasting both by sound and by television. It pointed out, correctly, that 'the success of any broadcast, sound or television, depends on the teacher's active presence'. It suggested, also, that whatever the prognostications, 'the appeal to eyes as well as ears should prove stronger than the appeal to ears alone'.<sup>1</sup>

Even before the war, the Central Council for School Broadcasting had turned its attention to the possibilities of school television, and during the war its Policy Revision Committee had expressed the opinion that 'television may in due course make an important contribution to education'.<sup>2</sup> Fears were

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 10 March 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of the Policy Revision Sub-Committee, Oct. 1946. See above, pp. 41, 388.

expressed, however, about 'premature inauguration' before 'the properties of the new medium' had been studied;<sup>1</sup> and when Haley addressed the first ordinary meeting of the Executive Committee of the new School Broadcasting Council in 1947, he was still talking in terms not of programmes but of 'experiments'. He added, moreover, as he always did in every context, that 'the Corporation regarded television as a development of sound broadcasting' and that developments in both media should be considered together.<sup>2</sup> There was a parallel in this connection between what was happening in educational and in religious programming.<sup>3</sup>

Two years later—almost to the day—the full Council was enlivened by a demonstration of telerecordings of various extracts from television programmes which had been chosen to illustrate different techniques of television production, and a number of members of Council visited Alexandra Palace to watch programmes in the making.<sup>4</sup> A year after that—on 10 November 1950—Haley, accompanied by Norman Collins and Mary Adams, attended a Council meeting at which they outlined the remaining problems. They seemed to be massive. 'The rate of expansion was conditioned by the Government's capital investment programme', coverage was still inadequate, and no large screens were being manufactured for classroom use. The general advice given by Haley was that since plans for School Television could not come to fruition for some time, those who had the responsibility for developing broadcasting in schools should not take the imminence of a School Television Service as 'a reason for avoiding this responsibility'.<sup>5</sup> In other words, concentrate on Sound.

New moves, however, were beginning to be made, and in March 1951 a School Television Sub-committee was set up under the chairmanship of J. L. Longland, Chief Education

<sup>1</sup> \*There is a note by R. N. Armfelt, 15 June 1944, suggesting that there would be 'a long transition period' before schools were equipped with television receivers and that in the meantime sound broadcasting to schools should increase.

<sup>2</sup> \*School Broadcasting Council, Executive Committee, *Minutes*, 10 Nov. 1947.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 782.

<sup>4</sup> \*School Broadcasting Council, *Minutes*, 11 Nov. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 10 Nov. 1950. For Collins's more positive views, see above, p. 236. The BBC had told the Beveridge Committee that it believed that 'television has a big part to play in school broadcasting and is studying its future possibilities' (Cmd. 8117, para. 59, p. 20).

Officer for Derbyshire and a well-known and very lively broadcaster, to prepare and supervise 'a joint experiment with the BBC' to ascertain 'the educational contribution that television has to offer to schools' and to consider related technical and economic questions concerning television and 'other visual aids'.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the stilted term 'visual aids' remained fashionable inside and outside the BBC for several years to come, and it did little to hint at the increased potential of television as a visual medium.<sup>2</sup> Yet the joint 'experiment' was a valuable, if protracted, one and a (delayed) pilot study took place in May 1952.<sup>3</sup>

The pilot or 'prototype' consisted of a study of twenty television programmes of twenty to thirty minutes in length on five groups of subjects transmitted to six schools in Middlesex on a special wavelength not normally used for transmission. The only three BBC educational producers who had any training in television were seconded to Alexandra Palace to help make them. Part of the object of the experiment was to test schools' reaction to the broadcasts, which were also watched by large numbers of journalists. There was obviously much to learn and in the words of the final Report, the pilot proved to be 'an experiment in very direction, not only in the exploration of programme technique with which it was intended principally to deal'.

The main points picked out in the Report constitute 'a useful anthology'.<sup>4</sup> Among them were the statements that there were gains for the school viewer in straightforward informative

<sup>1</sup> \*School Broadcasting Council, Executive Committee, *Minutes*, 9 March 1951. The Executive gave the Sub-Committee power to act on its behalf in planning and supervision. The Sub-Committee met on 5 July 1951.

<sup>2</sup> A change in approach became apparent during the later 1960s after the publication of the Brynmor Jones Report, 'Audio-Visual Aids in Higher Scientific Education' (HMSO 1965). The following year an important conference was held at the University of Sussex, and the papers delivered there, along with a report of the Conference, were published in *Educational Television and Radio in Britain: Present Provision and Future Possibilities*. See also K. Fawdry, 'Television for Schools' (BBC Lunch-Time Lecture, 1967) and Central Office of Information, *Educational Television and Radio in Britain* (1971).

<sup>3</sup> This had been planned originally for November to December 1951 or January to March 1952, but the BBC's Outside Broadcast Unit was not available.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report on the Pilot Experiment, 10 March 1953. The Council saw excerpts of the telerecordings at its meeting on 17 Nov. 1952. The Sub-Committee had been presented with a Memorandum on 5 July 1951 which made many of their points before the experiment started.

outside broadcasts, like *A Modern Dairy Farm*, in portrayals of young (or old) people at work, for example in *A Job with People* or *Meeting the Craftsmen*, and in programmes which gave 'the illusion of being on the spot', as in *Men Against Volcanoes*. There was also a 'potential', it was argued, in 'clear logical exposition' reinforced by 'visuals not within the range of the average teacher's equipment'—of the type used in *How an Aeroplane Stays up*—and at the other end of the scale in the presentation of 'clashes of personalities in unscripted discussion on a topic of the moment', as in *Canal Zone*, the latter a foretaste, perhaps, of Suez, not far round the corner. Television, the report concluded, had 'some contribution to make in the range of subject matter selected for the programmes'. The programmes, however, would have 'to reach a higher and more consistent general level of performance before they could be considered a satisfactory counterpart, even of an experimental type, to a School Broadcasting Service in Sound, or could escape unfavourable comparison with educational film'.<sup>1</sup>

A few passages in the Report, like those dealing with the role of 'personality' in television, retain their interest. 'Was one to choose the man who really knew what he was talking about, and risk the consequences of inexperience in the studio—or go for a hardened professional (probably an actor) without any deep knowledge of the subject in question, and trust him to learn his lines and cope?'<sup>2</sup> Other passages, by contrast, reveal dated anxieties, and demonstrate that educational television was still being treated with studied reserve. There were even a few believers in educational film who rated film very highly as compared with educational television. 'Why can't we have all this on film?' they asked.

Arguments about arts and techniques were less decisive, however, than arguments about money. The School Television Sub-committee did not believe that 'the main experiment' could begin effectively until Local Education Authorities were prepared to equip three hundred to six hundred schools with still expensive television sets. Yet the Association of Education Committees had told the Sub-committee during the winter of 1951-2—even before the pilot had started—that it would be a

<sup>1</sup> K. Fawdry, *Everything but Alf Garnett* (1974), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report on the Pilot Experiment, 10 March 1953.



mistake to approach Local Education Authorities with the request to buy them. The Authorities would all be anxious to 'get over both their budgets and the forthcoming elections',<sup>1</sup> and the Ministry of Education was asking not for new spending but for cuts. Later in the year, indeed, the Ministry of Education itself made it plain that 'no official support could be given to any proposal that involved capital expenditure of any order, in the foreseeable future, by L.E.A.s on the purchase of television sets'.<sup>2</sup> Mary Somerville took this negative direction very philosophically, perhaps too philosophically. 'I have unhappy memories', she said, 'of the years following the May Committee Report of 1931, when we prejudiced the position of Sound School Broadcasting, or so I was led to believe, by going full steam ahead regardless of the economic state of the nation, which made it difficult for the then Board of Education to maintain its attitude of benevolent neutrality.'<sup>3</sup>

If either sound broadcasting or television had had to wait for the positive encouragement, backed by finance, of the Ministry of Education, it would have been waiting still. And in 1953, after all, it was not so much the May Report which was in most people's minds as the Beveridge Report. In the Beveridge Committee, too, however, the voices of encouragement for educational television had been muted. It concluded in its Report that television was 'an expensive medium' and that educational television might 'have to await further progress in television technique and in receiver design and production. . . . To extend television here seems at this stage less important than to make full use of sound.'<sup>4</sup> Barnes fully backed Mary Somerville's cautious approach when he warned the Secretary of the School Broadcasting Council not to press the Minister of Education for action. 'The rate of development of television in this country since the war has been regulated by the Government of the day through capital investment control. The School Broadcasting experiment, which if successful might lead to the

<sup>1</sup> \*Steele to Gater, 29 Feb. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*School Broadcasting Council, *Minutes*, 4 April 1952. The main experiment was deferred again in 1953 (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 22 Jan. 1953). P. Wilson (H.M.I.) to Steele, 8 Dec. 1952, in reply to a letter of 27 Nov. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Miss Somerville to Barnes, 2 Jan. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Cmd. 8116, paras. 274-5, pp. 71-2.

establishment of a service, is a major development involving capital equipment and building as well as staff. It can therefore only be undertaken when the actual situation permits, and that is a matter for the BBC to decide in consultation with the Treasury in the light of other major developments required in the Television Service.’<sup>1</sup>

Barnes was ignoring the fact, which he well knew, that competitive television was around the corner and that the commercial companies might not necessarily feel so inhibited. In retrospect, the BBC was moving far too slowly. If there were grounds for caution, they were better expressed by Mary Somerville as she shifted her own ground and said that ‘undeniably good School Television programmes will only be made by people fully self-confident in their use of the new medium’.<sup>2</sup> The fact that many Local Education Authorities were more enterprising than civil servants in Whitehall—or officials of the BBC—emerged in the autumn of 1952 when an inquiry conducted by the Association of Education Committees showed that three-fifths were in favour of educational television and that 100 out of 146 were prepared to meet the costs.<sup>3</sup> Their willingness to provide five hundred sets was checked when the new Conservative Minister of Education, Florence Horsbrugh, claimed that the economic situation was not favourable enough for the pilot experiment to be followed through.

The fear of competitive television at last emerged publicly in March 1954 when Steele told Sir Gilbert Flemming, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, that ‘television broadcasting to schools when it comes should be developed out of the established broadcasting service to schools in sound, under the

<sup>1</sup> \*Barnes to Steele, 30 April 1953; School Television Sub-Committee, *Minutes*, 12 Feb. 1953; Executive Committee, *Minutes*, 14 March 1953; Memorandum, ‘Estimate of Educational Value of Television Broadcast Service to Schools’, Feb. 1953; Press Release, 18 March 1953. Barnes continued to argue in terms of capital investment when he addressed the Executive Committee of the School Broadcasting Council on 10 July 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Miss Somerville to Barnes, 2 Jan. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Steele to Alexander, 14 Sept. 1953; Alexander to Steele, 1 Oct. 1953; *The Times*, 30 Jan. 1954, ‘A substantial number of Local Education Authorities appear to be in favour of trying television in schools’. Steele wrote to the Minister of Education reporting this result on 10 Feb. 1954, but again there was a long delay. A meeting finally took place at the Ministry with representatives of the School Broadcasting Council in April 1954.

control of the Council, and building on the BBC's unique experience in this field.<sup>1</sup>

BBC educational television did not start until after the advent of commercial television, for almost everybody in authority needed to be convinced still further about the case for it, and it was 'outsiders' who set the pace. The School Broadcasting Council asked for an 'experimental service' in November 1954,<sup>2</sup> but Jacob told it firmly that there could be no television service until the BBC acquired a second channel in 1957 or 1958.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, David Eccles, who succeeded Florence Horsbrugh as Minister in November 1954, was reported, rightly or wrongly, as being 'a little sceptical'. 'He still needs to be convinced', Flemming told the Chairman of the School Broadcasting Council in July 1955, 'that the case for providing a special television service for schools has been established.'<sup>4</sup> He was willing to study further experiments, but he was unwilling to provide any extra money. In July 1955 Jacob and the Governors changed their mind about the need to wait for a second channel, but even then they added the rider that while a service would begin in September 1957 it would be 'terminated at the end of two years if it had not by then proved its worth to the schools'.<sup>5</sup>

John Scupham, who in 1955 had been in charge of School Broadcasting for five years, must have been relieved by this decision.<sup>6</sup> When all around were sceptical, he had written sensibly in December 1954 that 'the onus of . . . further delay . . . should patently lie with the Ministry'. He did not know 'anybody who is in touch with what school broadcasting does in Sound, and who has given serious thought to Television for schools, who doubts whether further experimental work in school Television should be undertaken as soon as possible. The *obiter dicta* of Bishops and public school headmasters, who are

<sup>1</sup> \*Steele to Flemming, 30 March 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*School Broadcasting Council, *Minutes*, 12 Nov. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Director-General's report to the Governors, 25 Nov. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Flemming to Sir Charles Morris, 7 July 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 21 July 1955, following School Broadcasting Council, *Minutes*, 8 July 1955. Cf. *The Times Radio and Television Supplement*, Aug. 1954: 'it seems likely that a television schools' service is still some years off'.

<sup>6</sup> Scupham had joined the BBC as Education Officer (Home Counties) in August 1946. In October 1950 he became Head of School Broadcasting and in December 1954 Head of Educational Broadcasting. He was to become Controller, Educational Broadcasting, in 1963.

generally quite unaware of the conditions and problems of the teacher in the ordinary school, are not to be taken as seriously in this context as educational opinion.’<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Barnes, who believed that television was ‘merciless in its revelation of the lack of quality both in content and production’, was pondering on the deeper implications for education of a television culture: ‘the emphasis is placed on things rather than on ideas, and this may indicate a return to a language of decreasing abstraction’. But on this occasion he was sanguine. ‘It cannot provide the disciplines and detailed techniques of study, yet it will do good if we lose the habit of thinking about what we should do so much that we do not notice what is happening.’<sup>2</sup>

## 7. Sport

ALREADY between 1945 and 1955 sport, well outside the range of the ‘Further Education Experiment’—perhaps unfortunately so—preoccupied the BBC as much as education. These years, however, were not a golden age in the history of British sport, although there was no shortage of happenings and stadiums were crowded and people flocked to professional or semi-professional games as never before. The all-time peak of football attendance was reached in 1948–9, when more than forty-one million people attended Football League matches; and Bradman’s last Test in 1948, an overwhelming Australian triumph, raised immense popular interest in cricket, interest which did not flag even in 1949, when England failed to win any of four test matches against New Zealand or in 1950 when it lost three out of four test matches to the West Indies. Perhaps winning did not matter much. The exuberant West Indian

<sup>1</sup>\*Scupham to Miss Somerville, 16 Dec. 1954; *The Times Educational Supplement*, 3 Dec. 1954. Some evidence had been collected about foreign educational television, for example in France (Note by Fawdry, 27 April 1954) and in Canada (a CBC report, *Television in the Classroom*). See also Scupham, ‘The BBC and Educational Responsibilities’, 14 Oct. 1957, and his article on ‘Aims of School Television’ in *The Listener*, 28 April 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Notes for lecture at the opening of the Annual Conference of the Educational Development Association, 13 April 1955 (Barnes Papers).

Lord Kitchener's calypso on the hallowed turf at Lords was itself an event for the crowd. So, too, was the boxer Bruce Woodcock's *defeat* at the White City, by the far less well-known American, Lee Savold. There was an immense increase in the number of BBC hours devoted to sporting topics during these years. There was also an immense increase in the amount of time devoted to the politics of sport behind the scenes, with both Haley and Jacob sometimes finding themselves directly involved at the very top.

Sound broadcasting of sport had settled into a regular set of routines, if not always smooth ones, before 1939,<sup>1</sup> but as the number of television licences rose, the new medium posed new problems and created new opportunities. The BBC had bought its sport cheap before 1939, just as professional football clubs were buying the services of their players cheap even after 1945. But television, it was quickly realized by those in the know, would change the terms. Some of the most important interests promoting spectator sports, particularly boxing, thought at first of television as a possible 'gold mine': they looked eagerly across the Atlantic, taking the United States as a reference point. Very quickly, however, financial considerations began to be looked on in a different way. As the number of viewers increased, there was as much fear as hope amongst promoters about the future—fear of falling attendances at football matches or county cricket games; fear too, perhaps, of a certain loss of independence.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of the secretary of the British Boxing Board of Control, television, even as it existed in 1947, could not 'but be detrimental to professional boxing', and future developments, he thought, would 'inevitably aggravate this position'.<sup>3</sup> In football, such opinions were often held as dogmas. 'He stated [that] he was completely opposed to television,' Ian Orr-Ewing told Alfred Drewry of the Football League about Drewry's colleague Fred Howarth, the Football League's secretary, 'and would do all he could to prevent it';<sup>4</sup> and five years later Drewry himself told S. J. de Lotbinière, the

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 119–21.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Gorham, 11 Dec. 1945.

<sup>3</sup> \*C. F. Donmall to Dorté, 5 Dec. 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Orr-Ewing to Drewry, 15 Aug. 1947; Howarth to Dimmock, 27 July 1946: 'Television of Football League matches has not been permitted, nor is it likely to be permitted in the near future.'

Head of Television Outside Broadcasts, that 'in the face of falling gates and increased . . . charges by way of duty' there was little possibility that football clubs would ever be friendly to live television.<sup>1</sup>

Minor spectator sports—some of them anxious to extend their appeal—and most participatory sports, many of them increasingly challenged by 'professionalism', usually welcomed the publicity given them on radio and television. Even in their case, however, there were traces of suspicion of both radio and television. The 'media', still not treated generically by commentators and critics, were already beginning to be thought of as competitors for people's leisure time rather than as allies in winning new recruits to the gymnasium or to the playing fields. The BBC, nonetheless, made much of the support that it offered to bodies like the Amateur Swimming Association and of the argument that 'the new promoter [of sport] will rate publicity high and threat to attendance low (e.g. in basketball)'.<sup>2</sup>

In 1952, de Lotbinière tried to generalize both about the logic of the situation and its history. 'Most promoters want all the money they can get in addition to publicity—so that on every occasion there is an equation to be worked out, i.e. publicity plus facility fee must equal threat to attendance (or believed threat). . . . In the early days of radio the threat to attendance was at first ignored. Then later the publicity value was under-estimated. The BBC has now achieved a fairly stable equation by paying reasonably generous facility fees for the ordinary run of top line events and by some limitation, in the case of football, on the length of the broadcast.'<sup>3</sup> It should be added that the BBC always offered 'facility fees' and not fees for 'the right to broadcast'.

This statement was a distillation of experience, yet as early as 1947 Maurice Gorham, the Head of the Television Service, expressed the view that the BBC eventually would have to pay far more for television than for sound broadcasts of sport, 'as

<sup>1</sup> \*Drewry to de Lotbinière, 10 June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Farquharson, 11 March 1952. The BBC tried out basketball for the first time in 1954, *Burtonwood Bounders v. Bomber Command 3 Group RAF*.

<sup>3</sup> \**ibid.*

we are buying the event where Sound is merely buying the right to have someone describe it'.<sup>1</sup> Both this assessment and the mature judgement of de Lotbinière in 1952 conveyed a degree of sophistication which had not been apparent in a note which Haley produced on the subject in 1946 and which was accepted by the Governors. Largely, of course, with sound broadcasting in mind, Haley enjoined that the BBC should 'resist all high fees, particularly for racing and boxing, claim free access and facilities wherever they were given to the Press and pay only nominal fees when it broadcast'. It could be argued, Haley had gone on, that 'even the fees we pay are out of proportion to the facilities offered and that broadcasting has shown its power to benefit sport. . . . It is doubtful if there is any general public sympathy with those who seek to force the BBC to pay high fees.'<sup>2</sup> Four years later the Governors had still not advanced far from this 1946 position. Sound fees, they decided, were to be 'frozen', even when separate fees were negotiated for television—fees, of course, which were to be as favourable to the BBC as possible.<sup>3</sup>

Without de Lotbinière, who was well known personally to large numbers of people in the world of sport, the Governors could never have enforced such a policy. It was he—and later Peter Dimmock—not they, who represented continuity in practical negotiations. De Lotbinière was right to recognize that the question of fees needed to be carefully sorted out along different lines from before the war. Bargaining realistically with sporting interests was essential, but attention would have to be paid throughout to the total cost of broadcast and televised sport as a major item—one of many—in a limited BBC budget. Before and during the war, many anomalies had arisen and obviously many of them would have to be ironed out. Some institutions had waived fees altogether—either through

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Orr-Ewing, 29 March 1947. Note also Outside Broadcasts Meeting, *Minutes*, 25 April 1946: 'D.O.B. said that the start of Television might mean that sports promoters would force up O.B. fees.' In 1946 there were some differences inside the Corporation as to how best to fix sound fees. Some BBC officials already advocated more attention being paid to 'programme value' and 'public relations' (R. McCall to J. B. Clark, 10 July 1946).

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley, 20 June 1946; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 27 June 1946.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 20 Nov. 1950. Note also a Report of the Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 16 June 1949: 'A rise in existing fees for sporting events may be considered only in exceptional circumstances.'

innocence of consequences or desire for BBC publicity. Moreover, much bargaining had been localized or regionalized, and a complex patchwork of fees had been knitted together with no sense of system. As a North Regional administrator stated in 1948, everything depended 'on the astuteness of the Outside Broadcasters in striking a bargain, and a rather pathetic trust that the promoter will not find out next time. It is an old-fashioned business method outlook and unworthy of the BBC.'<sup>1</sup>

In the evolution of a 'sense of system' there were different chronological stages for each of the different sports. Thus, in 1950 the principle was established that, 'given comparable facilities, the fee for Test Matches should be the same wherever they were taking place';<sup>2</sup> and in advance of the cricket season in 1951, 'model rules' both for Test Matches and County games were prepared. The MCC was not alone in seeking to establish a definitive relationship between numbers of sound and television licences and the levels of fees: indeed, there was a tendency on the part of many sports organizations 'to charge all that the traffic will bear and rather more'. The BBC was bound to resist such pressure, and it was in face of lower income and rising costs all round that in 1952 de Lotbinière felt obliged to tell Colonel Rait-Kerr, the secretary of the MCC, without any beating around the bush, that 'if you want to put fees up, it can only mean reduced coverage'.<sup>3</sup> As in the case of football clubs, country cricket clubs were always seeking to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of BBC coverage. 'Apparently the County Clubs are quite convinced that even restricted "live" television is harming their attendances,' Peter Dimmock wrote in 1955, 'and, more important still, not necessarily helping with the growth of the game.'<sup>4</sup>

'Sports promoters and sports control boards have the feeling', de Lotbinière concluded in 1953, 'that we are exploiting their material in relation to the fees that we pay for other forms of entertainment. . . . We have got to make up our minds to spending more money on our sport generally. . . . We have got to deal with these authorities year after year, and it does not

<sup>1</sup> \*P. Robinson to de Lotbinière, 4 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Col. R. S. Rait-Kerr, 31 Jan. 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Rait-Kerr, 4 Jan. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*Dimmock to McGivern, 10 March 1955.



pay us to strike a bargain that may subsequently appear to have been very much in our favour. To my mind if you are dealing with people who have got something that you want year after year, then the essence of a good bargain is one that suits both sides.<sup>1</sup>

This was the beginning of a new policy which was to be pushed further in an age of competitive television.<sup>2</sup> De Lotbinière knew from experience that cheapness was not always the best policy, particularly when telefilming and telerecording rights entered the reckoning; 'Part of the problem with sport,' he maintained, 'is that the BBC offers fees below the material's real programme value in relation to other programmes and their cost.'<sup>3</sup> Yet even his 'fairly stable equations' of 1952 became highly volatile between 1952 and 1955, particularly with the imminent approach of competitive television. Fees rose sharply, and contracts of a quite new kind—longer in duration and more specific in their conditions—were signed not only with the Football Association (in February 1955), covering both sound and television,<sup>4</sup> but with the International Horse Show, which had enjoyed very high audience ratings in 1954,<sup>5</sup> and with Mecca for twelve *Come Dancing* programmes.<sup>6</sup> For the 1946 Wimbledon, Sound had paid 75 guineas and Television £150: the inclusive figure for 1952 was £1,250, a sharp rise on 1951, and for 1955, £5,000. Sound broadcasting facility fees

<sup>1</sup> \*de Lotbinière to McGivern, 2 Jan. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Dimmock to de Lotbinière, 21 Aug. 1952: 'If sponsored television becomes fact, promoters are sure to demand higher fees. It is therefore perhaps an advantage to be without any outrageously expensive precedents.'

<sup>3</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 13 Feb. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Agreement of 14 Feb. 1955. The Agreement provided for six live transmissions during the second half of matches or the last hour, the selection to be made by Football League management and the BBC subject to the agreement of the Clubs. Location was never to be announced in the *Radio Times*. A certain number of matches could be filmed or telerecorded for transmission in the late evening provided at least six weeks' notice was given.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dimmock to McGivern, 19 Jan. 1955.

<sup>6</sup> \*Dimmock to C. L. Heimann, 10 Feb. 1955; Dimmock to McGivern, 19 Jan. 1955, 'Long-Term Television O.B. Agreements'. Exclusive contracts were not being pressed for at this time, but a guarantee was expected that commercial television would not be offered items or transmission times that were not equally available to the BBC. The policy had been outlined long in advance in an important memorandum of de Lotbinière to Barnes, 13 Feb. 1953, after discussions with Jacob. The Director-General had suggested the possibility of five-year contracts.

rose in most sports along with television fees, and a fee up to 50 guineas could be paid for single 'facilities' without argument in 1954 and 1955: with a few exceptions it was 'up to Programme Heads to decide whether the event is worth covering at the fee asked for'.<sup>1</sup>

Because of issues of this kind, the detailed history of the BBC's approach to sport between 1945 and 1955 is a history not only of memorable sporting events, increased broadcasting activity over a wide range, and the evolution of new arts and techniques of production, but of institutional wrangles, almost always protracted, with occasional moments of dramatic confrontation, usually but not always behind the scenes. The negotiations, as symbolized in the much publicized annual struggle with Mrs. Topham about the Grand National, were part of the game itself.<sup>2</sup> And it was a game of nerves as well as of skills. 'The whole matter of sporting negotiations', Norman Collins wrote in 1950, 'is an exceedingly delicate one, and it is not too much to say that one indiscreet remark may jeopardise everything.'<sup>3</sup>

Needless to say, there were many indiscreet remarks on many occasions. There were also many 'good headaches',<sup>4</sup> as many of them in 1954 and in 1955 as there had been in 1949 and 1950, and it was proving increasingly difficult to separate 'the truth from the braggadocio'.<sup>5</sup> At times, too, the negotiating game was as tiring for the participants as the 'real' game on the field or in the ring: on one occasion, for example, de Lotbinière could write with feeling after a contest about boxing rights in relation to a Turpin bout, 'I sometimes wish I were a Suffolk farmer instead of a broadcaster'.<sup>6</sup> This particular contest was about sound broadcasting fees, but the main influence through-

<sup>1</sup> \*Outside Broadcasts Assistants London Meeting, *Minutes*, 19 Oct. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> For the kind of argument, see a letter from Mrs. M. D. Topham to *The Times*, 25 March 1952. In the same month the matter was discussed in Parliament, when the Attorney-General was told that the fact that negotiations with Mrs. Topham had broken down was 'a very serious matter for old people and people lying ill' (*Hansard*, vol. 498, col. 1150, 31 March 1952). See also *ibid.*, vol. 498, cols. 1650-60, 2 April 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Collins, 'Press and Sporting O.B.s', 26 May 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Madden to Nicolls, 29 Oct. 1945.

<sup>5</sup> \*Miss S. Clarke to Dimmock, 21 April 1955.

<sup>6</sup> \*de Lotbinière to F. S. Gentle, 16 Aug. 1951. There were dangers that the fight might 'go to Luxembourg'.



21. Rehearsal for the Grand National. *Manchester Guardian*, 18 February 1953

out the period, of course, was the shift, incomplete in 1955 but already far reaching in its consequences both for broadcasting and for sport, from sound to television as the main communications medium.

Sport still remained essentially a local, regional and national rather than an international activity in 1945, with occasional Commonwealth events of major importance, like the Test Matches, and with even more occasional international events like big prize fights and the Olympic Games. Yet by 1955, there were signs of a shift in this respect also. Football in particular, had begun to acquire a new international dimension, and a new element of competitive professionalism had been introduced into other sports, including athletics. Test Matches could be thought of as exciting even when Australia was not playing and when the Ashes were not at stake. Television was

well adapted to this transformation; eventually, indeed, it was to speed it up.

The Olympic Games of 1948 (only the second to be held in Britain, forty years after the first, and in this case postponed from before the war) certainly gave a great fillip to sports broadcasting. Sir Arthur Elvin, the Managing Director of Wembley Stadium, where the Games were held, lent the BBC the old Palace of Arts, constructed for the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, to serve as a broadcasting centre with eight radio studios and thirty-two channels. There were fifteen commentary boxes and sixteen open positions in the stadium and sixteen commentary points at the Empire Pool. There were also television facilities, and a coaxial cable was installed between Wembley and Broadcasting House.<sup>1</sup> It was recognized long before the facilities were made ready that there would be ample scope for special programming. 'We are prepared to break into afternoon programmes where possible for peak events,' the Light Programme planners agreed in January 1947,<sup>2</sup> adding that 'all the main events' were to be scheduled and that there were to be 'trailers'.<sup>3</sup>

To make such large-scale broadcasting possible, both staff and equipment from the Regions were mobilized in London for the period from 15 July to 14 August. The title of the daily programme was *Olympic Sports-reel*,<sup>4</sup> and a fourth camera was used 'overlooking Olympic Way' to catch pictures of the crowds as well as of the contestants.<sup>5</sup> The fact there were very few British victories—there were 6,000 competitors in the field—did not dispel the excitement. The outside broadcasting output was twice that originally intended.

There was a close understanding between Wembley, which could take 100,000 people, and the BBC before and after the Olympic Games. Sound broadcasting, indeed, had already prepared the way when Gorham met Elvin in December 1945 and found him 'anxious to have BBC television of sporting

<sup>1</sup> See L. Hotine, 'Broadcasting the Olympic Games' in *BBC Year Book, 1949*, pp. 55-8.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 23 Jan. 1947, 14 June 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 26 Feb., 5 March 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 9 July 1948.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Dimmock, 26 March 1949.

events in his stadium'. Home-screen television of all his promotions, Elvin felt, was 'good publicity', although he did not see why cinemas should make money by showing his sporting events to rival crowds.<sup>1</sup> This was to be a point made by many other sports promoters and governing bodies besides Elvin. As for the BBC, organizers and commentators alike recognized that Wembley was a very special place, 'the home of thrills and excitement', as Kenneth Wolstenholme called it, but also 'the home of perfect organisation'.<sup>2</sup>

The 1948 Olympics—with Emil Gailly, Fanny Blankers-Koen and Emil Zatopek—showed how international sport could suggest very different perspectives from those associated with international politics. So, too, eventually could international soccer, which had counted for little before 1939<sup>3</sup> and which was only beginning fully to register with the crowds at the end of the period covered in this volume. The visit of the Russian team Moscow Dynamo in November 1945—four games were played—pointed, if few people realized it, to a new future; and international soccer, including amateur soccer, was televised intermittently throughout the ten years after 1948 with the consent of the Football Association, even when television of domestic League games was banned or restricted. The first such match was a traditional England versus Scotland contest in April 1947, when there was such an immense roar after England had equalized that the commentator—like the engineers—was thrown off his balance. In the England/Italy match of November 1949, there was a foretaste of much that was to come, when the commentators, key figures in the history of BBC sport (and requiring different arts in sound broadcasting and television), were told to 'build partisanship in the viewer' while not groaning whenever an English movement broke down: 'if we are to err at all, let us err on the side of being generous to the visitors'.<sup>4</sup> There was to be trouble later when 'too much bias' was shown by sound broadcasting commentators in some of the key matches with Hungarian teams.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Gorham, 7 Dec. 1945.

<sup>2</sup> K. Wolstenholme, *Sports Special* (1958), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> England had played only thirty internationals in the period 1930–9. See *ibid.*, ch. 9, and J. Walvin, *The People's Game* (1975), ch. 6. 'The Insular Game'.

<sup>4</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Chivers, 29 Nov. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Notes on Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 17 Dec. 1954.

In 1950, England took part for the first time in the World Cup (in Brazil) after the Home Championships had been treated as a qualifying competition: the defeat by the United States by one goal to nil was one of the greatest sporting shocks of all time, and perhaps it was fortunate that British viewers did not see the match. They did see part of the later match with Argentina in 1951, however, when it had become abundantly clear that England was no longer 'on a pedestal' in international football;<sup>1</sup> and after such an experience they should have been ready for the arrival of the Hungarians, 'the mighty Magyars', in 1953.<sup>2</sup> Two days before the remarkable and decisive match at Wembley between England and Hungary in November of that year, which Hungary won by six goals to three, Willi Meisl, author of *Soccer Revolution* (1955), had had the idea of a BBC programme on 'the difference in style of football played by the English and the Continentals'. After the match, there was no need for such a programme, and the difference was further demonstrated when Hungary beat England by seven goals to one in the return match in Budapest.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, at one of the next international matches in Britain, that between England and Germany in December 1954, the Hungarian section of the BBC was given a commentary point of its own.<sup>4</sup> The whole of this match was televised for English viewers, but the Match and Grounds Committee of the Football Association objected at first to the televising of a match between Germany and France, and allowed the televising of the last thirty-five minutes only on condition that it was not announced in advance.<sup>5</sup> Instead, a large-screen rediffusion of the game 'live' was provided in a few cinemas including the Gaumont Cinema in Manchester: 'a large num-

<sup>1</sup> The Republic of Ireland had already beaten England in 1950, the first home defeat by an international side from outside the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> See D. Signy, *A Pictorial History of Soccer* (1968), p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> \*Chivers to de Lotbinière, 23 Nov. 1953; BBC script of a talk by a Hungarian sports journalist: 'All those who have seen the match at Wembley . . . and since then studied the sports column of the English newspapers could have foretold the outcome of the match at Budapest. The English footballers have learnt nothing during the past six months. The Hungarians could have scored even ten goals with a bit of luck.'

<sup>4</sup> \*G. Peck to Rous, 4 Aug. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dimmock to Rous, 1 Sept. 1954; Rous to Dimmock, 2 Sept., 5 Oct. 1954. The Committee objected that 'not only would Football League matches be affected but also thousands of amateur matches throughout the country'.

ber of grandmothers were buried in Manchester today', a BBC official told his colleagues in London.<sup>1</sup>

England won this match against Germany, the surprise World Cup champions of 1954, but it was not an impressive victory; and a further match between England and Europe in Belfast in August 1955, which was not televised live,<sup>2</sup> only served, in the words of a breathless commentator, 'to confirm the difference between the football standards of Britain and the Continent'.<sup>3</sup> The England versus Spain match of November 1955 was won by England, however, by four goals to one, as England was on the eve of a transformation of its national game. Parts of this match were slotted into *Sportsview* and there were also Eurovision relays. In 1956, just around the corner, Manchester United, youthful winners of the League Championship, were to commit themselves to taking part in the new European Cup.<sup>4</sup>

The Thursday night *Sportsview* programme itself was the climax of the BBC's activity during this period. It was not the first or only programme of its kind, and must be placed in time in relation to sound broadcasting's *Sports Review*, *Calling all Sportsmen*,<sup>5</sup> *Sports Special* (there was a pre-war programme with this title), *Tomorrow's Sport*,<sup>6</sup> *National Sportsreel*, *Sporting Record*, programmes like *Saturday Sports Report*, brilliantly edited by Angus Mackay, *Sports Round-up* and *Sports Forum*.

The first of such programmes goes back to the very beginning of the period. In the year 1945, within a few months of the end of the war, a 'Sports Club Magazine/Sportsmen's Club' was being planned.<sup>7</sup> Suggested ingredients were 'Headline of the Week—Curiosities—History of Sports Venues—Topical Parallels (Continental/English sports)—Quiz on rules'.<sup>8</sup> *Sports Report* on the Light Programme was a direct challenge to the

<sup>1</sup> \*D. Burrell-Davis to Dimmock, 2 Dec. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Dimmock told Joanna Spicer on 29 June 1955 that he had 'desperately' hoped that this match would be televised in full live.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Script, 13 Aug. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> See Walvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–2.

<sup>5</sup> \*Gorham to de Lotbinière, 11 June 1945; he said he would gladly take this programme weekly rather than fortnightly every Wednesday.

<sup>6</sup> \*This was a News Division programme with its contents agreed in consultation with Outside Broadcasts (Dimmock to de Lotbinière, 19 July 1945).

<sup>7</sup> \*Notes on Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meetings, 1, 8 Nov. 1945.

<sup>8</sup> \*Ibid., 29 Nov. 1945.

provincial evening football newspapers, the pinks and greens, sold before the war on regular Saturday evening rounds: its five-o'clock report not only of results but of match commentaries was extended by Mackay to include transatlantic interviews and every kind of sporting gossip. *Sports Special* in its post-war form was to have a long uninterrupted run on Sound, and a parallel, but differently conceived, *Television Sports Club* was launched in August 1950, to be followed by *Television Sports Magazine*, which ran to twenty-one editions in 1951 and 1952.

Successful formulae either for sound or for televised sports programmes depended on an effective appeal to the inveterate interest of sports spectators in current news, as was clear when *Sports Special* came into existence on the Light Programme in 1946.<sup>1</sup> Likewise *Sportsview*, edited by Paul Fox and produced by Dennis Monger, had the right blend from the start, 8 April 1954, and quickly established itself as one of television's most popular features. 'Welcome sports fans to this first edition of your own programme,' Peter Dimmock stated in the first number, adding at once that 'we hope to bring you through the programme the latest news and views from the world of sport.' Dimmock, then thirty-four years old, soon became just as well known to viewers as he already was to his colleagues in outside broadcasting, inside the BBC, and to every kind of sporting promoter outside it. He had been a racing correspondent for a short time after demobilization, and joined the BBC in May 1946, when Ian Orr-Ewing asked him to negotiate television broadcasts from Sandown Park, Kempton Park and Royal Ascot. His business drive was said to 'rival that of the head of a million-pound commercial firm',<sup>2</sup> and within a few months of the launching of *Sportsview* he was to take over the acting headship of Television Outside Broadcasts.

In the first *Sportsview* programme Dimmock commented on speedway, and Brian Johnston was one of the first commentators on cricket.<sup>3</sup> In some of the early numbers boxing figures prominently, and there were interviews also with Sir Gordon Richards (in hospital), Roger Bannister and David Sheppard.

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 7 Feb. 1946. When it was first discussed, 'the News people' were brought in.

<sup>2</sup> Wolstenholme, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> See B. Johnston, *It's Been a Lot of Fun* (1974), p. 127.



In the tenth programme viewers were shown Trueman and Tyson in action, and were asked who was the faster bowler. *Sportsvie* did much to focus attention on sporting 'personalities', but its greatest strength lay in the fact that it took the word 'latest' very seriously: 'I realise that *Sportsvie* lives by its topicality,' an engineer remarked as early as June 1954. It was a measure of the interest it inspired in the BBC staff who organized it, that little attention was paid in its beginnings to how long it would be kept going or whether it should be presented on a weekly or a fortnightly basis. 'Sufficient unto the day' was the motto. 'If the programme had been a failure,' Dimmock stated, 'then it would not have involved either redundancy or new organisation.'<sup>1</sup>

The length of the programme was, in fact, extended from twenty minutes to thirty minutes in October 1954, a month when the personalities interviewed included Mike Hawthorn, Stirling Moss and Danny Blanchflower.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the *Sportsvie* trophy for the outstanding Television Sportsman or Sportswoman of the Year was introduced. Emphasis was placed throughout on effective presentation. 'We must not accept even "policy" items,' Dimmock argued, 'unless we can be certain of slick presentation.'<sup>3</sup> This 'philosophy' paid. Ten thousand postcards were collected in the 'Sportsman of the Year' contest, and the final programme on the subject was followed soon afterwards with film of the 'Dog of the Year', Paul's Fun, winner of the Greyhound Derby.<sup>4</sup> The draw for the first round of the Rugby League Cup had been broadcast in January 1954; and Don Revie, then a player with Manchester City and central figure in the then famous 'Revie Plan', was interviewed in the following month, as were (after some demur) Jean Prat, the French Rugby Union player, and Lady Docker, preparing for a much publicized marbles contest. Through a tip-off from the McWhirter twins *Sportsvie* cameras

<sup>1</sup> \*Dimmock to Barnes, 14 June 1954.

<sup>2</sup> There was a special whole-hour programme on 21 Sept. 1955. 'Everyone concerned with *Sportsvie* should be congratulated,' the *Evening News* remarked (22 Sept. 1955). 'Sportsvie scores again' was the headline in the *News Chronicle* on the same day.

<sup>3</sup> \*Dimmock to D. Monger, 10 May 1954.

<sup>4</sup> The General Overseas Service of the BBC took up the Sportsman of the Year contest (\*Notes on Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 10 Dec. 1954).

were there to film the whole of the first four-minute mile at what otherwise might have been thought of as a relatively minor athletics event. Tradition was maintained when the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race crews were kept completely separate in the filming of the trials for the great event, and tradition was extended when the British cyclists were shown getting ready for the Tour de France. Yet there could be deliberate breaks with tradition, too, not least in the style of broadcasting. 'Our aim tonight will be to let you know something of what has been happening in the world of sport, and even more of what's going to happen in the next few days.'<sup>1</sup> During the newspaper strike of 1955 this breathless striving after topicality was pushed even further.<sup>2</sup>

The programme switched from Thursday night to Wednesday night in August 1955 after the Press had praised Dimmock for adding 'extra immediacy to his adroit mixture of news and views'; and although Surrey Cricket Club may have disliked the 'pestering' of W. S. Surridge and P. B. H. May by television reporters, and the manager of Hibernian Football Club may have been wise not to 'stick his neck out' before the cameras,<sup>3</sup> the public seemed to have liked the *Sportsview* blend on the screen. The audience for the first Wednesday programme was 21 per cent of the adult population of the United Kingdom and the Reaction Index was 72 (25 per cent A+, 44 per cent A, only 3 per cent C, and no viewers C—). When there was talk of the boxer Randolph Turpin being shown in September, Paul Fox wrote, 'I don't have to remind you that our sports programmes are seen by an audience of at least eight million people'.<sup>4</sup> Fox went further: 'Mother may not be specially interested in sport, but we still want her to enjoy *Sportsview* if possible.'<sup>5</sup>

'*Sportsview* goes on strengthening its reputation as the most dynamic of all TV features,' the *News Chronicle* television critic remarked in the same month. 'Last night it seized on Neil McKechnie, the new star boy swimmer, ten minutes after he

<sup>1</sup> \*BBC Script of 31 March 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Dimmock to Gentle, 6 April 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mail*, 25 May 1955; \*B. Castor to Barnes, 24 Aug. 1955; W. M. Stevenson to Fox, 24 Aug. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \*Paul Fox to A. Griffiths, 8 Aug. 1955. Fox was praised for his 'racy but factual style which suits admirably the tempo of *Sportsview*' (Note of 14 June 1954).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in K. Baily (ed.), *The Television Annual for 1956*, pp. 62-3.

had come out of the water at New Brighton where he set up a new backstroke record and whisked him away to the Manchester studio. A police escort went along and the forty-six miles were covered in an hour. McKechnie was breathless when he appeared on the screen still in his dressing gown, and he said the journey to Manchester had been more exciting than the swimming race.<sup>1</sup>

It was with *Sportsview* as a main weapon in its armoury that the BBC faced competition in sport from commercial television. In these circumstances both its editor and producer were exceptionally vigilant and enterprising. Thus, a double-hour programme—heralded as ‘probably the greatest sporting night of the year’<sup>2</sup>—was a new inducement in October 1955 in the very first phase of ITA, and an effort to attract more women as viewers was notable in a programme devoted entirely to women’s sport.<sup>3</sup> There was, of course, a price to be paid. After the October marathon, the *Daily Mail* grumbled that ‘any citizen who did not care for racing, boxing, football, cricket, athletics, might as well have switched off and read a book’.<sup>4</sup>

The coverage of sport both at the beginning and the end of the period was mainly the province inside the BBC of Outside Broadcasts, with the News Division playing only a minor part; and in retrospect, the Sports Service of 1955 had far more in common with News broadcasting today than the News Service of 1955 did. Although there was a regular joint weekly meeting of ‘Sports’ and ‘News’ as early as 1945,<sup>5</sup> the most useful documentary source materials relating to coverage are to be found in the reports of the Light Programme’s Outside Broadcast Meetings and the minutes of a cluster of television committees.<sup>6</sup>

From 1946 to 1949 Sound and Television outside broadcasts were separated and although they were united again under de Lotbinière from 1949 to 1952, in 1952 they were separated for

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 8 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*BBC Script, 12 Oct. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*BBC Script, 28 Sept. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mail*, 20 Oct. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dimmock to de Lotbinière, 19 July 1945.

<sup>6</sup> \*The *Minutes* of the Outside Broadcasts London Meeting, 12 March 1953, refer to the decision that since so many requests were being made by different BBC departments to outside sporting bodies, all BBC requests were to be coordinated by the Outside Broadcasts Department.

a second time, when de Lotbinière chose to take charge of Television. Of course, sound broadcasting did not thereafter lose its dominant importance in relation to sports broadcasting—even before the car radio and the transistor guaranteed its survival. Under the able direction of Charles Max-Muller, the sound broadcasting fixture list for 1955 was still substantial, with the Home Service as well as the Light Programme being directly involved. There was more racing than in 1954—with the Ebor Handicap having been recently added to the schedule<sup>1</sup>—and special attention was being paid to boxing, to international soccer, and to the Monte Carlo Rally, covered by Raymond Baxter. The coverage of cricket was high too, with the South African cricket tour of 1955 and particularly the Third Test at Old Trafford as a landmark.<sup>2</sup> There was very regular broadcasting from White City, and a helicopter was borrowed from British European Airways for the Boat Race. The range of sound broadcasting was certainly wider than it had been in the very early post-war period when wrestling was 'out',<sup>3</sup> when cycling was not thought to make for good sound broadcasting,<sup>4</sup> and when Rugby League was treated very cautiously as a socially inferior local sport.<sup>5</sup>

A shift of public interest to television was, nevertheless, understandable and inevitable. 'Ever since the first discussions . . . on the relations between television and sound broadcasting,' Gorham had written in 1946, 'I have said that at some stage I might have to ask sound broadcasting to go without some programmes—the most likely OBs—in order to bring pressure to

<sup>1</sup> \*Notes on a Joint Home Service and Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 3 Dec. 1954. In 1947 it had been stated categorically that 'we are interested in placing racing any Saturday it is available' (*ibid.*, 21 Aug. 1947).

<sup>2</sup> \*The South Africans had said that they wanted to send one Afrikaans-speaking and one English-speaking commentator for their own coverage, but it was noted that 'with the new South African Prime Minister, it was more than likely that greater coverage would be required in Afrikaans' (Notes on Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 10 Dec. 1954).

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of the Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 8 May 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 29 May 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 16 Jan., 24 Oct. 1947: 'Confirmed that Light Programme will only carry a description of the biggest Rugby League fixtures'. There was a contrast in this respect with Rugby Union which was warmly welcomed. One high Rugby Union official said television was 'a godsend . . . it keeps all the old gentlemen at home and they write long letters afterwards commenting on the play and don't bother me on the day' (Note by Orr-Ewing, 24 Jan. 1949).

bear on interests who were opposing television.<sup>1</sup> Six years later television—despite the bans—was calling the tune. The eye was obviously being tempted by televised sport ('the real thing') far more than the ear ever had been by 'running commentaries', and though there were many viewers who felt that there was already too much televised sport, watching sport became one of the main reasons given for buying a television set.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the differences between the media, there was a marked continuity between the policies followed in relation to sport by the Light Programme and the Television Service. In both cases, the range was kept as wide as possible. Thus, on a Saturday afternoon chosen at random in 1947 the Light Programme broadcast projects included a hill climb, the last matches of the cricket season, and a report on a soccer match;<sup>3</sup> and later in the year there was a discussion as to whether there could be a regular 'period of seventy-five minutes on Saturday afternoon . . . filled with sporting events, the period being movable because of the football season times of kick-off'.<sup>4</sup>

There was always scope in this phase of sound broadcasting, as in television, for gossip about sporting personalities and the folklore surrounding the fortunes of clubs,<sup>5</sup> soon to be associated with 'see you on television', and for interviews before and after 'great occasions'. 'In the event of particular people coming into sporting prominence during the season we are very willing to take a break-in,' an Outside Broadcast Meeting decided in 1946. 'This is meant to apply to people who suddenly make the headlines.'<sup>6</sup>

A list of sporting events televised and not televised in the year 1953 still survives. In the first category seventy-two televised events had been 'unrestricted' and twenty-six 'restricted'. The

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Howgill, 6 Aug. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*A letter from Dorté to Howarth, 10 Feb. 1947, pointed out that a match between Charlton and Blackburn Rovers had been very much appreciated 'even by non-football enthusiasts'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of the Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 26 June 1947.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 8 Dec. 1947.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid., 31 July 1947. As early as 1949 the Light Programme was interested in broadcasting the Football Writers' Dinner (ibid., 28 March 1949); it was not broadcast (ibid., 7 April 1949). The Lawn Tennis Association complained about interviewing of competitors during Wimbledon in 1951 (Memorandum by P. Dorté, 27 June 1951), and in 1952 only recorded radio interviews were permitted until the last two days.

<sup>6</sup> \*Report of the Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 9 May 1946.

'unrestricted' included snooker, ice hockey, speedway racing, table tennis and curling, with Rugby League (and floodlit football, when permitted)<sup>1</sup> acquiring a bigger national appeal. The 'restricted' events included professional boxing, since it had been agreed that the main bout should not be exhibited; athletics, where there was a time limitation; the Rugby Union match between Wales and New Zealand, which was not transmitted from Kirk o'Shotts because of a ban by the Scottish Rugby Union; and even the visit of the basketball champions, the Harlem Globetrotters, where there was a restriction, American-style, on the length of appearance of principals.

The list of sporting events which BBC Television had *not* been able to cover at all—and bans on some of these will be dealt with more fully later<sup>2</sup>—included the Derby, the Grand National and the St. Leger (the televising rights were not actually applied for, since all offers had been turned down in earlier years), all boxing championship bouts, most Rugby Union matches, all matches played by Football League clubs, except for the odd floodlit game.<sup>3</sup> Televised soccer, though favoured by Sir Stanley Rous,<sup>4</sup> was still a comparative rarity for viewers in 1953, although the Russians pressed for a recording of a match between Spartak and Arsenal which had been played in fog in November 1954.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matches between Arsenal and Hibernian, and Tottenham Hotspur and the Racing Club of Paris were particularly popular.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 861–4.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum by R. D. Pendlebury, 21 April 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Rous, who was knighted in 1949, was always courteous and helpful, as were a number of club managers. It was the Football League that was the centre of the difficulties. \*After George Allison of Arsenal had expressed himself willing to allow a match to be televised in 1946, he had to write later to Orr-Ewing (21 Oct. 1946): 'The television of League matches is not permitted until such time as the clubs themselves in general committee authorise the televising of league matches. As a personal note I wish it could have been otherwise, but obviously I cannot go against the official orders from headquarters.' In January 1948 Collins gave a dinner at Alexandra Palace for Rous and some of his colleagues, including Drewry of the Football League Management Committee. 'Members of the F.A. are friendly to the idea of televising football,' he wrote, 'and members of the Football League are hostile' (Note of 26 Jan. 1948). Note also Rous to Orr-Ewing, 10 June 1948, deploring the Football League's attitude. Yet the Football Association showed signs of changing its attitude in 1949 (Memorandum from Collins, 25 May 1949).

<sup>5</sup> \*S. W. Smithers to Dimmock, 9 Nov. 1954: 'I have received a letter from the Director of Moscow Television saying that they are looking forward to receiving the record of this match for outputting by Soviet T.V.' Mary Adams wrote to Cecil

Some early restrictions after the war were ancient not modern—for example, restrictions on the freedom of broadcasting sports news imposed by the Press. In 1945 and 1946 football results could be broadcast only after the six o'clock News so that the evening newspapers, as before the war, could publish the results first. Haley himself wanted a five o'clock sports results programme, but 5.30 p.m. had to be fixed as a compromise.<sup>1</sup>

The whole operation of sports broadcasting involved planning far ahead, with much of the planning concerned with the day or week. Saturday afternoon was peak time, a kind of 'Sports Jamboree',<sup>2</sup> but until the days of telerecording and floodlit contests there was relatively little evening sport on radio or television. The weekly scheduling of sporting programmes far in advance would not have been easy even had there been no restrictions or bans; and, as it was, there often had to be a somewhat precarious balance between planning and improvisation. The week, however, was not perhaps the major planning unit. Increasingly the BBC had been forced to recognize that there was a 'sporting year' with 'a list of musts', sporting events which, if at all possible, had to be broadcast direct.<sup>3</sup> The more the BBC identified the 'musts', of course, the more their place in national life was reinforced, even if many of them were surrounded in all 'the ballyhoo of the moment'.<sup>4</sup> Some of them were old-established favourites like the Boat Race—John Snagge had been the commentator on it since 1931—or Wimbledon or the series of Test Matches. Some of them, like major professional boxing bouts for world championships, depended on the personalities and promoters of the day. Others were gaining in public interest largely because of

<sup>1</sup> \*Notes on Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, 18 March 1948: 'It has not yet been decided whether Outside Broadcasts Department or Sports News (Mr. Mackay) will undertake coverage.'

<sup>2</sup> \*A phrase much used in Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meetings in 1946 (e.g. *ibid.*, 29 March, 2 May 1946).

<sup>3</sup> \*Meeting of Outside Broadcasts Representatives, *Minutes*, 9 March 1948.

<sup>4</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 18 Oct. 1952.

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Madden (29 Oct. 1954): 'We cannot film the match. Telerecording is the next best thing. This soccer "film" can hardly be thought of as reciprocity for *Musicians to Moscow*, but it is a beginning.'

broadcasting, among them the Amateur Athletic Championships,<sup>1</sup> the National Swimming Championships, and the Royal Windsor and Richmond Horse Shows. The great racing events, including the Derby and the Grand National, needed little publicity: they would have figured in any list of 'musts'. So, too, would the most popular occasion of the year, the Football Association's Cup Final. In his *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), T. S. Eliot included it along with Derby Day, Henley Regatta, the twelfth of August, and, less convincingly, 'the dog races' and 'the pin table' as the main ingredients of 'English culture'.<sup>2</sup>

Not everyone, however, would have agreed with all the BBC's 'musts'. 'The Australian match is very small beer indeed compared with a Lancashire and Yorkshire match,' the North Regional Director told Nicolls in 1945.<sup>3</sup> Regional differences continued to be important in sport, and so long as London was the only television centre, the more distant parts of the country were inevitably neglected. There were to be surprises later. Thus, when Rugby League football eventually began to be commented upon nationally on a regular basis, its appeal outside the North of England greatly increased. So, too, did the appeal of motor racing far from the main national circuits.

The broadcasting of each sport had its own history. Wimbledon re-started in 1946 with 'the Centre Court looking as green as ever, with the bomb-damaged stands patched up'.<sup>4</sup> The tournament was broadcast every year both in Sound, on the Home Service and the Light Programme, and on Television, with every day of it being televised from 1950 onwards. There were no difficulties concerning fees until 1951 and 1952, when the All-England Lawn Tennis Association decided to negotiate terms afresh with the BBC.<sup>5</sup> 'I have never attempted to

<sup>1</sup> \*A note by de Lotbinière, 4 Feb. 1952, raised the question of broadcasts by amateur athletes. The British Amateur Athletic Board had stated that 'it had no wish to curtail television or broadcasting by athletes since it believed that both do good to the sport', yet their fees for studio appearances or as commentators should be paid direct to an athletic club or a charity.

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Notes toward the Definition of Culture* (1948), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> \*North Regional Director (J. Coatman) to Nicolls, 13 June 1945.

<sup>4</sup> \*Draft note for *Radio Times*, 5 June 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Reay (Secretary of the LTA) to de Lotbinière, 19 March 1951, referring to an amendment to the Association's rules at its December 1950 meeting and a decision at its meeting of 1 March 1951 to demand 10 per cent of all receipts from television.



conceal my belief that "Wimbledon" treated us generously,' de Lotbinière wrote in February 1952. 'I assumed it was the deliberate policy of an amateur sport towards a "public service".'<sup>1</sup> Fees rose both in 1952 and 1953, as did attendances, although it was decided in 1954 that no BBC telerecordings of Wimbledon could be made available overseas. In tennis, as in soccer, it was overseas players who were stealing the headlines, and as the development of world tennis was leading from 'shamateurism' to open professionalism, broadcasting was bound to be affected. There was no doubt that the Wimbledon fortnight, with limited attendances and its high fashions, was a valuable television asset, and in 1955 a new three-year agreement was signed with the Lawn Tennis Association on the understanding that Wimbledon would not permit commercial television to televise at times denied to the BBC.<sup>2</sup> The BBC guaranteed 'live' OB or film coverage of the Junior Championships, the Davis and Wightman Cups, the Queen's Club Tournament and the Bournemouth Hard Court Championships. In addition, it was to act as sole agent for all television film of Wimbledon.

Cricket had its own styles, and its own sometimes contrasting modes of management. Commentaries on the 1945 Test Matches between England and Australia were broadcast on sound, and the 1946 matches with India at Lords and the Oval were televised also, as were subsequent international series. It was not until 1950, however, with the opening of the Sutton Coldfield transmitter, that a Test was televised from Trent Bridge. Colonel Rait-Kerr, while friendly to the BBC, was more concerned from the outset about fees and times of broadcasts than the officials of the Lawn Tennis Association;<sup>3</sup> he also wanted to ensure that cinemas would not 'pirate' cricket transmissions.<sup>4</sup> The BBC might remind the MCC that it had never in its history paid a fee for 'the right to broadcast'—it had paid

<sup>1</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Reay, 4 Feb. 1952; Note to Dimmock and Max-Muller, 5 Feb 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Duncalf to Macaulay, 9 June 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Rait-Kerr to de Lotbinière, 12 April 1946: 'I am particularly nervous about any broadcasting before 3 p.m. and you may care to forego the morning periods'; Dorté to Rait-Kerr, 15 April 1946.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report of a Conversation between Rait-Kerr and Orr-Ewing, 14 March 1946.

'facility fees only' since 'it is sincerely believed that the broadcasts are of mutual advantage to both the Corporation and the Promoters'<sup>1</sup>—but this position was not possible to maintain, and television paid fees, rising in scale, from 1946 onwards.

All subsequent agreements about broadcasting of cricket matches laid it down firmly that programmes would be cancelled if there was piracy or rediffusion or 'communal showing',<sup>2</sup> and in 1949 Colonel Rait-Kerr tried to have all telerecording forbidden.<sup>3</sup> The MCC was concerned even about people watching cricket in radio and television shops; 'I know of one place on Southend Pier,' an official wrote, 'where some two hundred and fifty people sit and watch television. What a life.'<sup>4</sup> With falling attendances at county matches, which were to lead to the setting up of a special MCC committee of inquiry in 1956-7, the cricket authorities were uninterested in securing the kind of long-term contracts which Wimbledon obtained: their preoccupation as early as 1953 was said to be with limiting broadcasting hours rather than with securing extra money from long-term contracts.<sup>5</sup>

Soccer, 'built into the urban psyche',<sup>6</sup> had already superseded cricket, which was built into more than one psyche, as *the* national game, and the soccer Cup Final, organized not by the Football League but by the more friendly Football Association, which 'took a most progressive view' in 'helping' television,<sup>7</sup> was a unique occasion with a unique crowd complete with 'rattles, bells and bonhomie'.<sup>8</sup> The 1948 final, with lots of goals (Manchester United 4, Blackpool 2), was a 'classic match' and 'quite first-class, most exciting and real television';<sup>9</sup> and although the weather was bad in 1950 and the conditions

<sup>1</sup> \*Dorté to Rait-Kerr, 23 April 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*Rait-Kerr to de Lotbinière, 17 April 1951. There were arguments that year about the showing of cricket in the Festival of Britain Telecinema. Eventually 10-minute excerpts were allowed (Rait-Kerr to de Lotbinière, 2 June 1951).

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of Telephone Conversation between Dimmock and Rait-Kerr, 17 Feb. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Castor to de Lotbinière, 13 Aug. 1951.

<sup>5</sup> \*de Lotbinière to McGivern, 2 Jan. 1953.

<sup>6</sup> A. Hopcraft, *The Football Man, People and Passions in Soccer* (1966), p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> \*BBC Press Release, 14 Oct. 1947.

<sup>8</sup> \*Orr-Ewing to de Lotbinière, 15 Jan. 1948.

<sup>9</sup> \*McGivern to Dimmock, 26 April 1948; see also T. Pawson, *A Hundred Years of the F.A. Cup* (1972), pp. 152-7.

for the commentators were appalling—they described themselves as ‘hemmed in, crouching, kicking the wires and boxes lying about the tiny space available’<sup>1</sup>—the final between Arsenal and Liverpool ‘captured much attention’. The final was televised again in 1951 (Newcastle United *v.* Blackpool), but television was not allowed when Newcastle United beat Arsenal in 1952.<sup>2</sup>

Other bans continued. Thus, in 1953 viewers had had to be content during the season with an FA Charity Shield game between Manchester United and Newcastle United<sup>3</sup> and a floodlit match between Arsenal and Hibernian,<sup>4</sup> although they were able (after incessant argument) to watch the Bolton Wanderers *v.* Blackpool Cup Final, which Blackpool won, 4–3.<sup>5</sup> Alan Chivers, the BBC’s chief soccer producer, was warmly thanked on this occasion by BBC officials and viewers, as were the commentators, Peter Dimmock and Kenneth Wolstenholme, fortunate enough to be reporting a match which, as H. E. Bates said, ‘might have come straight out of the pages of *Boys’ Own Paper*’.<sup>6</sup> ‘The BBC really surpassed itself,’ an anonymous viewer telephoned in from Pontefract.<sup>7</sup> ‘Admittedly the game was a gift to television,’ de Lotbinière told Wolstenholme, ‘but all the more so might a commentator have obtruded or become a nuisance to viewers. Your restraint was in fact admirable.’<sup>8</sup>

The abilities of Chivers, on contract to the BBC from 1946, were recognized by both of them. He knew and loved his

<sup>1</sup> \*McGivern to de Lotbinière, 1 May 1950. McGivern was present in the Control Van (Dimmock to Elvin, 17 April 1950). Arsenal beat Liverpool 2–0 in a match which Rous rated ‘the purest in football skill’ (Pawson, *op. cit.*, p. 152).

<sup>2</sup> \*Dimmock to McGivern, 28 Jan. 1952; Dimmock to Rous, 25 April 1952: ‘It is a sad thing that even part of the world’s greatest football match will not be televised for the first time since 1936.’

<sup>3</sup> \*Newcastle fielded eight reserves, and the football, according to McGivern, was ‘reserve standard’. Yet the North Regional Controller reported that it was ‘vastly better than any other TV football game I have seen’ (Stephenson to Dimmock, 13 Oct. 1952).

<sup>4</sup> \*Howarth objected strongly to either game being televised (Howarth to de Lotbinière, 28 Oct. 1952.)

<sup>5</sup> \*\*The Football League have been doing everything they can to embarrass the Football Association over their original decision to let us televise the Cup Final in full’ (de Lotbinière to Barnes, 28 April 1953).

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Pawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–62.

<sup>7</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 4 May 1953.

<sup>8</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Wolstenholme, 6 May 1953.

soccer, and he knew and loved his television. When England played a World team in 1953 he was quick enough in his reactions to give television a 'scoop'. At one point in the game he forsook both the referee and the crowd and focused the cameras not on the play but on the goalkeeper. It was the kind of switch which in future was to be commonplace. Then it was bold and imaginative.<sup>1</sup>

The 1954 Final between Preston North End and West Bromwich Albion (the latter won 3-2) was recorded in full—the BBC fee paid rose by a third<sup>2</sup>—as was the 1955 match between Newcastle United (3) and Manchester City (1), when four cameras were in use, including a roving-eye camera. Manchester United and Newcastle United were involved in two other extremely exciting matches—the second just after this period—one reported on, one televised. Wolstenholme had not reached the Press Box in the Manchester United cup-tie at Burnley before the first goal was scored, and within four minutes the score was Burnley 2, Manchester United 2. In the Newcastle *v.* Fulham match at Fulham, Paul Fox had suggested at the interval, when Newcastle were leading 3-1, that 'unless anything sensational happens we'll make do with what we've got'. The 'sensational' did happen—three Fulham goals in six minutes—although Newcastle United eventually won 5-4.<sup>3</sup>

Such moments provide the drama of broadcast sport, but they could be provided, too, at quite different events like Henley and the Boat Race. In 1951 there was all the excitement—and shame—of the sinking of the Oxford boat, and a year later, when the two boats were racing canvas to canvas, John Snagge, superb Boat Race commentator both for sound and television, was so excited that all he could say was, 'It's a desperately close race—I can't quite see from here who is ahead—it's either Oxford or Cambridge.'

If events like the Boat Race or the London Amateur Athletics Championships posed no complicated financial problems for the BBC, the history of a number of other big events—for example the Grand National, the Derby (which had been televised in

<sup>1</sup> Wolstenholme, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>2</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 27 Nov. 1953; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 7 Dec. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Wolstenholme, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

1938 and 1939) and the International Boxing Championships—was always chequered. Thus in 1946, when the BBC approached C. J. L. Langlands of the Racecourse Association about televising the Derby, Orr-Ewing was told at once that the chances were 'nil' because the Epsom Grandstand Association had been 'the initiators in creating an Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport'.<sup>1</sup> 'We shall not get the Derby for television,' Gorham went on to tell the Director-General, 'unless we can give an assurance that no cinema will show it without extra payment to the promoters.'<sup>2</sup>

Exactly the same points emerged in discussions with boxing interests about a Woodcock-Lesnevitch fight, although it was felt rightly that Jack Solomons appreciated 'the publicity which the BBC gets for boxing' and took an independent line *vis-à-vis* the British Boxing Board of Control.<sup>3</sup> The British Boxing Board of Control's administrative stewards had stated categorically that they would not grant permission for the televising of boxing contests unless they were satisfied first that the promoter of the tournament was safeguarded by copyright against the re-diffusion of television and sound, and second that the fees were adequate.<sup>4</sup> They pointed out, indeed, that they had taken this line since 1938 and that they did not mind whether promoters agreed with their stand or not.<sup>5</sup> As a result of British Boxing Board of Control pressure, therefore, the televising of the big fight was off. So, too, was the fight between Joe Baksi and Freddy Mills in the same year, although Mills (like many sportsmen after him) was later to figure prominently in the broadcasting of sport and much else besides, once offering to learn to skate in order to appear in an ice show and once very successfully turning 'physical exercises' into television entertainment.<sup>6</sup> This was in the future. In December 1946, Sir Arthur Elvin, the Managing Director of Wembley Stadium,

<sup>1</sup> \*Orr-Ewing to Dorté, 12 March 1946. For APCS see below, p. 871.

<sup>2</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 13 March 1946. Exactly the same issue arose the following year (Langlands to Dorté, 17 April 1947).

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum by Orr-Ewing, 12 Sept. 1946; Record of a Conversation between Gorham and Solomons, 24 Oct. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Oct. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> \*Report of a Telephone Conversation between Gorham and Donmall, 23 Oct. 1946; Donmall to Gorham, 23 Oct. 1946.

<sup>6</sup> \*Gorham to Donmall, 25 Oct. 1946; Donmall to Gorham, 29 Oct. 1946; Report of a Meeting with the BBC, 1 Nov. 1946.

who, as we have seen, was on very friendly terms with the BBC, announced that 'last week's boxing from Wembley was the first television of boxing from Wembley and the last until the copyright law is altered'.<sup>1</sup>

The big problems in sports broadcasting had not changed much by 1955 when £28,000 was being spent on the list of 'musts'. Title fights were still 'out' in boxing, and the Grand National and the Derby, which had large overheads and depended on large attendances on the day of the race, were as difficult as ever. Yet the British Boxing Board of Control permitted professional boxing (under conditions) once a month, and Kempton Park, which had decided to exclude television of racing for six months to see whether attendances would be better without it, had invited the BBC back again. Never more than three races were to be shown.

The attempt to co-ordinate different sporting interests in negotiations with the BBC will be dealt with later. Listeners and viewers were usually not aware of the complications when they complained that they were 'starved' of certain kinds of sport, and, whatever the diet, they took an increasing interest in the quality of the fare which was offered them. The main intermediaries between the sports field and the home were not the administrators or the organizers at the BBC or even the sporting institutions which laid down the rules, but the commentators; and between 1945 and 1955 a remarkable team of commentators was built up. Some were experienced before the war, others new. Some were specialists, others were prepared to move happily from one sport to another<sup>2</sup> or from sport to something quite different. Some were more at home in sound than in television, others were television personalities in their own right. Some were full-time BBC employees, others were freelance. The household names quickly multiply. Stewart MacPherson was well known as a war reporter before and after D-Day, before he turned to post-war boxing. Max Robertson, Rex Alston and Raymond Glendenning, all distinguished broadcasters, must have reminded their post-war listeners or

<sup>1</sup> \*Gorham to Haley, 17 Dec. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> \*What are the chances of doing anything in the summer months?' one soccer commentator asked on 4 Feb. 1951. 'Cricket, tennis, cycling and athletics are my sports in that order. Any chance?' (Wolstenholme to Chivers.)

their viewers of more distant times of the Wimbledons of yesteryear, but from 1950 onwards Dan Maskell, the All-England Club's Chief Professional, was a new tennis commentator both for sound and television, and from 1953 he and Freddie Grisewood were joined on television by Dennis Combe. Kenneth Wolstenholme and Alan Weeks had made their soccer debut in 1950, although the former had started his broadcasting commentaries with an eye-witness account of two Cricket League matches in the North of England.<sup>1</sup>

Versatility tended to be highly prized, along with the exuberance which often went with it, as Brian Johnston's autobiography *It's Been a Lot of Fun* (1974) reveals. Johnston learned much from Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, who was not a sports broadcaster, from Stewart MacPherson, and from de Lotbinière, 'the architect of all commentary technique';<sup>2</sup> and he served his apprenticeship not only on sports fields but in theatres and music halls. The role and character of the Outside Broadcasts Department made for such mixed deployment. De Lotbinière's weekly meeting was attended by all kinds of broadcasters concerned with 'events and ceremonials'<sup>3</sup> and 'entertainment' (the latter under John Ellison's direction) besides sport. One of the most versatile of the commentators was Eamonn Andrews, whose long and extremely active career inside the BBC—the prelude to an outstanding continuing career in television—began in 1950 with the chairmanship of *Ignorance is Bliss*, when he stepped into Stewart MacPherson's shoes after MacPherson had returned to Canada. He was thought of as a possible sound commentator for *Sports Report* before he made his television debut, 'tieless in a tuxedo', as a boxing commentator from the Empress Hall.<sup>4</sup> One of the most interesting BBC notes in retrospect appears in the Minutes of the London Meeting of Outside Broadcasts Assistants in March

<sup>1</sup> Wolstenholme, op. cit., pp. 13–14; \*Note by Michael Henderson, 2 Oct. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> B. Johnston, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> For sport identified as ceremonial, see (within the period covered in this volume) M. Young and E. Shils, 'The Meaning of the Coronation' in *Sociological Review*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1953.

<sup>4</sup> E. Andrews, *This is My Life* (1963), p. 137. His autobiography gives a very full account of his BBC life. Broadcasting House, he said was associated by many people with 'the high stern of a ship'; to him it was 'a challenge'. He sent tapes of his Irish broadcasts to try to get a place in the BBC and wrote many letters before getting his chance.

1951: 'Eamonn Andrews had been given a trial broadcast and was considered promising for Association Football, and other sports, e.g. Boxing, Speedway, etc.'<sup>1</sup>

The list of boxing commentators in 1954 also included Raymond Glendenning, Harry Carpenter, W. Barrington Dalby and Cliff Michelmore, the last of whom was also on a soccer list dominated previously by Jimmy Jewell. In time, Michelmore, too, was to be employed in BBC Television in scores of different tasks: his curiosity, ease of manner and adaptability were immense assets. The rigger commentators were more specialized. G. C. Wynne Jones, Wilfred Wooller and Gilbert Bennett were among the names on the 1954 list, and those of Harold Abrahams, Jack Crump and David Coleman, soon to be very widely known to viewers, on the athletics list. There was no Eddie Waring, although he appeared soon afterwards. Cricket still drew on the biggest and most changeable of the teams, with fifteen names in 1954. John Arlott, E. W. Swanton, Brian Johnston, Peter West and Rex Alston were 'regulars', with help from Arthur Gilligan, Alfred Gover, George Duckworth, and, for a time, Bill Bowes. Eventually some of the ex-internationals—in soccer and in cricket—were to be among the stars. A new set of career opportunities had been offered.

Most of the cricket commentators found sound reporting, which had already become an art before 1939, less difficult than television. Indeed, according to one sports producer of 1952, 'few sports set such problems for the television commentator as does cricket. . . . Unlike football, tennis and rigger, the cameras cannot follow the ball throughout the game, and therefore the commentator has not only to help the viewer follow the picture on his screen, but also to give virtually a "sound" commentary on action out of camera range.'<sup>2</sup>

The difficulties of football reporting by television were stressed equally in the early post-war period. 'The televising of football is not easy,' Philip Dorté told Fred Howarth, the secretary of the Football League in 1946, 'in view of the large area to be covered, the rapid movement of the ball and the poor light often experienced.'<sup>3</sup> In the very first televised post-

<sup>1</sup> \*Outside Broadcasts Meeting, *Minutes*, 16 March 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*A. Craxton to Elwyn Jones, 21 May 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Dorté to Howarth, 20 Sept. 1946.



war match—the second half of the Athenian League game between Barnet and Wealdstone—the programme had to be stopped fifteen minutes early because of bad light.<sup>1</sup> Many commentators were employed in the early days, some of them with very little knowledge of football and some of them far too wedded to ‘the sound technique . . . fifteen seconds behind the game, and describing the obvious’.<sup>2</sup> Others were ‘carried away by their excitement’ and became ‘almost unintelligible’.<sup>3</sup>

Competitions were held for sound broadcasting commentators, including one advertised in *Radio Times* in 1948, while Philip Dorté tested possible television commentators at Alexandra Palace, with closed circuit television being used to help in the tests from 1954 onwards.<sup>4</sup> When Regional Heads of Programmes had expressed concern earlier in 1954 that ‘not enough was being done to encourage and develop would-be commentators’, Regional Outside Broadcasts Assistants confirmed that they ‘interviewed all possible applicants and tested those who showed any promise’, but added that few ‘came up to the required standard’.<sup>5</sup>

Given the medley of applicants and the large number of novices employed, it was important to codify the practice of ‘good commentating’, and de Lotbinière, who for years tried to listen to every outside broadcast and gave invaluable advice *ad hominem*, attempted codification in 1953, as Ian Orr-Ewing had done before him, when he drafted a number of ‘golden rules’. Commentators had to be willing to explain technique from time to time, ‘but crisply in relation to what is seen’, and ‘to give the score every five minutes at least . . . and at psychological moments’. There was a final NB: ‘There is very little

<sup>1</sup> \*Report by Orr-Ewing, 19 Oct. 1946, suggesting that a request should be made to the authorities that a white ball should be used and a new ball brought into play at half-time. White balls were used experimentally in 1950 (Berkeley Smith to L. Wilson, 6 March 1950). When a white ball was used in the last fifteen minutes of the England-Yugoslavia match in November 1950, it made ‘all the difference in the world to viewers’ (de Lotbinière to Rous, 4 Dec. 1950). Yet some club players were objecting bitterly to the white ball as late as 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of 2 May 1947.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note of 12 Nov. 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*The ‘Choose your Commentator’ competition advised hundreds of applicants to try: six were chosen for a short list and were given a programme test (Note by Henderson, 2 Oct. 1950; Note by Chivers, 28 Oct. 1954).

<sup>5</sup> \*Outside Broadcasts Assistants London Meeting, *Minutes*, 30 March 1954.

time for any but the most memorable wisecracks.<sup>1</sup> In addition to codifying rules, Orr-Ewing had also arranged Monday morning post-mortems, when performances were carefully analysed.

No commentator ever won universal praise from viewers. As one viewer put it after being exasperated by a host of commentators, 'after all the pictures are not by Picasso. . . . I would say that TV sporting events need little or no commentary as is the case (up to now) in cricket and tennis. I pray that no commentator from ice hockey, rugger, basketball and table tennis or such may ever spoil the thrill of watching Hutton & Co. or little Mo. . . .'<sup>2</sup> All commentators had their individual letters, hostile or friendly, vituperative or from 'fans'. 'Your name sounds German,' one correspondent told Wolstenholme in 1953, 'and you praised Hungary from the kick-off. . . . It is a wonder you did not shout "Heil Hitler" at the close.'<sup>3</sup>

If the commentators were the obvious intermediaries with the public, they depended on a hidden organization which had to be patient and thorough as well as imaginative. The contribution of de Lotbinière and of Dimmock at the top was always outstanding. They were a very effective combination—two men of different talents but of common aim, complementary but with enough sense of competition to keep organization alive. Nor were they ever alone. Paul Fox as editor of the *Sportsview* Unit was so successful in initiating and implementing new ideas that he was welcome on every sports occasion, and so too were most of the commentators. An emphasis on teamwork was necessary at every level. Dimmock, describing arrangements at Royal Ascot, took these as a characteristic example of the kind of teamwork required. Initial plans had to be made each year as early as February, and from the start the Outside Broadcasts producer and the planning engineer had to work closely together. To the members of the Outside Broadcasts team the engineers often seemed too cautious and conservative, but

<sup>1</sup> \*Undated Note on 'The Football Commentator'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Letter from a Viewer in Bolton, 15 March 1954. Cf. D. Horton, *Television's Story and Challenge* (1951), p. 104: 'The question of commentating is one of the things that television hasn't quite resolved. There is one school of thought that insists on the commentator saying very little; another that he should keep talking away, but *not* about the things everyone can see.'

<sup>3</sup> Wolstenholme, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

without the hard preparatory work of a team of riggers the mobile television units would never have been able to move in.<sup>1</sup> Working conditions for engineers and commentators alike were often cold and cramped, and there must have been pleasure to learn in 1954, for example, that Mrs. Topham 'had agreed to build a permanent box for us at the twelfth fence and the point at Becher's'.<sup>2</sup>

The role of the producer in the team was rightly held to be critical, and when a proposal was made in 1951 that a popular football outside broadcast might be done without a producer being present on the day, McGivern protested strongly. 'I cannot agree to an O.B. without a producer or a programme official acting as a producer. This is completely fundamental.'<sup>3</sup> Because from the beginnings of television there were so many serious technical obstacles to overcome and such a serious shortage of equipment, ideas often outran techniques. The Outside Broadcasts Unit had to turn down such interesting ideas as the televising of a cross-Channel swim,<sup>4</sup> and at nearly every important event there were difficult practical problems to get around. At Wimbledon, for example, radio link pictures were inadequate and no cable link was installed until 1952, while at Wembley a fourth camera could not be used at the Football Cup Final, as it had been in 1937 and 1938, until 1955.<sup>5</sup> It was only from 1952 onwards that mobile cameras were free enough to be moved around at short notice so that there could be general billings like 'This afternoon a mobile Outside Broadcast Unit will cover a sporting event.'<sup>6</sup> Two years later G. W. H. Larkby designed a mobile camera that could follow action in sport over a comparatively wide area.<sup>7</sup> The so-called 'Roving Eye' camera, which came into general use in 1955, at

<sup>1</sup> Dimmock, *Radio Times Annual* (1954), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> \*Outside Broadcasts Assistants Meeting, *Minutes*, 19 Oct. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*McGivern to Dimmock, 14 Nov. 1951, following Dimmock to McGivern, 12 Nov. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Special Meeting of 28 Feb. 1950, *Minutes*, 'Television Outside Broadcasts Mammoth Satellite and Roving'.

<sup>5</sup> \*There were vociferous complaints about this every year, e.g. Note by Orr-Ewing, 14 April 1948; Chivers to Bridgewater, 23 March 1949.

<sup>6</sup> \*Preliminary Billing for 22 March 1952, 29 Feb. 1952. One television mobile unit only had been available for sport in 1946 and 1947.

<sup>7</sup> E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), p. 362.

last made it possible to cover events at comparatively short notice and to transmit pictures while on the move.<sup>1</sup>

There were technical developments in sound broadcasting also. In 1948 the parabolic reflector microphone helped to reinforce sound effects and gave better definition: it was effective at a distance of thirty to three hundred yards. Twelve such microphones were used by sound Outside Broadcasts at the Olympic Games and were subsequently made available in the Regions.<sup>2</sup> Listeners noted these developments less than viewers noted new developments in television. Indeed, television viewers could be far more discerning than listeners: they included many people who were very knowledgeable about cameras. Thus, Chivers was questioned by viewers more than once about goals being missed by cameras trying to catch up with the ball following corner kicks, and in 1953 it was suggested by one correspondent that the use of a telephoto lens in a soccer match between Finchley and Walthamstow had made it impossible to follow the game. 'All we had was close-ups of players running with the ball.'<sup>3</sup>

Given the cost both of equipment and programming, the proportion of television expenditure devoted to outside broadcasting was often a matter of sharp controversy. Dimmock, energetic and for that reason alone often frustrated, was told by McGivern in 1952, 'I try to get as much as I can out of all the resources at my disposal. I exert constant pressure. You must advise me, immediately and strongly, if my pressure on O.B.s is such that I am forcing you to become simply a sausage machine.'<sup>4</sup> Often such pressure did not go far enough to satisfy Dimmock. Nor was he thinking only of equipment. 'It is not possible to plan efficiently and accomplish the tasks that lie ahead,' he replied to McGivern, 'until the question of permanent organising assistance has been solved.'<sup>5</sup> De Lotbinière was often equally dissatisfied. Later in the same year he complained about 'expensive television equipment lying idle', and after T. H. Bridgewater, the Superintendent Engineer (Tele-

<sup>1</sup> *BBC Handbook*, 1956, p. 87; see also above, pp. 271-2.

<sup>2</sup> \*Light Programme Outside Broadcasts Meeting, *Minutes*, 9 March 1948.

<sup>3</sup> \*Letter to Chivers, Nov. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Dimmock to McGivern, 27 Dec. 1951; McGivern to Dimmock, 8 Jan. 1952.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dimmock to McGivern, 21 Jan. 1952.

vision OBs), dwelt on 'the recent great increase in television hours devoted to sport', he retaliated briefly, 'It is hardly surprising when *we* enjoy marathons like Wimbledon, Test Matches and the Horse Show.'<sup>1</sup>

As the arts and techniques of sports broadcasting developed, new links were established between the BBC sports teams and people associated with the conduct of sport. In addition, new questions were posed, some of them controversial. In October 1952, about forty Wimbledon umpires were entertained to a playback: they had often been criticized for particular line decisions. Could television help? A few months earlier, a producer wrote to a football commentator how sad he was that a recent televised match had not been telerecorded so that the referee could see 'the error of his ways'. 'There is no doubt', he stated, 'that very often we can see more than the referee does. Not only in football but in cricket I can foresee occasions when umpires or referees may be put in a spot by giving what are clearly wrong decisions at vital moments.'<sup>2</sup> The argument was to continue, particularly when instant replay pictures became commonplace. The camera was to introduce a new element to racing also—this time a more definitive one—the 'photofinish'.

In the more recent history of television, the relationship of the medium to issues of this kind has been a matter of frequent comment. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, most of the questions being discussed concerned not the nature and effects of the medium but the structures of control. On the sporting side, the Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport, founded in November 1944,<sup>3</sup> sought 'to have the promoter of any sporting event placed in the same legal position as the author of a book, so that a promoter could make what arrangements he thought proper in connection with television or its rediffusion of any event'. To secure this object, a modification of the Copyright Act of 1911 would have been necessary, since the Act protected only literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works. The Association was often accused of 'crying for

<sup>1</sup> \*T. H. Bridgewater to de Lotbinière, 17 Oct. 1952; de Lotbinière to Bridgewater, 27 Oct. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of 18 Dec. 1951.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note on the APCS, 8 Feb. 1950. The BBC's first contact with the Society was said to have been in June 1944, although it was not registered until Nov. 1944. In 1950 it had 65 members.

the moon', asking something 'so novel the law will not countenance it'.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the singleness of the aim of the Association, it remained a loose coalition of sometimes antagonistic interests, including not only the Jockey Club and BBC, but bodies like the All-England Lawn Tennis Club, the MCC, the Rugby Football Union, the Rugby Football League, the National Greyhound Racing Society, the National Hunt Committee, the Royal Automobile Club and the Professional Golfers' Association. The Association, which had Herbert Perkin as secretary, did not succeed in changing the law of copyright as it wished, but it was a powerful enough body to set the pace of television development in sport and ultimately to come to terms—after many vicissitudes—with the BBC. Its leading personalities included F. S. Gentle, Chairman and Managing Director of the Greyhound Racing Association, Sir Arthur Elvin, C. J. L. Langlands, and Sir Harold Parker, President of the Southern Counties Amateur Swimming Association. The sources for a detailed narrative of the development of the Association begin with early direct approaches to the BBC and then pass inconclusively, but often heatedly, through the minutes of a score of other committees before returning to a direct relationship with the BBC.

These committees included the official Television Advisory Committee, usually caught up in what Haley called 'the cinema tangle',<sup>2</sup> and ultimately unable or unwilling to do anything to recognize the APCS's case;<sup>3</sup> the Beveridge Committee, which had very little to say about sport and which, while mentioning APCS bans and restrictions, likewise did nothing effective to meet APCS arguments;<sup>4</sup> the International Copyright Union,

<sup>1</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 19 May 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Haley on a Memorandum of Collins, 21 July 1947.

<sup>3</sup> For the Television Advisory Committee, see above, p. 188. \*Haley sometimes used the existence of this Committee to try to mollify APCS (e.g. Haley to Elvin, 6 Jan. 1947): 'The T.A.C. has been actively pursuing the matter.' On 8 Dec. 1947 Dorté wrote to Collins telling him correctly that APCS was beginning to 'exhibit frustration because it cannot succeed in getting anywhere in its negotiations with the T.A.C.'

<sup>4</sup> The bans were mentioned briefly in para. 301, p. 80, and para. 310, pp. 83-4, and there was no reference to sport in the list of listeners' preferences, pp. 55-60. Para. 513 stated that the Committee gave no reason why the televising of sporting events should be held up pending possible changes in the law, but this observation was 'not in accordance with the facts' (BBC Evidence submitted to the Copyright

which convened a Committee of experts in Rome in November 1951 and prepared a draft international convention;<sup>1</sup> and in May 1950, a Television Sports Advisory Committee appointed by the Postmaster-General, then Ness Edwards,<sup>2</sup> which had the task of assessing the direct and indirect effects of televising sporting events during an experimental period in order to judge the strength in practical terms of the APCS case.<sup>3</sup>

The Postmaster-General set up the Committee after several questions had been asked in Parliament by Orr-Ewing, Ernest Marples and others, who felt that viewers were not being given enough chance to see televised sport.<sup>4</sup> He eventually secured the agreement of the various sporting bodies that up to a hundred events, to be selected on the advice of the Committee, would be televised experimentally during the following year. During the same period, it was agreed, 'a statistical watch' would be kept upon the number of spectators at events televised as compared with other non-televised events.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the position had not been fully clarified by the end of the year. Although a ban was not reimposed generally,<sup>5</sup> there was continuing friction;<sup>6</sup> and Members of Parliament were asking for further reports on progress in 1952 while the Copyright Committee was still sitting.<sup>7</sup> By

<sup>1</sup> The Brussels Copyright Convention of 1948 had recommended that Governments of the member countries should study the means of assuring the protection of broadcasting organizations against the unauthorized use of their programmes.

<sup>2</sup> In 1952 the President of the Board of Trade turned down a request for a Committee to consider exclusively broadcasting copyright on the grounds that the 1951 Committee was still meeting (*Hansard*, vol. 498, col. 97, 31 March 1952). The Postmaster-General gave the same reply on 7 May 1952 (*ibid.*, vol. 500, col. 42).

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 475, col. 1198, 17 May 1950; cols. 253-4, 24 May 1950. \*Basis of Agreement, 31 May 1950; Note by Ness Edwards, 6 July 1950. The setting up of the Committee was the last stage in a sequence which began with the calling of a conference of interested parties on 9 May.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 474, col. 16, 19 April 1950; vol. 475, cols. 1197-9, 17 May 1950; cols. 253-4, 24 May 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Robbins to Collins, 29 Jan. 1952.

<sup>6</sup> In January 1952 APCS considered reimposing a drastic ban (\*Memorandum of 24 Jan. 1952).

<sup>7</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 498, cols. 1658-9, 2 April 1952. Christopher Soames put what sounded the simplest but was in fact the most complex of all the questions—'whether in the renewing of the BBC's Charter, he will arrange for the BBC to hand over the copyright of sporting events, after limited use, to the promoters of such events'. See also *ibid.*, vol. 500, cols. 123-4, 14 May 1952.

Committee). The APCS representatives had told the Beveridge Committee in oral evidence that APCS had no objection to sound commentaries on sporting events.

then, however, the position was further complicated by moves towards commercial television, what a Labour MP called 'backdoor negotiations about sponsored programmes'.<sup>1</sup>

The BBC decided, with de Lotbinière dissenting, not to be represented at the final meetings of the Television Sports Advisory Committee,<sup>2</sup> although Haley offered to meet some of the members of the Committee to explain why the BBC, 'as an act of policy', had decided to absent itself.<sup>3</sup> De Lotbinière was rightly anxious to assure promoters of the 'friendliness' of the BBC and of its willingness seriously to consider their problems.<sup>4</sup> Haley, however, who was further removed from the contestants than de Lotbinière, felt that it would be impossible, if BBC representatives attended, to prevent the Committee from becoming 'a non-BBC Planning Committee'.<sup>5</sup> He never liked 'lobbying' on this or other issues,<sup>6</sup> but he may not have realized fully how strongly de Lotbinière felt that the decision was alienating those promoters most friendly to the BBC.

The names of the members of the Committee were announced in the House of Commons on 5 July 1950,<sup>7</sup> and Haley wrote at once to Lord Beattie, the Chairman, inviting the new Committee members to a cocktail party at Broadcasting House.<sup>8</sup> They included Rous, Drewry, Rait-Kerr, Gentle, Elvin, Langdon, Langlands, Miss Elaine Burton and Lord Willoughby de Broke; R. J. Broadbent was secretary. Fortunately de Lotbinière continued to press his case for attending meetings, and from the third meeting onwards he joined the Committee,<sup>9</sup> which produced its first report in May 1951. De Lotbinière also

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 498, col. 1659, 2 April 1952; \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 19 May 1952. De Lotbinière had found himself in agreement with Gentle that any 'compromise would be difficult to achieve except with a television monopoly, for with a "free for all" no sponsor can afford to look beyond the immediate present'.

<sup>2</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Collins, 8 June 1950.

<sup>3</sup> \*Collins to de Lotbinière, 12 June 1950; de Lotbinière to Collins, 19 June 1950.

<sup>4</sup> \*Rous had already expressed surprise that no member of the BBC was on the Committee if only in an advisory capacity (Rous to de Lotbinière, 27 July 1950). De Lotbinière to Rous, 1 July 1950: 'We are anxious to give that Committee every possible help.'

<sup>5</sup> \*Collins to de Lotbinière, 30 June 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Collins, 26 July 1949.

<sup>7</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 477, col. 450, 5 July 1950.

<sup>8</sup> \*Haley to Beattie, 7 July 1950.

<sup>9</sup> \*Broadbent to de Lotbinière, 3 Nov. 1950; de Lotbinière to Broadbent, 6 Nov. 1950; *Hansard*, vol. 497, cols. 139-40, 12 March 1952.



encouraged the BBC's Audience Research Department to carry out an inquiry into the effects of television on attendances,<sup>1</sup> although the Committee also decided to embark upon a survey of its own with the help of a Government statistician.<sup>2</sup>

The effect of television on sporting attendances had been widely discussed in the United States before it was discussed in Britain, and neither the methodology nor the conclusions of sociological inquiry won unanimous acceptance among either experts or vested interests. There was American evidence that 'people who own TV sets actually attend more sporting events than people who don't own sets'.<sup>3</sup> Yet sporting interests across the Atlantic were not convinced by such evidence, and in England the Football League was even more worried about football than Rait-Kerr was about cricket. 'We realise that television will eventually affect all gates,' Howarth wrote in 1947, 'probably not so much the particular games that are televised as the gates of other matches, particularly Third Division games.'<sup>4</sup>

This, however, was only one point of view, if a common one, and it was in flat contradiction to de Lotbinière's view, clearly expressed in 1950, that 'the broadcasting of an international or First Division match appears to have less effect on over-all gates than the weather'.<sup>5</sup> It was contradicted, too, it seemed, by the experience both of Wimbledon, where 'gates' rose, and Earls Court, which had record Ice Hockey crowds after television had 'popularized' it.<sup>6</sup> In 1952, de Lotbinière was prepared to advance a more searching and critical analysis than ever before:

(1) Sound broadcasting and still more so television both provide good publicity, but both are potential threats to attendances. The threat is aggravated by bad weather, by long distances to travel

<sup>1</sup> \*Broadbent to de Lotbinière, 29 Jan. 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Collins, 1 March 1951.

<sup>3</sup> *American Television News*, 1 June 1950. There were then nearly six million sets in use in the United States. The evidence came from an inquiry made by J. N. Jordan in Milwaukee, and Haley asked for more details (\*Haley to Collins, 16 June 1950).

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Dispatch*, 19 Oct. 1947. He had made the same point about the ubiquity of television in a letter to football clubs on 25 Aug. 1947: 'The matter of television of League matches is one which will sooner or later affect every League club and not only the two clubs concerned in the broadcast.'

<sup>5</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Rous, 4 Aug. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note by Orr-Ewing, Jan. 1949: 'Is a theory exploded?'

(e.g. Aintree), by an event which really needs to be witnessed from more than one vantage point (e.g. the Boat Race), by costly seats, or by any reduction in the public's spending power. (2) The publicity given by an outside broadcast can benefit the event broadcast or other events of a similar kind, e.g. televising one professional boxing show may benefit subsequent promotions not only at the same venue but elsewhere. (3) The threat to attendance may affect a particular 'gate' or other similar or simultaneous 'gates'. . . . (4) Most promoters want all the money they can get in addition to publicity.<sup>1</sup>

By this time, more balanced opinions were being expressed also by some sports interests, for example, at a meeting of a Football Association Sub-Committee in 1951. It was agreed then that broadcasting severely affected football gates only on the day of Cup Tie semi-finals, of the England-Scotland match, and of the Cup Final itself. Yet at this very same meeting, representatives of the Players' Union and of the Supporters' Clubs confidently expressed the view that broadcasting did the game more harm than good.<sup>2</sup>

It was not easy to pass from opinions to definitive conclusions backed by research. The main reasons were, first, the difficulty of assembling all the relevant evidence and, second, the problem of establishing correlations. In 1951 Silvey had many misgivings about a postal inquiry which might be answered largely by viewers interested in sport. This, he felt, would inflate estimates both of the number of viewers of the televised cricket programme which was to be the basis of the tests and of the number of people kept away from sports as a result of viewing. 'Frequent sports attenders who, by hypothesis, are likely to be over-represented in the answers, are precisely those who are most likely to say, in answer to the hypothetical question, that they would have attended a sporting event if they had not watched the cricket O.B.' More profoundly, however, Silvey objected to the hypothetical question itself. It might be legitimate to ask viewers what they would have been doing if they had not been viewing provided they had a limited choice. For example, it would be easy to get a truthful answer from a

<sup>1</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Farquharson, 11 March 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Cf. de Lotbinière to Madden, 29 April 1952: 'We recognise the anxieties of promoters and contributing parties, though we are not prepared to agree their fears are justified.'

businessman who took an afternoon off to see the Varsity rugger match: he would have replied 'working at the office'. 'But on Saturday afternoons people are free to indulge in any of a number of activities (gardening, motoring, playing tennis, listening, lazing, etc.): to ask them to specify what they would have been doing had they not been viewing is completely unrealistic, because in choosing to view it would not normally be one activity but many activities which would have been rejected.'<sup>1</sup>

If there were unresolved doubts about the effects of television on gates, there was some resolution of the problem of fees, a problem which had been raised at the same meeting of the Football Association's Sub-Committee where attendance had been the chief item on the agenda. 'There was a fairly friendly atmosphere throughout the meeting,' de Lotbinière wrote, 'apart perhaps from the feeling that the BBC had been getting something for nothing for far too long.'<sup>2</sup>

The Sports Television Advisory Committee, set up by the Postmaster-General, did not meet after April 1951, and in December 1952 Gammans, the Assistant Postmaster-General, who was looking forward to the advent of commercial television, told his Labour predecessor that there was no point in extending 'its sphere of usefulness' as 'a fact-finding body'. 'The most promising way of facilitating the broadcasting of sporting events,' he went on, 'is by free negotiation between the parties concerned.' This was a complete return to the *status quo*, although Gammans reported briefly that there was now 'good will on both sides'.<sup>3</sup> There was certainly a measure of agreement between the BBC and some of the sporting interests represented in APCS that commercial television and the 'free for all' that would follow it 'was not the answer to the promoters' problem'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Silvey to de Lotbinière, 'Proposed Enquiry by Sports Television Advisory Committee', 27 March 1951.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum by de Lotbinière, 2 Aug. 1951: 'Discussion kept reverting to the fact that the BBC had paid hundreds of thousands of pounds in income tax and the suggestion that the money would have been more beneficial to football.' See above, p. 840.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 509, cols. 50-1, 9 Dec. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 843, n. 6; \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 6 June 1952, following a meeting with Gentle.

Yet this was only part of the picture. APCS had told the BBC in June 1952 that there would be no further restriction on the televising of sporting events pending the report of the Copyright Committee,<sup>1</sup> but when that Committee's long-awaited report finally appeared in October 1952, it suggested in face of the APCS line of argument that the BBC in future should hold 'a performing right' in sports broadcasting. The BBC itself was not happy about some of the 'implications' in the Report. De Lotbinière pointed out, for instance, that the BBC had never claimed the right, as the Report suggested, to televise any sporting event subject to terms to be agreed with the promoter and, failing agreement, subject to arbitration; and to suggest that it had done 'does us harm with the promoters'.<sup>2</sup> The 'actual attitude' of the BBC, he said, had been expressed cogently in a memorandum of 1952. 'Our object is to prevent the promoters persisting in their attempt to get their own copyright—since that may involve bans and anyhow won't succeed. We must therefore present them with an acceptable *modus vivendi*.'<sup>3</sup>

Discussions between APCS and the BBC on the 'vexed question of copyright in sport'<sup>4</sup> were as difficult as ever late in 1952, particularly when Gentle suggested that the BBC's performing right should be assigned by the Corporation to the promoters of the televised events, a solution which the Committee had specifically not recommended. In the BBC's view, the administration of any performing right by individual sporting promoters would result in an initial multiplication of licences and in an ensuing confusion which the Committee had hoped to avoid when it recommended that the right should be vested in the broadcasting authority.<sup>5</sup> 'Given the need to reconcile the interests of the BBC and the promoters, perhaps the best solution would be the setting up of a separate organisation in which both BBC and promoters will be represented and which

<sup>1</sup> \*Perkin to Farquharson, 7 June 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Barnes, 15 Oct. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Memorandum, 'Copyright and the Promoters', 6 Nov. 1952. Cf. Collins to the Radio Industries Club, April 1950: 'The BBC and the APCS both have one object in view—namely to serve the public.'

<sup>4</sup> \*This memorable phrase was used in a memorandum by Dimmock, 21 Feb. 1949.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by Robbins, 22 Oct. 1952.

would act as a collecting agency in the same way as the Performing Right Society and Phonographic Performance Ltd.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, some APCS interests were suggesting a sponsoring agency of their own, a Sports Television Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

Discussions with the promoters took place in November,<sup>3</sup> with a further meeting in February 1953.<sup>4</sup> Memoranda were being exchanged in May,<sup>5</sup> and the Postmaster-General called a meeting for 22 October.<sup>6</sup> Competitive television was round the corner, and Jacob explained very clearly the BBC's attitude, as it then was, at a further meeting with the APCS in Broadcasting House in April 1954. The Corporation, he said, was 'not interested in securing exclusive rights in sport, but only in obtaining maximum facilities for broadcasting all events of interest to the public'. It was 'fully conscious' also that 'the long-term interests of any given sport could be endangered by excessive broadcasting'. The question of 'money payment' was less important—and here there were shades of Haley—than that 'of preserving all forms of sport in a healthy condition'. The BBC wished in future to settle fees 'by means of sensible and businesslike negotiations with the sporting interest concerned, taking full account of the conditions of the particular sport'.

This important meeting was a friendly one and prepared the way for a new period in which the BBC was greatly to extend its commitment to sport in an age of competitive television. Aird of the MCC, Reay of the LTA, Rous of the Football Association, and Lt.-Col. Prentice of the Rugby Union all 'admitted' that television had proved greatly beneficial to the sports they represented; and Rous and Prentice indicated that their associations would continue to favour 'awarding their

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of interview with Capt. John Gray, 15 April 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 10 Nov. 1952; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 10 Nov. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 17 Feb. 1953. At this meeting, which was convened at the request of APCS and which was attended on the Association's behalf by Gentle, Parker, Langlands and Perkin, 'some anxiety was expressed about the position during the interim period until the creation of a statutory broadcaster's right'. It was agreed jointly to approach the Postmaster-General to find out when legislation would be introduced. A statement to this effect was drafted on 21 May 1953. A new Copyright Act was not passed until 1956 after the end of the period covered in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> \*Note by de Lotbinière, 21 May 1953.

<sup>6</sup> \*Note of 13 Oct. 1953; de Lotbinière to Perkin, 19 Oct. 1953.

broadcasting rights to the BBC'. Mrs. Topham and Sir Arthur Elvin pointed out frankly that the size of the fee offered for broadcasting rights could not be disregarded as far as their interests were concerned, but they recognized the length and import of the history of their dealings with the BBC. The meeting as a whole rejected the idea in section 5 of the Television Bill that there should be a list of 'important sporting events' to which special conditions would be applied. The decision as to whether or not to award exclusive rights was to be left to the promoters.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1955 it was suggested that Dimmock should be invited to attend some of the APCS meetings—a sign of how times were changing<sup>2</sup>—and Jacob warmly welcomed the idea of APCS becoming 'a guiding and consultative body in connection with sporting negotiations'. Like some of the sporting promoters themselves, however, he did not support the setting up of any APCS company to handle arrangements for all television broadcasts.<sup>3</sup> When ITA established a Sports Advisory Committee, the BBC stated that APCS was the body with which the BBC's Television Service regularly consulted,<sup>4</sup> and a Press statement to this effect was made by Sir Randle Feilden of APCS at the end of 1955.<sup>5</sup>

There were some interesting signs before the period ended that the 'performers' at last were beginning to come into the picture along with the promoters. It was the secretary of the Variety Artistes Federation who remarked late in 1954 that television was giving footballers 'the status of performers in terms of programme time' and that they would increasingly influence the terms of future discussion. They had so far 'not received one single penny' for their 'titanic efforts' in 'entertaining' the vast television audience.<sup>6</sup> Six years before, in 1948, J. Guthrie, the secretary of the Association Football Players' and Trainers' Union, had telephoned de Lotbinière to say that

<sup>1</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 21 April 1954; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 29 April 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Dimmock to Jacob through Barnes, 9 Feb. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Dimmock, 18 Feb. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \*Dimmock to Barnes, 11 Aug. 1955; de Lotbinière to Dimmock, 14 Aug. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \*Dimmock to de Lotbinière, 19 Dec. 1955.

<sup>6</sup> *The Performer*, 18 Nov. 1954. For the subsequent attitudes of football clubs towards their players, see Walvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-8.

he was concerned that players should be represented in discussions about fees. He obviously had in mind the fees paid to boxers.<sup>1</sup> He was still pressing the same point, in vain, in 1955.<sup>2</sup>

Given the BBC's 'positive policy' in sports broadcasting, 'performers' were bound at some stage to be drawn more deeply into the organization. Yet it was not until after the advent of the videotape that a solution could be found to some of the most difficult problems of development. The inhibitions against recorded broadcasting had not been determined simply by technology. It was a basic maxim from 1945 to 1955 that 'filmed sport is, as far as Television is concerned, very secondary to "live" sport', since once the final result was known there would be little interest in viewing.<sup>3</sup> There were very few sporting events indeed, it was felt, which deserved 'more or less full-length re-broadcasting'. A number of them might figure in *Newsreel*, but in general, once the result was known, 'excitement would flag'.<sup>4</sup>

The maxim was challenged on occasions—once, at least, by Sir Stanley Rous, who thought that 'recorded parts' of the Cup Final would certainly attract evening audiences 'at a peak viewing time',<sup>5</sup> and once, at least, by de Lotbinière himself, who drew a similar conclusion from public reactions to a double showing, afternoon and evening, of a Rugby Union international match between England and Wales. The afternoon viewing figure was 86 viewers per hundred sets, with an audience rating of 79, and the evening viewing figure was as high as 60 viewers per hundred, with an audience rating of 72. De Lotbinière's 'general conclusion' pointed firmly to the future: 'On really big sporting occasions we could well afford to end the evening's programmes with a fifteen to thirty minute version of the live broadcast. This might then give us the best of both worlds—some satisfaction to the sporting authorities

<sup>1</sup> \*de Lotbinière to Madden, 3 Feb. 1948; J. Fay to Rous, 3 Feb. 1948: 'The members [of the Players' Union] feel that the Clubs and players assisting in matches, televised or broadcast, should receive some remuneration for their services.'

<sup>2</sup> \*J. Guthrie to Dimmock, undated letter of 1955; Dimmock to Guthrie, 22 Sept. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Dorté to de Lotbinière, 19 Feb. 1951.

<sup>4</sup> \*Dorté to de Lotbinière, 17 Aug. 1950.

<sup>5</sup> \*Rous to Dorté, 16 March 1949.

and at the same time a bit of additional programme material that would be reasonably acceptable.<sup>1</sup> The full significance of this statement, however, was to be appreciated only after the period covered in this volume had come to an end.

<sup>1</sup> \*de Lotbinière to McGivern, 10 March 1952. He added that he knew that there would be 'processing and cutting difficulties'. These were not obviated until the introduction of videotape.



## VII

### THE END OF THE MONOPOLY

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American radio is the product of American business! It is just as much that kind of product as the vacuum cleaner, the washing machine, the automobile and the aeroplane. . . . If the legend still persists that a radio station is some kind of art center, a technical museum, or a little piece of Hollywood transplanted strangely to your home town, then the first official act of the second quarter century should be to list it along with the local dairies, laundries, banks, restaurants, and filling stations.

J. HAROLD RYAN, Radio Chief of the Office of Censorship, quoted in C. SIEPMANN, *Radio's Second Chance* (1946), pp. 186-7

Somebody introduced Christianity into England. And somebody introduced smallpox, bubonic plague and the Black Death. Somebody is minded now to introduce sponsored broadcasting.

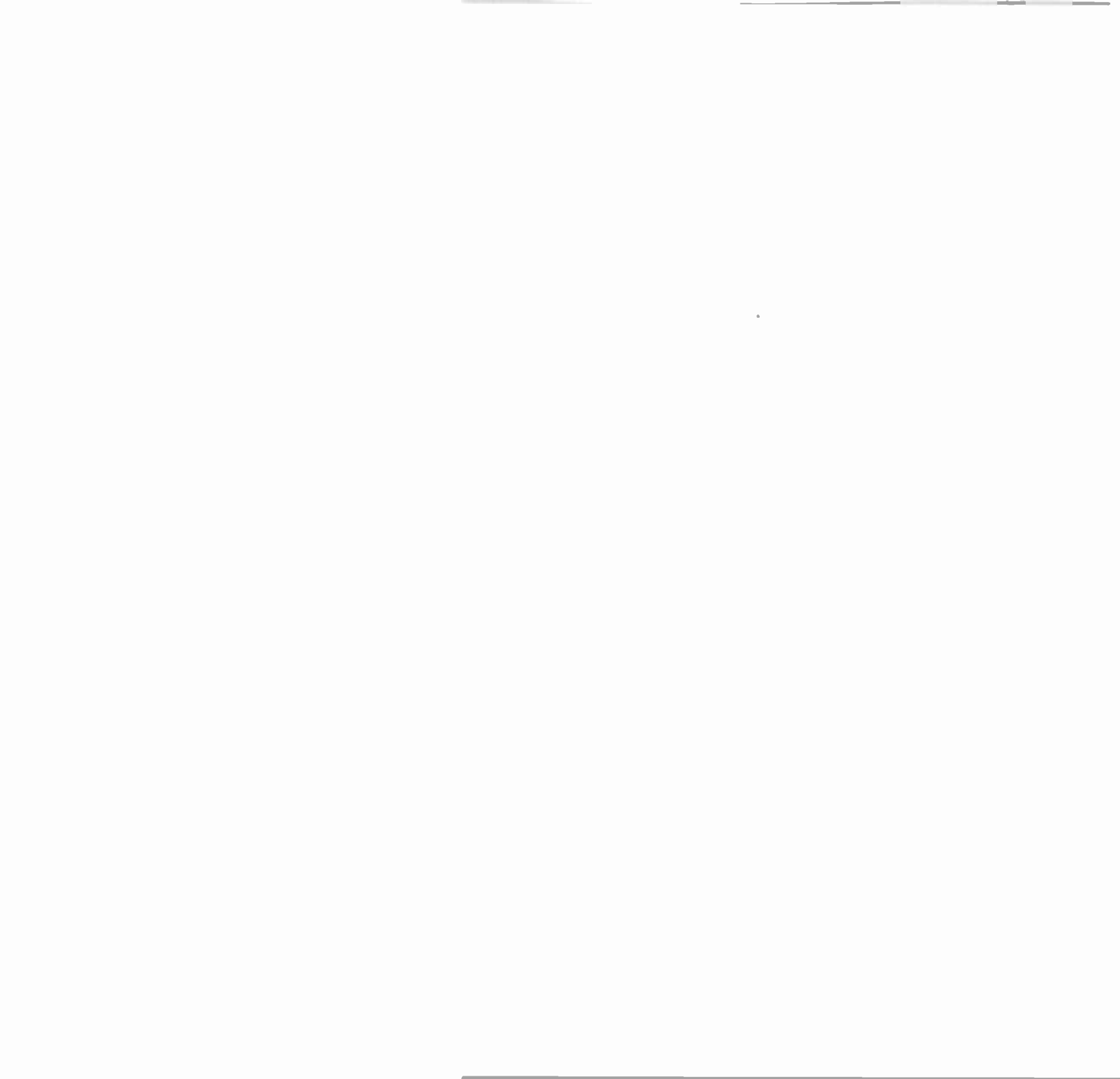
LORD REITH in the House of Lords, 22 May 1952

Dear little John Bulls,  
Don't you cry;  
You'll be full commercial  
Bye and bye.

*Broadcasting* (the American journal), 30 November 1953

The ending of the BBC monopoly is the biggest knock which respectability has taken in my time. If this was all the work of a pressure group, we cannot have too many of them.

A. J. P. TAYLOR in the *New Statesman*, 21 July 1961



## I. Acts of Parliament

FOR many people, the quality and variety of BBC output seemed to justify the continuing monopoly of the BBC during the early 1950s, particularly when that output was compared with sound and television output in other countries. Why should things change? Even before the Coronation, the BBC had had far more admirers of its achievements in television than it had critics. It seemed to them the right institution to guide the country into the television age. Thus, in the month of August 1952, when the Government renewed the BBC's Charter, A. J. Cummings, the well-known journalist, wrote in the *News Chronicle* that the time would come when, 'unless our economy collapses, colour television and other great technical and artistic advances will be a commonplace. . . . It is all the more imperative', he concluded, 'that these immense developments of the not too distant future shall remain under a wise but firm control.'<sup>1</sup>

There were then more than a million and a half television licences in Britain (as compared with over sixteen million sets in the United States), and the last of the five high-power television transmitters at Wenvoe near Cardiff had just been opened. Cummings obviously believed that the BBC was now following a sufficiently active policy of television development—whatever might have happened earlier—to guarantee further progress. Four out of five people, if they possessed television sets, could now receive television in their homes as against only one in two in the United States, where there were important cities like Denver and Portland which were still without television.<sup>2</sup>

This itself was a sign not only of active development but of public responsibility. Programming seemed to Cummings to be in the right hands also, and he quoted with approval a recent statement of George Barnes that, as viewing facilities

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, 19 Aug. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*D. Ritchie, Head of Publicity, to Haley, 12 May 1952. A freeze had been imposed on the construction of new television stations in the United States from 1948 to July 1952. See Barnouw, *The Golden Web* (1968), pp. 285–90.

increased, 'television programmes must increasingly reflect the life of the country as a whole'. Nonetheless, nothing could be taken for granted. Because the Government in renewing the BBC's Charter had committed itself to 'competitive television', 'a moral crusade for proper television control' was now necessary 'without much loss of time'.<sup>1</sup>

'Programming' and 'control' seemed to go together. Frank Lloyd Wright, the great American architect, was to call television 'the medium designed to provide chewing gum for the eye'.<sup>2</sup> But need it necessarily be so everywhere? The British, after all, used far less real chewing gum than the Americans. Indeed, at that time they associated chewing gum, like urban crime, with America, and most of them did not believe that it followed naturally from the inherent characteristics of the television medium that 'two to four hours of visual education in violence and crime' should be offered every evening, as some Americans were complaining. The idea of a voluntary Broadcasters' Code, not enforceable by law, did not seem—even to the Americans—to be an adequate safeguard 'to protect the standards of our homes'.<sup>3</sup> Nor did the existence of a 'dual system'. A Canadian Committee, chaired by Vincent Massey, a later Governor-General, had reported in 1951 that 'few of the representatives of the private systems who appeared before us recognised any public responsibility beyond the provision of acceptable entertainment'. Some of 'the wealthiest' of these stations had 'the lowest standard in programmes'.<sup>4</sup>

It was Norman Collins who separated most explicitly ques-

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 896.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in W. P. Dizard, *Television: A World View* (1966), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> For the code, see G. Chester and G. R. Garrison, *Television and Radio* (1956), pp. 140 ff. One section of the code read: 'Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect for the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for the advancement of education and culture, for the acceptability of the programme material chosen, for decency and decorum in presentation and for propriety in advertising.' For the protests, see *The Times*, 3 Sept. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> See the Report of the Canadian Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1951). Simon, in his article in *The Times*, 5 Sept. 1952, where he claimed that American experience sounded 'a warning bell', also urged the Government to follow 'the excellent example of the Dominion of South Africa' and to investigate the experience of other countries before pressing ahead with further commercialization. For Canada, see F. W. Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951* (1969).

tions of programming from questions of 'commercialism' as a system of control. In an immediate reply to an article by Lord Simon in *The Times* in September 1952, Collins doubted whether American television was 'bad' because it was 'commercial', pointing out that it was not only in the field of television that American standards were different from those in Britain. No one in Britain, he claimed, was advocating commercial radio and television on the American pattern. There could be a quite different system of control and a quite different pattern of programmes. Meanwhile, in Britain, the word 'commercial' was becoming a bugbear. 'We do not . . . talk about the "commercial" Press of the country. We talk about the free Press. Would Lord Simon argue that the free Press of the country would be better if placed under "a single Board of Governors"?'<sup>1</sup> Someone very different in temperament and experience from Lord Simon rushed to reply. Lionel Fielden, highly unorthodox ex-BBC official and at an earlier date manager of Indian broadcasting, wrote from his home in Italy that it was dangerous to treat the words 'commercial' and 'free' as interchangeable. 'The logic of Mr. Collins leads to the assumption that Parliament would be "free-er" if time could be bought on the front bench at Westminster.'<sup>2</sup>

It would be absurd, Fielden went on, to change 'the most reliable, intelligent and varied service . . . in the world' on the assumption that to allow the advertiser's foot in the door would 'bring a sweet new whiff of freedom'. Fielden had never liked bureaucracy, not least when he was working inside a hierarchical BBC, and he conceded willingly that 'monopolies tend to create complacency, lack of enterprise, top-heavy bureaucratic staffs, and general doodling'. He believed, too, that 'programme-makers should have more power and reward than they get, administrators correspondingly less'. Yet the BBC, in his opinion, was doing its best in the 1950s. Complaints and preferences had to be balanced. 'In the same way, we may grouse at the muddles of democracy, and yet prefer it to more efficient totalitarianism.'

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 6 Sept. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1952. For Fielden's early career, see A. Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (1965), pp. 74-5, 136. See also Fielden's revealing autobiography *The Natural Bent* (1960).

This preliminary exchange, a very courteous one,<sup>1</sup> was the prelude to many, not all of them so courteous, particularly from April 1953 onwards. Gallup Polls showed that most people in Britain were still reasonably happy with the broadcasting *status quo*, although the strongest supporters of change were the people with television sets, and one out of two set-owners had favoured the Government's new approach when it was put forward in August 1952.<sup>2</sup> The courtesy survived in public, if not always in Parliament, until after the Coronation, even if at times it was strained, and as late as July 1953 a Conservative backbencher, Anthony Hurd, stated that, while some of his Conservative colleagues on the back benches were all the time trying to force the pace, the Cabinet was right to allow opinion to form quietly before introducing legislation to implement its White Paper.<sup>3</sup>

The immediate moves between the two summers of 1952 and 1953 were certainly not dramatic. The Broadcasting Group got a new Chairman, Sir Robert Grimston, when Profumo became a Minister in the autumn of 1952, and while Brigadier Clarke dropped out, Gilbert Longden, C. Mott-Radcliffe and Tufton Beamish came in. Yet the Government did not accede to its request to set up a new five-member Broadcasting Commission,<sup>4</sup> and decided instead to widen the membership of and to confer greater powers on a reconstituted Television Advisory Committee. The BBC was no longer treated as 'the only interested party',<sup>5</sup> and after Sir Waldron Smithers had asked the Minister to take steps not to add any fellow travellers to this important Committee, C. O. Stanley, Chairman and Managing Director of Pye Ltd., and C. Darnley Smith, Chairman of a radio company which was a subsidiary of the Rank

<sup>1</sup> Collins publicly thanked Simon for 'the characteristic moderation of his contribution on commercial broadcasting'.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup Poll, 19 Aug. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 12 July 1953.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 426.

<sup>5</sup> Orr-Ewing to Gammans, 14 Aug. 1952. The new Committee had Admiral Sir Charles Daniel as Chairman, E. W. Playfair from the Treasury and Sir Ben Barnett and Dr. Radley from the Post Office. The presence of the Treasury representative and a representative of the Ministry of Supply guaranteed that it would follow official policy. There were three independent representatives—the Hon. Charles Maclaren, E. M. Fraser (of ICI) and Sir Edward Herbert. The BBC was represented by Jacob and Bishop.

Organisation, were appointed in October 1952. There was some controversy, which reached the pages of *Wireless World*,<sup>1</sup> but it was felt, not least in Broadcasting House, that since the old Committee had seldom worked fast, the new one would not be likely to improve on its record.<sup>2</sup>

It was certainly not felt to be surprising or alarming inside Broadcasting House that applications for commercial television licences had been received by the Postmaster-General.<sup>3</sup> The first company to apply for a licence—the Associated Broadcasting Development Company, formed on 7 August 1952—had been told politely that no licences would be granted until after the Television Advisory Committee had completely considered the whole position.<sup>4</sup> It had also been told by the Board of Trade that it had to include the word ‘Development’ in its title on the grounds that only the BBC could use the word ‘Broadcasting’ without qualification. The BBC itself had also been told that while the Government was ‘under great pressure’ to begin commercial television, no licences would be granted until the BBC had completed its five medium-power stations and had made ‘a good start’ on VHF.<sup>5</sup>

The sponsors of ABDC included Stanley and Collins, the latter already working in an office in Covent Garden and in studios at Highbury for his High Definition Films Company while spreading the gospel of competitive television. Sir Robert

<sup>1</sup> For Stanley and Pyc, see above, p. 177. For the earlier history of the Television Advisory Committee, see above, p. 188. For controversy see *Hansard*, vol. 505, cols. 130–1, 15 Oct. 1952; vol. 507, cols. 173–4, 19 Nov. 1952; and vol. 525, cols. 1487–8, 25 March 1954. See letters from Orr-Ewing to *Wireless World*, 6 Feb. 1953, and from Stanley to *The Times*, 31 March 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Orr-Ewing (loc. cit.) said that the Committee was no longer a ‘rubber stamp’ device. He thought of Sir Edward Appleton as a possible Chairman: (letter of 14 Aug. 1952).

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 510, cols. 183–4, 21 Jan. 1953. Gammans refused to give the names of the applicants. The matter was raised again on 5 February (ibid., cols. 2166–78) when a number of Labour MPs attacked any idea of sponsored programmes on the grounds that they would lower standards. There was a mini-debate when Conservative MPs joined in the fray. There was a further discussion on 11 March (ibid., vol. 512, cols. 1266–70, 11 March 1953) when Gammans said, in answer to questions, that the number of applications had risen to 46. See also ibid., vol. 513, cols. 9–17, 18 March 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Board of Management, *Minutes*, 11 Aug. 1952. The announcement of the formation of a reconstituted committee had been made on 20 June 1952.

<sup>5</sup> Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 11 Dec. 1952, following a meeting with the Postmaster-General and the Assistant Postmaster-General.

Renwick, businessman, President of the Television Society, former Chairman of the County of London Electricity Supply Company and war-time Civil Servant (Controller of Communications Equipment at the Ministry of Aircraft Production), was a third leading figure, a long-standing advocate of commercial television who had written a letter on the subject to *The Times* as early as 1947,<sup>1</sup> and Lord Duncannon (later the Earl of Bessborough) was a fourth. Other early figures dropped out. The 'energy and passion' of Collins served as a detonator during this critical period, but he was shrewd enough to know when and where to keep the powder dry.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, however, the Broadcasting Study Group was not inactive, and a limited 'war of words', the prelude to the real struggle, began in public. The Group queried the reasons for the Government's delay in implementing Cmd. 8550, and pressed for the Postmaster-General to lay down 'the rules of the game' so that would-be station operators would know exactly where they stood.<sup>3</sup> It urged him also to meet them to discuss future policy, and contemplated seeking to become an official sub-committee of the Conservative Party's Home Affairs Committee.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as late as April 1953, it was still passing on news of 'considerable perturbation in the radio industry about the date for the introduction of competitive TV'. 'It is feared', the Group added, 'that sales will dry up and the rhythm of production be lost (with consequent unemployment) if the public are made to think that the new stations are [not] going to open in the near future.'<sup>5</sup> In the same month, the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising published a pamphlet, *Television: The Viewer and the Advertiser*, proclaiming the virtues of an 'independent system' whereby 'the advertiser would be able to buy into the audience or audiences most likely to be interested in his product, while the

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 2 April 1947. Renwick is said to have stated that since he had had his business taken away from him after the nationalization of electricity he would now take away the Government's (i.e. the BBC's). There was a profile of C. O. Stanley in *The Observer*, 21 Aug. 1960.

<sup>2</sup> P. Foster, 'The Lucrative Mystery' in *The Spectator*, 25 Aug. 1961: this is one of the best articles in any periodical on the origins of commercial television.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Some Notes from The Broadcasting Study Group', 11 Feb. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> Note on a Meeting, 1953; *Hansard*, vol. 513, cols. 155-6, 1 April 1953, when the points were pressed by Beamish, Grimston, Orr and others.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Gammans, 28 April 1953.



viewer would be able to tune in to those programmes, including the BBC's, which appeal to him most'.<sup>1</sup>

There was a debate on the subject on 2 April 1953, initiated by John Rodgers, who admitted frankly that he had been for many years a director of an advertising agency whose associated companies were among the biggest producers of commercial radio and sponsored television.<sup>2</sup> This, he said, had nothing to do with his support of commercial television in Britain, about which he felt as strongly on one side as Christopher Mayhew did on the other. He accused the Government of holding up progress, even as far as a Controlling Body was concerned: 'while the bureaucrats have dawdled, delayed and dallied, private enterprise has been, as I believe it always is, zealous in its duty.' Such talk was not calculated to appease Labour critics of the Government's intentions, and it left out, of course, the lack of enthusiasm for a shift towards new policies among many Conservative MPs, including Eden and Butler.

Mayhew pressed the point that there had, in fact, been no delay. In the 1952 debates the Lord Chancellor had stated that it would be several years before licences could be granted.<sup>3</sup> He hoped that the Government would stick to this statement. It was possible to forgive those businessmen who were pushing for commercial television: by their lights they were doing their duty to their shareholders. What could not be forgiven would be a failure of the Government to resist this pressure in the public interest. American programmes would flood in. 'The viewer wants the programmes to be in British taste and in British style; the sponsor does not want a British-type programme.'<sup>4</sup>

There were increasingly sharp political dividing lines in this debate which did not help the BBC.<sup>5</sup> Rodgers had set the pace,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. a pamphlet produced by the Popular Television Association, 'Some Thoughts on Competitive Television': 'The competing stations will persuade viewers to modify their sets and turn over to the new stations ONLY if these new programmes are better than those at present obtained.'

<sup>2</sup> For Rodgers, see above, p. 410; see also *Hansard*, vol. 513, cols. 1456-76, 2 April 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 176, col. 1445, 26 May 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 513, col. 1465, 2 April 1953.

<sup>5</sup> The BBC Staff Association had come out once more against commercial television and was considering measures to be taken to resist it. (It had made its first statement on the subject after a meeting of 24-25 May 1952.) Rodgers claimed that this raised 'an important constitutional issue'. Could they flout Parliament?

Mayhew had retaliated in similar fashion, and in his final speech Gammans stated that he hoped the Labour Party would make 'no sponsored television' an election cry and 'go barnstorming up and down the country'. 'Nothing could be of greater advantage to the Conservative Party. For one thing, it will be plain to the general public that it is the Socialists who propose to prevent their enjoying a variety of programmes.'<sup>1</sup>

The most interesting points came at the end of Gammans's speech. Like Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, the Home Secretary, before him in 1952,<sup>2</sup> Gammans confessed that there was still no clear-cut pattern of a new system. A 'new field' was being entered, and there were many questions to answer. 'Should any action be taken to prevent monopolies being set up?' 'Ought there to be any regulation concerning the number of stations which can be started in any particular area?' 'Should foreign capital be allowed and, if so, on what conditions and with what limitations?' 'For what number of years should a commercial station be licensed?' 'Is it desirable to control the number of hours during which television of any sort should be allowed during the course of a day?' 'As to the controlling body itself, how should it be composed and what are to be its powers?' 'What is to be the Ministerial responsibility for the decisions of the controlling body?' Finally, 'how are we to create a healthy code of the air?'<sup>3</sup> A Post Office Working Party had been considering the answers to these and other questions, and he was taking account also of the economic context. 'Some people may well have criticised us for the fact that at a time when we were fighting for our very national economic existence we allotted any capital resources at all to television', and 'as we go round the country and see these rather ugly aerials on the chimney pots it is not easy to persuade people from abroad that our economic position is as difficult as we all know it to be.' Television, however, was to go ahead, and the BBC would still have a major role to play in its development.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 513, col. 1470, 2 April 1953.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 425.

<sup>3</sup> A Committee of the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising and the Incorporated Society of Advertisers drew up such a code which Gammans read in May 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 513, cols. 1474-6, 2 April 1953.

If the enthusiasm of committed politicians (on both sides), the pressure of eager advertisers, and the enterprise of some of the embryonic sponsoring groups were all unquestionable, the prestige of the BBC itself was exceptionally high in June 1953 following the great success of its arrangements for televising the Coronation.<sup>1</sup> And for all the talk of 'a first-class alternative service of programmes competing with the BBC for all tastes and interests', the 'warning bells' from across the Atlantic were ringing more loudly, too, than they ever had before.<sup>2</sup> 'Commercial television cannot be inaugurated until the Government has issued Licences to those wishing to operate in this field,' *The Observer* pointed out on 7 June, when the first Report of the Television Advisory Committee had been submitted to the Post Office. 'Parliament has yet to debate the term of such Licences. There is still a chance to reconsider the whole question.'<sup>3</sup>

Jules Thorn, Chairman of a British firm of television set makers, returned from the United States openly hostile to commercial television.<sup>4</sup> Sir Alexander Korda, the film-maker, one of the original Directors of ABDC, urged that in the light of the history of the cinema industry any 'sponsored TV' would have to be British; if the BBC faced competition 'even in the field of entertainment', bad currency *à la* Gresham would

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 457-73. *Daily Sketch*, 4 June 1953, *Daily Herald*, 4 June 1953, 'Does this fine feat suggest that the BBC is in need of "competition" to improve its efficiency?' The BBC had not, however, disposed of its critics, some of whom did not favour sponsored TV. See, for example, *The People*, 14 June 1953, urging the BBC to 'wake up' if sponsored TV were to be avoided. *The Statist*, 20 June 1953, said that the most 'futile of arguments against commercial television was that the BBC had done so well with the Coronation programmes. That contention is tantamount to saying that because a service is capable of excellence no other service is equally capable.' Cf. *Financial Times*, 5 June 1953: 'The case for commercial television has not been altered or weakened. It never was based on any contempt for the abilities of the BBC.'

<sup>2</sup> *Television: The Viewer and the Advertiser*, p. 1; the *Daily Telegraph* (19 June 1953) gave as the heading to a group of letters 'Sponsored Viewing: American Infiltration hard to Counter'. Orr-Ewing was in touch with R. H. Coase in the United States (letter of 13 August and reply of 17 September 1952) about the position of the BBC and differences between the British and American situations. He had complained to the BBC about an article by Bernard B. Smith in the *BBC Quarterly* vol. VII (1952) on 'American Television at the Crossroads'.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 7 June 1953. The Radio Industry Council had asked the Postmaster-General for a meeting before the Report of the Television Advisory Committee was published (letter of 30 April 1951).

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Express*, 17 June 1953.

drive out good.<sup>1</sup> Gerald Cock, first Director of BBC Television before the war, wrote from San Francisco that Americans were suffering from 'a competition that has driven advertisers to play down to what they believe is majority taste for crime, cheap sex, appeals to avarice and worse'. All American programmes, indeed, could be improved by 'the removal of all commercial influence'.<sup>2</sup> Randolph Churchill, writing from London, did not let the fact that his father was Prime Minister inhibit him from arguing that the lesson from America was the danger of 'the mass mind'. 'Free competition for the mass mind of the millions had produced monotony and uniformity.'

Defending the record and current output of the BBC as stoutly as Gerald Cock, Churchill added that if it was felt that the development of television was being held back by lack of money—one of the main points made by the supporters of commercial television—there was an obvious remedy. Licence fees should be increased or the Government should pass on to the BBC some part of the heavy purchase tax it imposed on television sets.<sup>3</sup>

Much was being made of the financial argument at this time—with the *Financial Times* arguing that the public would want to see 'not the best programmes that the BBC can afford but the best that money can buy.'<sup>4</sup> Yet Churchill, among others, would have been happy to see the BBC provide its own 'second channel'. When Jacob was questioned sharply about such a possibility in April 1953 on the grounds that it had not figured in the BBC's evidence to Beveridge, he replied equally sharply that 'the evidence given to the Beveridge Committee' was no longer 'necessarily a very good guide to what the BBC

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1953, and a supporting letter from the Screenwriters' Association, 13 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 11 May 1953. Cock wrote further letters on 30 May and 27 June 1953. American correspondents who defended the American system seem to have produced opposite results from those they intended. They were often 'corrected' by other Americans.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 1953. See also his article in the *News Chronicle*, 23 June 1953, 'TV—the Gutter or the Stars'. *Tribune*, 26 June 1953, spotlighted divisions in the Churchill household. Christopher Soames was in favour of commercial television, but Winston never mentioned it—at least in public. Much was being made of the financial argument.

<sup>4</sup> *Financial Times*, 5 June 1953. 'The cost of first class programmes', it began, 'is very great indeed. No doubt, on a steadily increasing revenue from licences, the present system could go on. . . . But that is not enough.'

may be planning now'. The idea of a BBC second channel was by now being taken very seriously inside the BBC: it would both relieve the first channel, where 'scarcity' of time was a major problem, and present new opportunities for a second channel which would genuinely compete, not simply provide more of the same thing.<sup>1</sup> It would be expensive, of course, and even without it Barnes deleted from his prepared speech to the staff in January 1953 the sentences, 'We are the most costly Television Service in the world. By the end of this year when we are in our permanent home I hope that we shall earn the title of the most efficient Television Service in the world.'<sup>2</sup>

If Gammans was not going to divulge the names of applicants for competitive licences, he was obviously going to give no secrets away or to talk at length about the economics of the exercise. And he knew that, leaving on one side the critics of the United States—a band limited in numbers, if not in eloquence—he had other powerful allies and some powerful enemies.

The newspaper industry as represented by the Newspaper Society remained almost unanimously hostile to commercial television,<sup>3</sup> and there were far more articles supporting the BBC in the Press than there were against. Only the *Daily Mirror*, but not its columnist Cassandra, was loudly in favour of a change of system,<sup>4</sup> along with Malcolm Muggeridge, who enjoyed making fun of 'the system' in *Punch*. 'Consider how different our plight today might be if, say, Lord Beveridge or

<sup>1</sup> \*Orr-Ewing wrote to Jacob about the idea of a second BBC channel on 30 April 1953 and Jacob replied on 4 May. For the rumours, see *Daily Sketch*, 28 April 1953. Barnes dealt with the issue in a speech to the Summer School of Music at Dartington Hall, 9 Aug. 1953 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>2</sup> Staff Speech by Barnes, 20 Jan. 1953 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1953, reported the hostile reactions at the Society's Dinner to a speech by Gammans. The President said that he could not disguise 'the dismay' of the Society at the decision to permit 'new forms of competition to endanger the prosperity of a free and independent Press'.

<sup>4</sup> On 17 June 1953 the *Daily Mirror* published a list of the names of newspapers which were said to have applied for licences. The *Daily Sketch* retorted on 18 June 1953 that it was 'bitterly opposed' to commercial television. 'We, like the *Daily Mirror*, know that there will be big profits for station holders. If we are granted a licence we will apply ourselves to the running of a station with all the enthusiasm we can muster; but we are still entitled to our opinion that commercial television is not in the national interest.' In the pages of the *Daily Mirror* (15 Dec. 1952) Cassandra had asked, 'If you once let the soap-sellers get a grip of this fantastically powerful medium of propaganda, how are you going to keep the politicians out?'

Lord Waverley or Lady Violet Bonham Carter had been made head of a State Publishing House, with all rival enterprises as illegal as private distilleries.<sup>1</sup>

Muggeridge's choice of these names was deliberate, for before the Government made its long-awaited statement about 'television development' in June 1953 two important developments had taken place. First a letter appeared in *The Times* on 4 June signed by Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Lord Brand, Lord Halifax, Tom O'Brien (Chairman of the Trades Union Congress) and Lord Waverley, stating that they were hoping to set up a National Television Council 'to resist the introduction of commercial television into this country and to encourage the healthy development of public service television in the national interest'. Christopher Mayhew had been behind this initiative, with Lady Violet coming in a little later.<sup>2</sup> Earlier there had been talks with Lord Simon and Gerald Barry, and before the decision to set up the new Council had been taken the idea had been mooted of working not through a new body but through the existing Association for Education in Citizenship.<sup>3</sup> The publication of the letter to *The Times* had been deliberately delayed—on the editor, Sir William Haley's, suggestion—until after the Coronation.<sup>4</sup>

The Association for Education in Citizenship emphasized that commercial television was a 'non-party matter' and that 'doctrinaire considerations should be ignored'. There should be a free vote of the House, it suggested, 'when the question comes before Parliament'. A second move in June 1953, however, made this possibility less likely. A fortnight after *The Times* letter, the Leader of the Opposition, Clement Attlee,

<sup>1</sup> *Punch*, 24 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Mayhew Papers: Christopher Mayhew to Lord Waverley, 29 May 1953. Waverley thought the draft of the letter 'excellent': Halifax (28 May 1953) made a few alterations to the last lines. He had first been approached by Mayhew in a letter of 22 May. P. Forster in *The Spectator*, 25 Aug. 1961, reported that when Collins opened *The Times* and saw the name of Lady Violet Bonham Carter he said to himself that he knew he 'must eventually win'.

<sup>3</sup> At a meeting on 29 May the Executive Committee of the Association declined to participate. The *News Chronicle* also decided not to accept an invitation to publish Mayhew's pamphlet. M. Alderton Pink, honorary secretary of the Association for Education in Citizenship, wrote to *The Times* in support of the line taken, 5 June 1953. The first critic of the Council was Capt. L. P. S. Orr, writing on the same day.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 5 June 1953.

# NOT FIT FOR CHILDREN?

It will be TELEVISION Children's Hour at 5 p.m. Parents all over Britain will switch on as usual, confident that the programme will be properly presented and planned in the interests of children and of no one else.

This is because the B.B.C. is a Public Corporation and has a proper sense of public and social responsibility.

Supposing that responsibility were removed?

Supposing, as our Conservative Government proposes,

commercial interests were allowed to 'buy' time on television or sound radio to advertise their wares, they would control their own programmes. In the fierce competitive struggle for the largest audience, all today's good standards would be abandoned in favour of the 'sensational' and 'stunt' type of programme.

You don't believe it?

Then read this quotation from *Time* magazine (3 March 1952) of America, where commercially sponsored radio and TV are practically everywhere. This is what the magazine says about the results of a children's television investigation by mothers in San Francisco: 'The outraged mothers saw 13 murders and assorted killings; four sluggings; six kidnappings; five hold-ups; three explosions; three instances of blackmail and extortion; three thefts; two armed robberies; two cases of arson; one lynching; one torture scene and one miscarriage. One mother clocked 104 gun shootings during a half hour serial, and another found sudden death shudderingly described 14 times in 20 minutes. The mothers themselves concluded that the gun, the gat, the rod, the six-shooter, is the prime motivator of most children's television programmes. Life is cheaper than a cigarette butt in the gutter. Not one episode, not one character, not one emotion do we see evoked that the children might emulate to their gain.'



22. Labour Party leaflet attacking commercial television

made a statement (to a miners' rally) declaring that if the Conservative Government 'handed over television to private enterprise' Labour would 'have to alter it when we get back to power'.<sup>1</sup> This was the first time that such a formal declaration had been made, and it was a firm declaration, even if the word 'alter' had an element of ambiguity in it, and even if another senior Labour politician, Herbert Morrison, during the very same weekend, expressed the view that there should be a free vote in Parliament, on the grounds that this was 'not a matter of party politics but of the maintenance of British standards'. Not surprisingly, Lord Simon in a postcard from the Lake District on 16 June congratulated Mayhew on the 'storm' he had done 'so much to raise'.

Attlee's threat may not have been taken very seriously by the advocates of commercial television: it had the immediate effect, however, of consolidating doubtful opinion within the Conservative Party.<sup>2</sup> From now on, the Whips were on. It was

<sup>1</sup> *The Observer*, 14 June 1953; *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1953; *The Times*, 15 June 1953; *The Scotsman*, 15 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times*, 21 June 1953; *News Chronicle*, 22 June 1953.

significant also at this juncture that a new Gallup Poll suggested that resistance to commercial television was actually slightly less on the part of Labour Party supporters than of Conservatives: 40 per cent of the Labour voters who were asked their opinions on the subject preferred a combination of BBC and commercial television as against only 36 per cent of Conservative voters (and 37 per cent of Liberal voters). As early as July 1953, in an extremely well-argued article, William Clark, an opponent of commercial television (and an influence on Sir Anthony Eden), pointed out that 'it would be foolish to imagine that the Labour Party would undo the harm' if a Conservative Government introduced commercial television. Commercial television would have to be very inept not to be popular; once it had started, its abolition would involve 'destroying a large vested interest . . . in the role of a kill-joy'.<sup>1</sup>

The Press battle was still raging when Lord De La Warr, the Postmaster-General, made a statement on 2 July—paralleled by a statement in the Commons by Harry Crookshank, the Lord Privy Seal—that a further White Paper would be issued during the autumn setting out the terms on which 'competitive television might be permitted to operate'.<sup>2</sup> In the circumstances they were somewhat cautious remarks, and began not with a reference to competitive television but to the BBC, which was to be allowed 'to proceed at once with certain projects' that would 'make television available to another six or seven million people' and to start VHF sound services. As far as competition was concerned, the further debate in the autumn would 'enable the House and the country to exercise a proper judgment in this essential matter before a final judgment is taken'. The BBC would remain 'intact' and its scope would be 'extended' and the number of new competitive stations would be limited and in the first instance of low power and range: none of them could operate before another eighteen months at the earliest. The Controlling Body would have power to see that competitive programmes conformed to specified standards and if need be to recommend withdrawal of licences: it might even call for scripts before presentation and it might lay down 'the

<sup>1</sup> W. Clark, 'The Future of Television' in *Twentieth Century*, July 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 517, cols. 593-600, 2 July 1953; *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 183, col. 116, 2 July 1953.



place to be allotted to advertising matter in any programme' and restrict certain kinds of advertising altogether.

There had obviously been a good deal of behind-the-scenes discussion in Government circles about the relevant 'terms' of a new system—the possibilities of a formal 'Code' for advertisers, for example, and the substitution of advertising between programmes for individual programmes directly sponsored by advertisers. *Television: the Viewer and the Advertiser* had recognized that 'a series of short disconnected programmes, financed by fluctuating budgets', might not be sufficiently attractive to compete with BBC programmes.<sup>1</sup>

Considering the tenor and tone of the 1952 debates and the drive and determination of the pro-commercial lobby during the previous months, the apparently calculated and consistent use of the word 'might' in the official statements by the two Government spokesmen was bound to arouse the deepest suspicions among the most enthusiastic parliamentary advocates of commercial television. 'I have seldom seen Tory backbenchers so openly angry with their own Government,' wrote the parliamentary correspondent of *Truth*. 'They muttered and wriggled in rage and yelled "might" with furious emphasis.'<sup>2</sup> Few of them joined in discussion at this stage, however—the Speaker insisted that it was not a debate—and the attack came from Morrison, who urged the Government to proceed no further with its plan, and from Mayhew, who dismissed the controls offered by Crookshank as 'odds and ends of safeguards'. Morrison called the issue a 'national moral' one rather than a 'political' one, but the issue was obviously becoming more and more political, in the Commons at least. The *Daily Telegraph* contrasted the 'urbanity' of the House of Lords with the noisy exuberance of the Commons, pointing out distastefully that thirty MPs got to their feet, fourteen on the Opposition side and sixteen on the Government side. 'Questions from some were preceded by cries of "declare your interest".'<sup>3</sup> Mayhew was asked to do this by the Conservatives, and Tom Driberg pressed Conservative speakers to do the same. One important new point was made by Robert Boothby. He hoped that the

<sup>1</sup> *Television: The Viewer and the Advertiser*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Truth*, 10 July 1953. Cf. *Hansard*, vol. 517, cols. 596–7, 2 July 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1953.

Government would not persist in the view that all political discussion should be banned on sponsored television. Indeed, if this view were to be retained, then the argument about breaking the monopoly of the BBC fell to the ground.<sup>1</sup>

Crookshank made it clear that the Report of the Television Advisory Committee had been taken into account by the Government, and it was published a few days later. Only a limited band of frequencies would be immediately available for commercial television in the so-called 'Band III', and within that band only two channels could be used at that time for broadcasting; the rest were needed for various public and experimental services and for business radio. Other channels should ultimately be cleared to serve stations covering large areas, but this would inevitably take time.<sup>2</sup> Ultra high frequency broadcasting—UHF—could not yet start since techniques were not fully developed.

Technical limitations were obviously influencing Government policy towards competitive broadcasting in 1953 as they had done more than thirty years before when the BBC monopoly was established with technical considerations prominent, if not decisive.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 1953, however, the BBC continued to bask in its post-Coronation glow, receiving more compliments than ever before as the 'best broadcasting system' in the world.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, at least one Conservative constituency—Twickenham—sponsored a motion at a Home Counties Area Meeting in July that 'in view of the high standard attained by the BBC and the lack of public demand' the Government should 'postpone the introduction of sponsored television indefinitely'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 517, col. 599, 2 July 1953.

<sup>2</sup> For Band III, see *ibid.*, vol. 517, cols. 166–8, 15 July 1953 and vol. 518, col. 365, 22 July 1953.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), pp. 101 ff. Cf. R. H. Coase, *British Broadcasting—A Study in Monopoly* (1950), p. 18. 'It is broadly true to say that the establishment of the broadcasting service in Great Britain as a monopoly was the result of Post Office policy.'

<sup>4</sup> *News Chronicle*, 22 June 1953, and *Manchester Guardian*, 26 June 1953. Cf. *Birmingham Post*, 31 Aug. 1953. 'The proposal [to end the monopoly] is to interfere with an organisation which has made itself admired and respected throughout the civilised world.' The *Daily Sketch* announced the results of a poll of its own on commercial television on 22 June 1953. Seven out of ten of the respondents were said to be against it. 'The vast majority of people in this country', Jonah Barrington exclaimed, 'do not want commercial television.'

<sup>5</sup> The conference took place on 14 July 1953 at Caxton Hall.

The BBC's Ten Year Plan, widely publicized at this time, shrewdly emphasized also that the Corporation intended at every stage 'to proceed . . . in consultation with the Radio Industry Council'.<sup>1</sup>

While the Government was far from accepting the BBC's Ten Year Plan in its entirety in July 1953, it was obvious, as *The Scotsman*, which objected to monopoly, pointed out, that once competition was introduced the BBC would still enjoy 'considerable advantages'; 'it seems a trifle absurd', the newspaper went on, 'to regard the BBC as a small and poor concern which would wither away were it subjected to the cold blast of competition.'<sup>2</sup> Jacob was certainly unwilling to make any compromises in 1953, not least when they were suggested unofficially by Gammans, the Assistant Postmaster-General, or when they took the form of practical propositions for co-operation with ABDC, including buying programmes, during the winter of 1952-3.<sup>3</sup> The biggest possible compromise—that of the BBC itself 'selling time'—was ruled out in 1953 when, following a dinner in September with Lord Duncannon, Sir Robert Renwick and Norman Collins, representing ABDC, Jacob firmly advised the Board of Governors neither to 'sell time to anyone' in order to raise money for capital development, nor to put on sponsored programmes itself.<sup>4</sup> Had the decision of the Governors gone the other way, and had the BBC accepted even at this late hour the possibility of 'sponsoring' for some of its own programmes, there might well have been no Independent Television Authority in 1954.

Such 'mights' of history are more dangerous than the 'mights' of politics in the Government's July statements. There never was a chance that the Governors of the BBC would have taken such a decision. Although it was Acts of Parliament—

<sup>1</sup> \*Outline of Statement by the Director-General on BBC Plans, 23 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scotsman*, 15 June 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 8 Dec. 1952. For the idea of sponsored programmes as a 'life-line' for the BBC itself, see the *Daily Mirror*, 9 Dec. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> A payment of £1 million a year to the BBC for the right to televise three hours a day had been suggested. Collins told the story, but did not mention ABDC, at a luncheon arranged by the Society for Individual Freedom on 24 Sept. 1953 (*Manchester Guardian*, 25 Sept. 1953). The BBC, he added, was 'impenetrable' and 'imperturbable'. The Chairman at the luncheon was Sir Frederick Sykes, who had chaired the 1923 Committee on Broadcasting and who wrote a pamphlet for the Society for Individual Freedom, 'Television—The Right to View'.

culminating in the Television Act of 1954—which settled the future pattern of broadcasting in Britain, the BBC itself had already laid down its own position very firmly in a memorandum written by Jacob in February 1953.<sup>1</sup> ‘Unless . . . the Corporation is ready to depart from its long-established principle and to abdicate its trusteeship for public service broadcasting by allowing those who hold entirely contrary views to participate in the control of its resources,’ it began, ‘all suggestions of selling time should be firmly resisted.’

‘Objections on principle’ were ‘strongly reinforced by practical arguments of expediency. . . . The retention of flexibility, the need for room for expansion of our own output and the maintenance of the maximum strength with which to fight competitors, all impel the Corporation to retain full control of its own transmitters. . . . If the BBC is to provide, as it has done in sound broadcasting, a service of television which balances the needs of all parts of the country and of all levels of the population, it must retain control over its time and its programmes. It is not a question of deciding what is good for the people and denying them much of anything else. It is a question of remaining in a position to withstand pressure from whatever direction it may come and to be able to steer a steady course in fulfilling the aims of the Charter to inform, to educate and to entertain. There is no good reason why the people should not contrive to provide the finance necessary to enable the Corporation to serve them in this way.’<sup>2</sup>

The Government had been kept fully informed of BBC attitudes—and of its unwillingness to compromise—before the official statement of 2 July 1953 was made.<sup>3</sup> Yet it was only on the eve of the statement that public support for the BBC began to be carefully organized. Prepared as it was for competition—Jacob, like Haley before him, believed that it would now come—the BBC continued to hope, of course, that there

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 Feb. 1953; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 2 Feb. 1953. *Ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1953, notes the rejection of a second offer from Broadcast Relay Services. The view was held inside the BBC that ‘selling time’ was prohibited by the 1952 Licence, Clause 14.

<sup>2</sup> \*Memorandum to the Board of Governors, Feb. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*It had been agreed in February 1953 that the Vice-Chairman should inform the Postmaster-General (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 19 Feb. 1953).

might still be a change of opinion in Parliament between July and the publication of the promised White Paper in the autumn. The most effective way of realizing that hope, it was felt, would be to build up pressure.

The National Television Council to resist commercial television was formally inaugurated at a meeting in the home of Lady Violet Bonham Carter on 18 June. At this meeting, which Mayhew thought went 'splendidly', Lady Violet, 'magnificent in the Chair', was appointed Chairman for the future and Lord Waverley Honorary President—his office was to be no sinecure—and an Organizing Committee was set up which Mayhew did not consider to be 'really powerful and representative enough' in its first guise.<sup>1</sup> It included several MPs, among them Mayhew, Edward Shackleton and the Liberal, D. W. Wade. The Vice-Presidents and Supporters, whose names figured on the letterhead, included Sir Michael Balcor, Beveridge, E. M. Forster, Frank Gentle, Julian Huxley, Lord Horder, Violet Markham, Lord Moran, Harold Nicolson, Lady Palmerston, W. F. Oakeshott, Bertrand Russell, Viscount Samuel, Mary Stocks and Henry Willink.

The Committee met thereafter every two weeks in an interview room in the House of Commons. From the start it placed a great deal of emphasis on evoking 'the weight of authority', even though some of its members felt that 'the high moral tone is the one calculated to make the government obstinate'.<sup>2</sup> In private and public, emphasis was placed on the need for 'pressure and publicity' to counter the 'pressure' from vested interests. 'We express our sincere hope', the Council wrote, 'that the government will yield no further to the intense pressure to which they have been subjected by a comparatively small number of interested parties.'<sup>3</sup> The Council set out deliberately to appeal to 'thinking' people everywhere and

<sup>1</sup> Mayhew Papers: Mayhew to Simon, 19 June 1953. 'This can be changed,' he added.

<sup>2</sup> Barnes to the Bishop of Bristol, 20 Nov. 1953; the Bishop of Bristol to Barnes, 28 Nov. 1953 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>3</sup> Mayhew Papers: Mayhew to Simon, 19 June 1953; National Television Council, Organizing Committee, *Minutes*, 18 June 1953. Mayhew stressed that the Council should be 'positive' in its approach and William Clark suggested—with general approval—that the BBC should not be regarded as 'perfection'. For an early NTC pamphlet see *Britain Unites Against Commercial TV*. Cf. the Popular Television Association's *Britain Unites to Demand Competitive TV*.

sponsored a pamphlet by Mayhew, *Dear Viewer*, which sold 60,000 copies. 'I ask you', Mayhew's text concluded, 'to exercise all the influence you have, as a free citizen of the most democratic country in the world, to prevent this barbarous idea being realised.' Mayhew gave all the royalties of *Dear Viewer* to the Council.

The 'weight of authority' was represented not only by names like that of Lady Violet herself, Lord Waverley, Lord Brand or Lord Halifax, but by those of Church leaders—the two Archbishops and, as a member of the organizing committee, the Rev. E. Rodgers of the Department of Christian Citizenship of the Methodist Church—and of the Vice-Chancellors of universities and leading representatives of teachers' organizations.<sup>1</sup> Fourteen Vice-Chancellors, including those of Oxford (C. M. Bowra), Cambridge (Lionel Whitby) and London (H. Hale-Bellot), all signed a letter to *The Times* in which they warned that if television was placed on 'a commercial basis', 'the power of television for good' would be lost, never to be recovered.<sup>2</sup> The sense of a 'moral responsibility' for television output went further than the protection of the rights of 'the young'. 'Once sponsored radio and TV are admitted,' the *Daily Sketch* thundered, 'nothing is sacred.'<sup>3</sup> This was the 'high moral tone' at its most suspect.

<sup>1</sup> Many bishops made statements on the subject, e.g., Dr. Greer, the Bishop of Manchester, as reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, 25 June 1953. Their views were strongly criticized in *The Recorder*, 4 July 1953, and the members of the rival Popular Television Association (see below, p. 905) included Canon L. J. Collins and Canon C. B. Mortlock. In October 1953 the Bishop of Durham, Dr. A. M. Ramsey, said he was startled by the dogmatism of some of his colleagues and had not made up his mind. Christian Action deliberately stood aside as a body (Mayhew to L. J. Collins, 18 Dec. 1953, 28 Jan. 1954; Collins to Mayhew, 8 April 1954). Mrs. Dorothy M. Roberts proposed a concentration on headmistresses at the first meeting of the Council after Lord Samuel had complained that not enough women were represented. For an NUT statement, see *Schoolmaster*, 10 July 1953. *Education*, 10 July 1953, reported the unanimous adoption by the Association of Education Committees of a resolution hostile to commercial broadcasting 'whether by sound or sight'. It was proposed by J. L. Longland. For protests from the Workers' Educational Association, see *Liverpool Daily Post*, 22 June 1953. The Council itself recognized that it was short of businessmen (Organizing Committee, *Minutes*, 18 June, 1 July, 1 Oct. 1953). Sir Miles Thomas, then Chairman of BOAC, was an enthusiastic supporter (Thomas to Mayhew, 25 Nov. 1953).

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 1 July 1953. The Vice-Chancellors referred to the different treatments of the Coronation on the two sides of the Atlantic. Appleton at Edinburgh was a dissenter.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 4 June 1953.

If the National Television Council was the first off the mark—in public—in June 1953 and within a few weeks had agreed on a constitution, within a fortnight of the Government statement on 2 July a rival organization, the Popular Television Association, was set up. Its object was ‘to awaken the national conscience to the dangers, social, political and artistic, of monopoly in the rapidly developing field of television’ and ‘to provide the public at the earliest possible moment with alternative programmes which are in keeping with the best standards of British taste’. ‘Almost overnight,’ the Earl of Derby, its President, promised of commercial television, ‘the owner of a television set becomes a richer man.’<sup>1</sup> Its Vice-Presidents included Alec Bedser, the cricketer, Collin Brooks, Professors George Catlin and John Coatman, Sir Ian Fraser, Rex Harrison, Valerie Hobson, the Marquis of Londonderry, Somerset Maugham, the Duke of Northumberland, Viscount Nuffield and A. J. P. Taylor.

There had also been an immediate reaction to the Government statement in the Conservative Parliamentary Party. The day after it was made, the Broadcasting Group met to discuss future tactics and pressed for the speediest possible end to the BBC’s monopoly. They went on to convey this view to R. A. Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who assured the 1922 Committee on 9 July that the Government firmly intended to go ahead with its plan.<sup>2</sup> They also secured the formal setting-up of a new Radio and Television Committee—this time the official Committee which they had hoped for—with Walter Elliot as Chairman and Sir Robert Grimston as Vice-Chairman.<sup>3</sup> Elliot was an experienced broadcaster, who had been a well-known member of the old BBC *Brains Trust* as well as an experienced politician, and on 8 August he wrote to Jacob suggesting a broadcast debate on whether ‘the uses of advertisement are sweet or nasty’. The courtesies were back. ‘I shall be quite willing to take the part of Daniel,’ he added, ‘and there are an almost unlimited number of candidates for the lions.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Press Statement, 13 Nov. 1953. reprinted in *Britain Unites to Demand Competitive TV*.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 July 1953. The matter had not been discussed at the meeting of the 1922 Committee on 2 July, the day of the announcement.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 9 July 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Walter Elliot to Jacob, 8 Aug. 1953.

Jacob had his own stock of images: advertising mixed with programmes he compared with coal being carried in a railway train compartment full of passengers.

Whatever the outcome of such an open debate might have been—and the Governors procrastinated in deciding whether to stage it<sup>1</sup>—there was little doubt on either side in July 1953 about the important uses of ‘public relations’. Principles mattered, particularly to the influential members of the National Television Council, but efficient presentation of the case for or against was known to matter too when large sections of the public were ignorant or apathetic. Mayhew was very well known to viewers as a BBC television personality, and he could draw on the part-time services of Sydney Lewis, the Public Relations Officer of the Associated British Pictures Corporation, one of the film interests which, like the newspaper interests, opposed commercial television.<sup>2</sup> The Popular Television Association, however, had the big battalions on its side: it included so many public relations experts, indeed, that it was embarrassed by their presence, as it was also by the claim of Lord Woolton, the great public-image-maker, that, although he was ill in 1953, he had created the Association from inside the Conservative Party’s Central Office.<sup>3</sup> Years later, Harold Harris, writing in the *Evening Standard*, recalled how he had been approached on 11 July 1953 by Anthony Fell, MP, with the offer of ‘a public relations job’ in connection with ‘a short sharp public relations campaign’ to secure the speedy introduction of commercial television. ‘The complete support’ of *Aims of Industry*, which had been fighting battles against nationalization, would, he was told, be made available.<sup>4</sup> It was. Kenneth Mason and Gordon McIvor were seconded to the Association and worked as paid officials. The full-time Secretary was Ronald Simms, who had been employed by the agency, W. H. Gollings and Associates. Simms was later to succeed Mark

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 3 Sept. 1953. Board of Management (*Minutes*, 14 Sept. 1953) felt that a debate in a public hall might be more suitable. See below, p. 946.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Eric Fletcher, Labour MP for East Islington, was Deputy Chairman of ABPC, which also gave financial support to the National Television Council. Fletcher represented Warner Brothers. For differences in the Board, see Howard Thomas, *With an Independent Air* (1977), pp. 143–4.

<sup>3</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group* (1961), p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Standard*, 18 July 1961.



Chapman-Walker as Publicity Director for the Conservative Party, and when he left the Conservative Party he was to be associated with a campaign for commercial radio.<sup>1</sup>

Before turning in more detail to the two pressure groups which struggled to influence Government in 1953, it is necessary to consider again the material presented by Professor Hugh Wilson in his detailed but controversial study of the advent of commercial television in 1955, one of the few monographs at the disposal of a historian of British broadcasting. 'A future scholar, looking at the struggle over commercial television,' wrote a reviewer in *The Economist* of Wilson's book when it appeared in 1961, 'will find that though some new papers may be available, others will have been destroyed and that fewer and less accurate memories will be at his disposal for consultation'.<sup>2</sup> The words ring true, for it is already difficult to substantiate some of Professor Wilson's detail. His monograph is only one source, however, and part of its controversial quality sprang not so much from its revelations of 'cloak and dagger' detail, but from the fact that it was something of a *livre d'occasion* which appeared at a time when both the BBC and its competitor, not yet created in 1953, were under further official review by the Pilkington Committee.<sup>3</sup> Old battles were still being fought as the new battle proceeded. Eight years had already elapsed since the passing of the Television Act of 1954, but there were two threats of Court action when the book was published; and Lord Reith drew attention to it in a remarkably frank and vituperative speech in the House of Lords which shocked many of his fellow peers at least as much as the introduction of commercial television in 1954 had done. 'Hunched, mountainous and speaking with a kind of controlled ferocity,' as one observer described him, Reith moved a resolution calling attention to the lesson of Wilson's study. In return, he was attacked by a hurt as well as indignant Woolton and accused somewhat inadequately of offering merely 'a torrent of vulgar abuse'.<sup>4</sup>

Reith's speech was far more than that: he packed into it the

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 16 May 1962.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economist*, 26 Aug. 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Cmd. 1753 (1962). The Committee, with Sir Harry Pilkington as Chairman, had been appointed in July 1960.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 10 May 1962, commenting on H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group*.

feelings of a lifetime, and still felt at the end that he had not 'damn-blasted Woolton as forcefully' as he ought to have done.<sup>1</sup> By 1962, however, few shared his forthright values which had once dominated a generation. A more generally acceptable defence of Professor Wilson's account was made in 1962 by R. H. S. Crossman, who began a review with the characteristic (and prophetic) words, 'I have always maintained that there is trouble in store for anyone who strips off the legend and gives the first truthful account of British Parliamentary politics since 1945.'<sup>2</sup>

Vantage points from which to study recent history have changed many times since 1962, and in this chapter, as in all previous chapters in this *History of Broadcasting*, attention is focused on what at the time was thought, said, and done about commercial television and its prospects, not on what has been thought, said, and done since. Neither the National Television Council nor the Popular Television Association in 1953 was in a position to forecast accurately either the pattern or the consequences of competitive television in Britain, and neither was to win a complete victory. This was clear even by 1955. Professor Wilson had little to say of the final Act of Parliament—the 1954 Television Act. He had little to say also about the protracted debates leading up to it or of the complex structure of broadcasting which eventually emerged and which diverged so strongly from many of the most recent predictions. A. J. P. Taylor, who was an active member of the Popular Television Association, saw the eventual outcome both as participant and historian in very different terms from those of Wilson. 'I gave no endorsement to the present system of commercial television, mistakenly called "independent",' he wrote, 'indeed, I specifically condemned it.'<sup>3</sup> Others, however—the majority in Parliament then and later—preferred the 'new system' to all the alternatives. It seemed a wiser outcome than any which had at first been likely.

Because there are so many layers of later history, it is necessary to recall that during the period of history covered in this chapter the only recent official inquiry into the BBC which was on the record was that of the Beveridge Committee<sup>4</sup> and that

<sup>1</sup> Lord Reith, *Diary*, 9 May 1962.

<sup>3</sup> *New Statesman*, 28 July 1961.

<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian*, 8 June 1962.

<sup>4</sup> See above, ch. III, *passim*.

Lord Hailsham complained bitterly in Parliament that members of the Government and most of his fellow peers had not even read the Beveridge Report.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to recall, too, that Robert McKenzie, already well known as a broadcaster,<sup>2</sup> had not yet published his *Political Parties* (1955), the first of a number of studies in political science which introduced into this country from across the Atlantic conceptions of 'pressure politics',<sup>3</sup> and that Henry Fairlie had not yet publicized the term 'the Establishment' nor J. K. Galbraith the concept of 'the affluent society'.<sup>4</sup> Not everyone in 1954 attributed the advent of alternative television solely to the sinister machinations of a small group of 'nominally insignificant Conservative backbenchers' working from inside the Conservative Party, although the idea was certainly already current and was expressed frequently in Parliament by Herbert Morrison, one of the Labour Party's chief spokesmen.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the debate centred, like 'the rehearsal' of 1952, on 'commercialism' and its present and possible influence on social and cultural life. 'In that subtle way that is unique to this Island,' wrote *The Economist*, 'it is not so much stated as taken for self-evident that only cads would want to have advertising on the air.'<sup>6</sup> Yet the real issue to others, a minority which included *The Economist*, was the same as it had always been since 1944 and 1945. Why should broadcasting be treated in a different way from 'other media', including the Press? Was there not an overwhelming objection *in principle* to leaving television in the hands of a single Corporation? For *The Economist*, Beveridge had not settled the issue, and it was still prepared to envisage in the summer of 1953 not commercial

<sup>1</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 188, col. 384, 1 July 1954.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 669, 811.

<sup>3</sup> R. T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties* (1955). See also S. E. Finer, *Anonymous Empire*, (1958); J. D. Stewart, *British Pressure Groups* (1958); H. Eckstein, *Pressure Group Politics, the Case of the British Medical Association* (1960).

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Oct. 1958. Fairlie bracketed Haley with Lady Violet Bonham Carter and John Sparrow, the Warden of All Souls, as 'cardinals' of the 'Establishment'. J. K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* also appeared in 1958.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 441, and *News Chronicle*, 10 Oct. 1953: 'The handful of Tory backbenchers who started a revolt over commercial television less than eighteen months ago have travelled a long way.' Cf. *Hansard*, vol. 527, col. 207, 4 May 1954: 'All that has happened is that about twenty hon. Members on the back benches opposite have thrust their will down the throats of the Government.'

<sup>6</sup> *The Economist*, 15 Aug. 1953.

television but either a second public service corporation modelled on the BBC or a whole host of alternative models falling far short of what the major commercial interests wanted.

*The Economist* said very little—far less than Wilson was to do—about the financial interests which stood to gain (perhaps not at first) from the advent of commercial television.<sup>1</sup> Yet it recognized more than Wilson did, even though he was writing in retrospect, that the ultimate outcome would depend on ‘a compromise’. Indeed, the very idea of introducing competitive television and leaving sound broadcasting as a monopoly was already an initial compromise, at least as far as principle, if not profit, was concerned, and the Government showed itself willing throughout to compromise on basic questions of control. ‘It is probably fair to say’, *The Tablet* had written as early as April 1953, ‘that the solution will be found by trial and error, in the empirical fashion of the English, and that it will not be found at either extreme’, while it was before the Government statement was made in July that *The Economist* itself had urged the Government ‘to explore the possibility between the two extremes’.<sup>2</sup> *The Economist* was already anticipating Wilson, however, in pointing to the significance of pressures. If the BBC’s monopoly were to be broken and a better scheme devised in this country than either that of the present monopoly or ‘the pure commercialism of America’, this would not be because ‘wise men have sat down together and thought it out as an ideal system and had then commended it to their fellow citizens by reasoned persuasion. . . . It will be because the subject hap-

<sup>1</sup> For stress on the financial interests, see, for example, Ness Edwards in the *Daily Herald*, 19 June 1953; *Church Times*, 3 July 1953; and, above all, *Daily Worker*, 7 July 1953, and *Sunday Tribune*, 26 June 1953. Aspects of the story were summed up in C. Jenkins, *Power Behind the Screen* (1961). For the comparative finances of American television during this period, see Chester and Garrison, op. cit., pp. 44–6 and ch. 7, ‘Adventurers and Agents’. For the three years 1948–50 aggregate operating losses of \$48 million were reported to the Federal Communications Commission. For an American comment on British financial prospects, see *Advertisers’ Weekly*, 2 July 1953. Cyrus Ducker, the Chairman of the Television Advertising Panel of the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising, said modestly in October 1953 that he believed that ‘five hours of commercial television a day’ would guarantee a revenue ‘enabling advertisers to produce excellent programmes which would certainly measure up to those of the BBC’ (*The Times*, 20 Oct. 1953).

<sup>2</sup> *The Tablet*, 25 April 1953; *The Economist*, 20 June 1953. Cf. *The Times*, ‘Compromise is seen, by anyone who understands the reality of so-called competitive television, to be valueless’ (quoted in *Punch*, 2 Sept. 1953).

pened, by accident, to fall among politicians, who then found themselves pushed by the pressures to which they respond along a path which may perhaps, if our speculations are well founded, turn out to be fairly satisfactory.' It is doubtful whether *The Economist* had A. J. P. Taylor in mind when it added, 'This will not be very pleasing to the practitioners of reason. But it is the way of the world.'<sup>1</sup>

The two pressure groups tried to use 'reason' as well as the arts of public relations, although according to at least one provincial evening newspaper, 'the vast majority of people', when they considered commercial television, were not 'swayed by reason' but by 'a sentiment which has something in it of the idea that an Englishman's home is his castle': 'they heartily dislike a commercial foot in the door' and 'feel that freedom to switch off is no freedom at all'.<sup>2</sup> Such a sentiment could be related, of course, to a principle. Ending the BBC's monopoly might give 'freedom from the BBC', as Maurice Cranston put it, only 'in exchange for bondage to the powerful advertisers, the makers of razor-blades, deodorants, malted milks, tonic wines and so on'. There was a difference even in popular entertainment between that which was 'prompted by some sense of public service' and that which was prompted only by 'the desire for material gain': commercial television was 'intrinsically debasing'.<sup>3</sup>

As the debate continued, the National Television Council saw and depicted its rival as a tool of vested interests—many of them monopolists themselves—and as 'professional, audacious, mercenary and ruthless' in its methods, while the Popular Television Association dwelt on the 'holier-than-thou' dogoodism of its opponents, 'the rule of the high-minded', or, as the Marquess of Linlithgow was to describe them, 'the Patriarchs'.<sup>4</sup> 'Let us prefer the long competitive spoon with the Devil', John Grierson, the documentary film maker begged, 'to the milk-and-water hand-outs of this episcopal clinic.'<sup>5</sup> 'I hope

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 15 Aug. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 2 Sept. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Time and Tide*, 27 June 1953; letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, 20 May 1953.

<sup>4</sup> C. Mayhew, 'Pressure Groups and Television' in *The Guardian*, 17 July 1961; *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 188, cols. 242-4, 30 June 1954.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in the Popular Television Association pamphlet, *The Fundamentals of Competitive Television*.

and pray that commercialisation of television will, throughout the country, be decisively defeated,' wrote the Bishop of Manchester.<sup>1</sup>

There was thus a contrast of styles as well as of purposes between the two pressure groups, with the NTC emphasizing its poverty and the PTA its freedom from cant. Both bodies attempted to secure a wide range of representation and participation, although the former knew from the start that it could rely on the support of a very large number of voluntary groups already in existence. The National Television Council was very anxious to secure its donations from 'as many representative bodies as possible, with not too much money from any one source'.<sup>2</sup> When it was suggested, however, that an appeal might be made to Conservative Party organizations, Waverley thought that it might be treated as an 'unwarrantable intrusion'. 'We are in a period', he went on, 'in which the excesses and maladroitness of our opponents are likely to do our cause more good than any *vigorous* activity on our part.'<sup>3</sup> The Popular Television Association felt from the start that it had to 'stump the country' and to invade the Press both with articles and with letters. Indeed, guidance in drafting letters was given to members of the Association who desired it, and many identical letters appeared in scattered newspapers. So, too, did identical articles. A twelve-minute film, *Television Choice*, featured Alec Bedser and the film star Joan Griffiths; and there were public rallies (well planned but sometimes very sparsely attended) in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, York, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Like the National Television Council, the Association tried to emphasize that it was 'a non-party body', and it always made the most of non-Conservative writers and speakers, like David Hardman, a former Labour Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education, Lord Winster, a former Labour Minister for Civil Aviation, and Professor Catlin, one of its Vice-Presidents. If there were Conservative undertones in

<sup>1</sup> Address to the Manchester Diocesan Conference, 24 June 1953, quoted in *Britain Unites Against Commercial TV*.

<sup>2</sup> National Television Council, Organizing Committee, *Minutes*, 5, 19 Aug. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 Sept. 1953. A draft pamphlet by a professional journalist was turned down on 17 September.

slogans like 'setting television free', A. J. P. Taylor could be relied upon to translate them into the language of 'the freedom of the mind'. The members also included Gillie Potter, the comedian, who had made his reputation before the war with sound broadcasting, Ted Kavanagh, scriptwriter of *ITMA*, Malcolm Muggeridge, one of the signatories of its first letter to *The Times*, Maurice Winnick, bandleader and owner of the broadcasting rights in Britain of *What's My Line*, Professor Arnold Plant, the economist, and a second Collins, Canon John, best known for his leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Common to the whole campaign—although not to all the campaigners—was a certain animus against the BBC, just as experience with the BBC and its governing bodies was a very strong bond in the leadership of the National Television Council. There were many inconsistencies. Gillie Potter, who had been made by the BBC, claimed that it was now flogging foul films and 'boosting bawdy books', while at the same time A. J. P. Taylor, who blamed George Barnes for turning *In the News* into 'a balanced forum of orthodoxy', was condemning the Corporation as a bastion of 'respectability'.<sup>1</sup> Norman Collins attacked its 'Brahmin caste', while Ted Kavanagh was claiming that it was not offering Roman Catholics enough Roman Catholic programmes. Catlin believed it was not doing enough for adult education—and much else besides—while Winnick, backed by Lord Derby, maintained that it was not offering the right kind of popular entertainment.<sup>2</sup> This was variety of critique enough, but there were many other appeals *ad homines*. Thus, Scotland was offered priority when commercial licences were granted and Wales was promised its own television service.<sup>3</sup>

There was also a very special appeal to technicians, scriptwriters, artists and performers, who were tempted with the prospects of alternative employment. 'Songwriters ready for the rush,' announced *Melody Maker*, which gave its wholehearted support to the campaign. 'Commercial TV would mean more

<sup>1</sup> See his article 'Freedom of Speech and Television' in the *Contemporary Review*, Dec. 1953, where he called the BBC 'highly tolerant in whatever does not matter'.

<sup>2</sup> *New Statesman*, 21 July 1961.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29 Oct. 1953; *South Wales Echo and Express*, 10 Nov. 1953.

work for thousands' was another newspaper headline.<sup>1</sup> One television star who stood on the sidelines was Gilbert Harding. When asked to join the National Television Council by Lady Violet Bonham Carter he replied that 'whilst he was almost wholly persuaded that commercial radio and television are bad, he could not make up his mind about the desirability of associating himself openly with the NTC'.<sup>2</sup>

The influence on opinion of the Popular Television Association is very difficult to measure. What is certain, however, is that the public debate between the Council and the Association, intermittent and faltering though it was,<sup>3</sup> revealed many crosscurrents and countercurrents within the political parties. Most Labour MPs were opposed to any change and did not need Whips to tell them so. They could be accused (by a fellow Socialist) of clinging to 'a mixture of Socialist doctrine and Puritanism'.<sup>4</sup> Yet at the same time they were deeply suspicious of commercial pressures and of the association with the Popular Television Association of a body like *Aims of Industry*. One Labour Party pamphlet described the Government's proposals as 'commercialism run mad' (a phrase of Morrison's) and attacked 'the Conservative TV (too vulgar) policy'.<sup>5</sup> 'Our programmes would be full of concealed propaganda for "free enterprise", for commercialism, for all the values of big business.'<sup>6</sup> By contrast the Conservative Party, which appealed to many elements besides 'big business', was split, and every view about television, including the most extreme, seems to have been held inside it.

*The Times* was right to say in retrospect that 'the Conservative Party, which was in power, could without weakening in

<sup>1</sup> *Melody Maker*, 8 Aug. 1953. See also (for other kinds of musicians) *Music Teacher*, Sept. 1953, and (for magicians) *Abra Cadabra*, 8 Aug. 1953; *Glasgow Evening Times*, 23 Sept. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> National Television Council, Organizing Committee, *Minutes*, 11 May 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Both 'sides' knew this. The National Television Council decided in November 1953 (*Minutes*, 18 Nov. 1953), for example, to cancel a December meeting in Manchester, to be addressed by Dr. Stephen Taylor, on the grounds that 'the Popular Television Association had recently held a meeting in Manchester at which the attendance had been very poor'.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 26 June 1953. Cf. *The Economist*, 13 March 1954, where it was stated that many Labour MPs were afraid that commercial television would spread jokes against socialism and consider jokes against Churchill as 'rather bad taste'.

<sup>5</sup> VH 6394: 'Keep our TV and Radio Standards'.

<sup>6</sup> Labour Party, *Talking Points*, 28 June 1952.



the least its hold on the country have set its face against the change'. But it was wrong in following Morrison in suggesting that the Party 'shirked responsibility' only 'because a few resolute and astute men who knew their own minds drove them down the road'.<sup>1</sup> Certainly 'resolute and astute men' were always active, particularly inside the Conservative Central Office, and it was under the 'party' imprimatur and not that of the Popular Television Association that Chapman-Walker produced a summer pamphlet in 1953, *There's Free Speech, Why not Free Switch?* Certainly, too, the section in the pamphlet on 'moral critics' of commercial television referred to some influential members of Chapman-Walker's own party. Yet in the constituencies Conservative opinion was changing in the summer and autumn of 1953, and the more the Labour Party thundered against 'commercialism', the more there was a revulsion inside the Conservative Party against critics like Halifax and Hailsham. It was felt increasingly that if the Party introduced commercial television before a general election and the Labour Party then tried to 'take it away', the issue would greatly favour the Conservatives.

As early as June 1953 many Conservatives had felt uneasy when Attlee described 'Lord Halifax and so on' as 'the best minds in the Conservative Party'.<sup>2</sup> The next Conservative prime minister, Anthony Eden, did not like the idea of commercial television, but he did not speak out. As the summer went by there were many Conservative backbenchers who had hitherto taken no part in parliamentary debates on radio and television who now declared that they no longer opposed competitive television and had been won over to a belief that an acceptable British compromise was possible. The shift in support was plain at the Conservative Party Conference at Margate early in October. Of five resolutions on television submitted to the Conference, four supported the Government and the fifth asked for a free vote on the issue. Sir Robert Grimston called competitive television 'a fundamental principle of Conservative policy', and eventually a resolution was carried fully approving the Government's decision to permit an element of competition. There were only a few scattered votes against, and one speaker, eschewing all moderation, warned that a continuing

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 11 May 1962.

<sup>2</sup> *The Observer*, 14 June 1953.

BBC monopoly of television would imperil 'the free society'.<sup>1</sup>

The Conservative Party Conference had been invited, however, to support Government proposals which were very different in substance from those which it might have been called on to accept a year before. The parliamentary recess had been a time for 'careful thinking'; and at the end of August the Postmaster-General in an important statement told the country that the Government did not now intend to adopt the American system of dependence on sponsoring—it would substitute commercial programme contractors—that it was not 'in any way altering the present method of working of the BBC', and that it recognized 'the misgivings' expressed by 'thoughtful and serious people' about its first proposals.<sup>2</sup> The last point was underlined also by R. A. Butler, who said in a widely quoted speech that he did not wish to discount 'the sincere feelings of those who genuinely think that this new and powerful force should be kept as a monopoly of an already tried and trusted organisation'. Even the promised White Paper, he said, should not be the last word. It should focus attention on 'practical issues' so as 'to help the Government to reach a final decision'.<sup>3</sup>

Such comments had not shifted the attitudes of the opponents of commercial television. The *Manchester Guardian* condemned the biggest of the 'compromises' being canvassed by De La Warr—that of issuing 'a number of syndicates' with licences to provide commercial television programmes and with the advertisers being kept out of programme-making—as 'at only one remove' from sponsored television;<sup>4</sup> and a related point was taken up on the eve of the publication of the White Paper by Lord Radcliffe, whose letter of 16 October to *The Times* triggered off a new controversy. Noting that no one talked any longer of 'sponsorship', Radcliffe asked why anyone should put more trust in the owners of commercial stations than in advertisers.<sup>5</sup> And if, as Lord Derby had suggested, the Government

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 9 Oct. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 31 Aug. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 Aug. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1953.

<sup>5</sup> When the Government made its July statement, Collins stated categorically, 'the issue of the sponsorship no longer arises' (*Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1953). Cf. Lord Foley, a Vice-President of the Popular Television Association (*News Chronicle*, 20 Oct. 1953), who said 'sponsored television in Britain is a dead issue', and Sir Frederick Sykes (*The Times*, 27 Oct. 1953), who claimed, 'That chimera has been definitely laid.'

through 'safeguards' could take away the licences of any such station owners who broke 'a code of practice', would not this be a far more serious threat to 'freedom' than any restrictions at present imposed by Ministers on the BBC? Moreover, if a new 'Authority' were to be set up to deal with the supervision of commercial television—and he insisted that it should be called 'commercial'—it would be 'a great deal less free and independent than the BBC itself'.<sup>1</sup>

Radcliffe spoke of a 'confused . . . struggle for liberty', although Malcolm Muggeridge, who had been engaged in an interesting controversy with Mayhew earlier in the summer, claimed, not entirely convincingly, that the confusion existed largely in Radcliffe's own mind.<sup>2</sup> Advertising revenue, Muggeridge said, would make possible 'free' television just as it made possible a 'free' Press. 'Whoever controlled' a future television station would, 'like the controllers of a newspaper, do their best, in their own interests to ensure that the material presented was "palatable" to the public.' Once installed, competitive television would become 'varied and manifold'.

The adjective 'palatable' raised all the old issues—about the Press (very unpopular at this time in many Labour Party circles) as much as about television—and obviously there was no guarantee that if there were more stations there would be greater variety of output.<sup>3</sup> Muggeridge was wrong, too, to speak of the alternative being 'a continuance forever of all television and sound radio being directed by one agency under Government control'. First, the BBC had never been under direct 'Government control' in the sense that he implied, and, second, it was unlikely that any Government, least of all the particular Conservative Government in power in 1953, would allow commercial television to be entirely free from control.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to *The Times*, 24 Oct. 1953, Edward Shackleton claimed that 'the commercializers', having got rid of the word 'sponsored', were now trying to get rid of the word 'commercial'.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1953, for a response to this point in a letter from an American reader: 'Whatever else may be said of it, the BBC offers a far more varied fare than American commercial radio. Commercialism reduces all to the dead level of majority taste, as nothing shows better than your evening newspapers.' Cf. Barnes, Note of 7 Aug. 1953, 'We may fail, but we shall not do it [broadcasting] better by having to compete with a service whose object is to sell goods' (Barnes Papers).

Muggeridge was right to insist, however, as Boothby had demanded and as the Government had already conceded, that politics and religion would have to come within the programming arrangements of the new commercial stations if there were to be any advance in freedom.

Three important points were made in this last burst of correspondence, with Edward Shackleton drawing attention to the differences between 'commercial television' and a 'commercial Press' and Benn Levy enlarging upon them. First, they said, the Press derived income both from advertising and sales; commercial television would derive income from advertising only. Second, they went on, commercial television would be controlled from the start by fewer people than the Press, even the Press of 1953 which had been reduced by newspaper failures and had ended in mergers. If there were many complaints about the decline in the number of newspapers, it had to be recognized that commercial television would actually begin with an oligopoly. Thirdly, they concluded, genuine freedom of expression depended on 'a multiple market' and on attention being paid to minority opinions and tastes. It was unlikely, in their opinion, that commercial television would be as responsive to such tastes as the BBC. 'The issue', as they saw it, was not whether television should be 'run by "Whitehall" or by "the people"', but whether it should be 'run by persons answerable to the representatives of us all or to the representatives of what is compendiously called "big business"'.<sup>1</sup>

Correspondence in newspapers gives some idea of the strength of feeling late in 1953, at least among a minority who cared. So, too, do articles in periodicals. Some writers, however, tried not to argue one case or another but to place what was happening in perspective. 'It may be safely forecast', one of them began, 'that no one will attempt to impose the American pattern of competition on this country.' It might be safely forecast also, he thought, that 'there would be a large measure of support for the creation of a second Television Corporation not dissimilar to the BBC'. 'The respective Licences might allocate certain specific functions to each,' but each would include programme makers and administrators.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 24, 30 Oct. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> A Correspondent, 'Solving the TV Controversy', in *The Fortnightly*, Nov. 1953.

The forecast was only partially correct, for while the main point in the new White Paper (Cmd. 9005), which appeared on 13 November 1953, was that a 'second Authority' was necessary, it was stated that the new Authority was not to engage in daily programme making itself. It was to supervise the commercial system through ownership and operation of transmitting stations and the renting out of its facilities to commercial companies—the number was not mentioned—which would be responsible not only for selling time to advertisers but for securing balanced programme output in each station. This, the White Paper stated, was 'a typically British approach to this new problem'. A considerable degree of freedom was to be combined with what potentially, at least, was a stringent degree of control. 'In practice,' however, the White Paper added, 'the fewer rules and less day-to-day interference the better; the need would be for a continuing friendly and constructive contact between the Corporation and the companies.' The monopoly would be broken, but control would not go. 'As television has great and increasing power in influencing men's minds, the Government believes that its control should not remain in the hands of a single authority, however excellent it may be.'

Doubts about the extent of 'control' remained. There were supporters of 'freedom' who objected to the 'conception of running advertising TV on the lines of a Kindergarten school or the Cheltenham Ladies College'.<sup>1</sup> 'This is not competitive TV,' one advertiser complained, 'this is a minuscule BBC operating under handicaps which even that august body has never had to face.'<sup>2</sup> 'It is strange', wrote *The Scotsman*, 'that the Government has succumbed to the theory that the public cannot be trusted to choose their own entertainment and that there is some moral superiority about a Corporation.'<sup>3</sup> Yet at least one newspaper, which found the Government's proposals worthy of careful study, thought that 'in the wider interests of the community as a whole it is vital' (particularly given the lifting

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 16 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *World's Press News*, 20 Nov. 1953, 'TV without Trust'. For American critical comment, see *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, 19 Nov. 1953: 'The restrictions they propose to throw about the new commercial operations would make our wildest-eyed rigid regulationists cringe.'

<sup>3</sup> *The Scotsman*, 14 Nov. 1953.

of the ban on religion and politics) 'that the new Corporation shall exercise its full power to discipline any company which permits any lowering of the standards to which the viewing public has been accustomed'.<sup>1</sup>

Most commentators found the Government's proposals 'ingenious', if not disarming,<sup>2</sup> although there was still no change of front on the part of those opponents of commercial television who condemned it on principle. In a letter addressed to *The Times* Sydney Lewis, writing as Honorary Secretary of the National Television Council, noted that while the Government appeared to be making 'a serious effort to meet the storm of protest raised against its earlier proposals', there was no basic change. 'Every penny of the revenue for providing programmes under the new system will come from advertisers,' and 'even the proposed Corporation, which is meant to supervise the system, is in the last resort financially dependent on the advertisers.'<sup>3</sup> For *The Observer*, as for *The Times*, pressure on the programme companies by their 'backers'—whatever the promised controls—would inevitably 'deliver up a mass audience, happily relaxed and prepared to accept the suggestions of the advertiser';<sup>4</sup> while the *Daily Worker* suggested that both 'the advance of the working class' and 'the preservation of peace', two very large objectives, were both 'imperilled' by the new policy which could best be described as 'dope unlimited'.<sup>5</sup> For *The Economist*, which continued to favour its own plan (still in line with those envisaged by Geoffrey Crowther and the Beveridge Committee), the Postmaster-General had devised not an ideal 'framework', but 'a scheme that fulfilled the Government's promise to a group of its backbenchers to introduce some element of competition . . . while offending as little as possible the influential and vociferous element within

<sup>1</sup> *Birmingham Post*, 14 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Financial Times*, 16 Nov. 1953; *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> S. K. Lewis to the Editor of *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1953. Several drafts of this letter exist. One includes the phrase 'TV advertisements are sheer loss to the viewers—a useless and irritating hindrance to their enjoyment; and from the economic point of view their only effect is likely to be to increase home sales at a time when we need to increase our exports.'

<sup>4</sup> *The Observer*, 15 Nov. 1953; *The Times*, 14 Nov. 1953. The same point was made in newspapers as different as the *Yorkshire Post*, 14 Nov. 1953, and *Reynolds News*, 15 Nov. 1953.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Worker*, 14 Nov. 1953.

the Conservative Party that is perfectly content with things as they are'.<sup>1</sup>

*The Economist* was not alone in questioning whether there would be sufficient profit within the system to make it work. 'Whether advertisers will find this new medium worthwhile and will pay enough to make the hiring companies solvent,' wrote the *Daily Telegraph*, 'only experience will show.' The new Corporation's initial capitalization of £500,000 seemed inadequate in respect both of capital and of potential revenue, and there was a strong case, many argued, for it to be able to secure income from another source than advertising. As for the companies, given their overheads and programme expenses, who would be able to afford to undertake such a venture?<sup>2</sup> *The Times* envisaged the possibility of only one new company taking up all the available time, 'if indeed under the arrangements envisaged by the White Paper it can find the money to keep a full service going'.<sup>3</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* thought that the three, four or six minutes of advertising to be allowed each firm was too 'miserly [an] allowance' to support the finances of a competitive system.<sup>4</sup> All these were mistaken judgements. Yet Kingsley Martin was even further away from the mark. He quoted an American who had told him that American television companies were beginning to find it difficult to make profits. 'You people in England look like starting commercial television just when we in the United States look like giving it up.'<sup>5</sup>

When it reported on the 1953 White Paper, *The Economist* believed that it was not the last word. 'The very defects of the scheme proposed make it certain that the Government and the public will soon have to think again, and go on thinking, about the right framework for broadcasting in a democracy.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 21 Nov. 1953; see also above, p. 891.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 14 Nov. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Nov. 1953.

<sup>5</sup> *New Statesman & Nation*, 14 Nov. 1953. Kingsley Martin assumed also that 'the new companies will not as a rule be able to put on serious or informative programmes'.

<sup>6</sup> *The Economist*, 21 Nov. 1953. A National Television Council broadsheet, *Commercial Television, The Government's White Paper*, ended with the words, 'The government has already shown that it is sensitive to public opinion on this question. The National Television Council urges that all men of goodwill will again press on the government their opposition to commercial television. We earnestly hope that the government will have second thoughts on this matter, and that it will allow a free vote of both Houses of Parliament.'

Whatever new was being thought, however, very little that was new was said, in the two-day parliamentary discussions on the White Paper in the House of Lords, on 25 and 26 November, or in the House of Commons on 14 and 15 December.

Originally, the House of Lords would have discussed the White Paper on a motion tabled by Reith, which would not have forced an immediate division. Instead, a motion by Halifax was placed before the House, with Reith's blessing, and Reith attended the debate, without speaking, only on the first day. 'Whilst recognising the desirability of an alternative television system,' it ran, 'this House regrets that it cannot approve the proposals of Her Majesty's Government as outlined in the memorandum on television policy.' The debate attracted a very large audience and at the end tempers were frayed, particularly that of Lord Hailsham, who was one of the most fervent opponents of commercial television. He had taken Halifax's place as mover and final speaker when the latter was ill with influenza, and he roundly condemned, in a style very different from that of Halifax—some critics called it a House of Commons speech delivered in the House of Lords—'the shoddy disreputable politics' leading up to the initiation of competitive television and the 'muddle-headedness' of the proposed solution. No such measure should ever have gone forward, he claimed, 'without being included in an election manifesto'. He did not spare Salisbury, and this was thought to have lost votes; indeed, Simon thought the speech 'noisy and emotional'.

Simon's comment on his own speech—'I knew much more about the problems than the rest of the House of Lords put together'—suggests that the speech cannot have been very productive either; and as he said, it was, in fact, 'completely ignored by Ministers'. Simon thought that the best short speech was by Lord Rochester, the Methodist peer, who had packed 'a lot of moral conviction into it'; but he was appalled both by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was concerned, in his opinion, only with 'expediency', and by the Lord Chancellor, who 'mouthed platitudes'.<sup>1</sup> Principles were certainly felt to be at stake on 25 November. 'A political or economic issue on

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by A. Gordon, 27 Nov. 1953: Simon to Mary Stocks (letter not sent), 28 Nov. 1953 (Simon Papers).



which the fate of the nation depended could hardly have provoked a controversy in which conflicting issues were combined with such deep feelings,' wrote the parliamentary correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*.<sup>1</sup>

The Liberal and Labour Parties did not attempt to whip their members, although Lord Salisbury, the Conservative leader, sent an official message to the Government peers 'earnestly requesting their attendance' and urging them to be in their places 'to support the Government in the Division'. The National Television Council had sent out a similar message to several hundred peers with the approval of Lord Halifax.<sup>2</sup> Some of the arguments had been rehearsed less than three weeks before during the debates on the Address, when Jowitt had stated that advertising would still dictate programming even if direct sponsoring was no longer to be a feature of the system, and when Woolton questioned everyone, Labour, Liberal or Conservative, who had criticized advertising. 'I fail entirely to understand the argument,' he began, 'that if you have advertisements, then the advertisements will inevitably determine the nature of the programmes. Look at our greatest newspapers: full of advertisements, indeed able to keep alive only because of the advertisements; and yet, as your Lordships are well aware, big business is not allowed to determine their policy.'<sup>3</sup>

The final vote in favour of the Government on 26 November was 157 to 87. Salisbury, like Butler earlier in the year, had been irritated by some crude arguments, and had made it clear in what Simon thought was a 'brilliant' speech that the Government would look again at the financing of its scheme and some of its other features; he had assured the House, too, that the new system would be totally different from the American.<sup>4</sup> Only about twenty Conservatives and National Liberals went

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 184, cols. 741-3, 26 Nov. 1953. 'The Whip' Salisbury told the House, was 'not an order'. It was an 'indication of the way the Government would like its supporters to vote'. See P. A. Bromhead, *The House of Lords and Contemporary Politics* (1958), p. 189. There is a draft note from S. K. Lewis in the Mayhew Papers: 'Lord Halifax has asked me to state that he hopes you will find it possible to attend this debate and to support his motion if a division is called.' The response was noted in the National Television Council, *Minutes*, 2 Dec. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 184, cols. 39-40, 52-3, 94-5, 4 Nov. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 556-7, 568, 25 Nov. 1953; 731-8, 26 Nov. 1953.

into the lobbies to vote with Halifax—they included the Duke of Wellington, Viscount Simon and Lord Moyne—but there were many abstentions (some said over a hundred) and it was obvious that most of the Lords were accepting with reluctance what the Government had to offer.<sup>1</sup>

'Who wants this TV?' the *Daily Herald* had asked before the debate. The November Gallup Poll, announced on the same day, showed that nearly half the electorate was now in favour.<sup>2</sup> The change in support since the previous Poll was accounted for by a 13 per cent shift among Conservative voters—still not quite *the* big switch, but big enough to confirm Mark Chapman-Walker in his belief that the introduction of commercial television by the Conservatives could be a 'vote-winner' at the next election.<sup>3</sup> Forty-eight per cent now wanted BBC *and* commercial television and 48 per cent BBC only, and the Labour and Conservative shares of each group were the same. An overwhelming majority of the sample was in favour of a choice of programmes, but the idea of commercial companies providing them without any restraints did not appeal. Only 15 per cent thought that TV stations offering choice should be in the hands of private companies: 32 per cent favoured the BBC and 34 per cent a 'public Corporation'.

The Commons debate on the White Paper revealed that whatever the public might think, some of 'the resolute and astute' were still dissatisfied both with the timetable and with the terms of reference of the proposed operating 'stations'. Lord Derby might call the White Paper 'a step in the right direction',<sup>4</sup> but Anthony Fell, for example, found it 'the most depressing document' he had ever read. He objected particularly to the power of the new Authority to withdraw Licences

<sup>1</sup> \*Before the debate Samuel had asked Farquharson to send him a copy of the Latin motto in Broadcasting House (or a translation) since he might wish to quote it (letter of 20 Nov. 1953). Broadcasting House was described as 'a temple of the arts and muses'. It had been the prayer of the first Governors that 'good seed sown may bring forth a good harvest, and that all things hostile to peace or purity shall be banished from this place'.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Herald*, 16 Nov. 1953; *News Chronicle*, 16 Nov. 1953. The *Daily Herald* added that American interests would gain a share of control. 'They already have TV films waiting to be dumped here.' 'It is monstrous that public money should be used', it concluded, 'to upset the present thoroughly British system, which has stood the test of years with such success.'

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum of 9 Nov. 1953, quoted in Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-7.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum of the Popular Television Association, 10 March 1954.

from the contracting companies and to the power of the Postmaster-General to determine the hours of broadcasting. Nor, in his view, should there be any more unnecessary waiting. The timetable, he and others felt, should involve the speedy clearing of all necessary legislation by the end of February 1954, the setting up of a new Authority in March, and the beginning of commercial programming—after a year of preparations—in March 1955. Such a timetable would be right in relation to the general election timetable, Conservatives like him concluded, since there were hopes that the first few months of commercial television would give the public programmes of ‘a spectacularly high quality’ and these would be bound to influence popular attitudes at the elections.<sup>1</sup>

From the other side of the House Herbert Morrison, supported by Gordon Walker, Wedgwood Benn and three Liberal MPs,<sup>2</sup> continued before, during and after the debate to press for an all-Party conference to deal with the issues and for a free vote in Parliament itself. It is difficult to see, however, that there was any room for such a conference, and the time was long since past for a free vote. Selwyn Lloyd, who had played such an important role at the very beginning of the story,<sup>3</sup> was not alone in arguing that the only possibility of arranging a conference depended on the Labour and Liberal Parties not only accepting the principle that the BBC’s monopoly should be broken but the further proposition that the means of financing any alternative system should be based on advertising. As for the free vote, political calculations were already deeply influencing the issue. Both political parties were inclined during the winter of 1953–4 to look for political advantage in their stand for or against the introduction of commercial television, although differences inside each party remained, with a section of the Conservatives continuing to resist blandishments or compromises (Hailsham joined the Organizing Committee of the National Television Council as late as February 1954) and with some Labour MPs being prepared to concede, as Morrison

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of 9 Nov. 1953. Wilson also quotes (p. 197) a Backbench Memorandum of 18 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallup Poll had shown that Liberal voters were most in favour of the continuation of the BBC’s monopoly—54 per cent to 44 per cent, although the comparable figures had been 61 per cent and 37 per cent in June 1953.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 390–2.

would not, that second programmes should be provided by a quite different agency from the BBC.

Meanwhile the pressure groups were active also. The National Television Council, arguing that the Government's scheme involved 'a fatal division of responsibility between the advertising and commercial interests on the one hand and the National Corporation on the other', produced a large number of leaflets and sent a deputation, or exploratory mission, led by Lord Waverley and Lady Violet Bonham Carter to meet Lord Woolton, Lord De La Warr and Sir David Maxwell Fyfe on 25 January 1954.<sup>1</sup> The mission received some assurances that the position of the proposed new Authority would be strengthened *vis-à-vis* the commercial companies. If the presence of Lord Beveridge among the National Television Council's deputation cannot have been a help (Mayhew was the fourth member of the group), the presence among the Government's four of Captain Gammans, the Assistant Postmaster-General, was a guarantee that not too many compromises could be made.<sup>2</sup>

The real but limited extent of the Government's concessions became plain on 4 March 1954, when the Television Bill was published. It had been prepared in what Wolstencroft, a Post Office official later to be seconded to serve as first Secretary of the new Independent Television Authority, called 'a staggeringly short space of time'.<sup>3</sup> The new commercial stations, to be managed by companies licensed on contract, were to provide programmes which had to be predominantly 'British' and which were not to be offensive to 'good taste or decency'. It would be the duty of the new Independent Television Authority to ensure this. The news service had to be 'accurate and impartial', political broadcasting had to be responsible; and religious broadcasting, like BBC religious broadcasting, had to be 'representative of the main streams of

<sup>1</sup> National Television Council, *Minutes*, 2 Feb. 1954. Gammans had been in touch earlier with Mayhew about the Government's plans. Thus, on 12 December 1953 he wrote to him saying that in his opening remarks in Parliament he would probably refer to Mayhew's speech at an Oxford Union Society debate. He had sent Mayhew tactful comments on *Dear Viewer* on 21 May 1953.

<sup>2</sup> The Organizing Committee of the National Television Council agreed on the membership of the deputation on 19 Jan. 1954. For the deputation and its results, see *The Times*, 26 Feb. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Wolstencroft, 'Setting up the Independent Television Authority', paper of Jan 1955 (IBA Archives). This is an excellent summary of the story.

thought' and under the control of a 'religious advisory committee'. Neither 'religion' nor 'politics' would be able to advertise directly. 'Advertisers' comments' would not be allowed to take up more than five minutes in any hour; they would have to be 'clearly distinguished from the programmes' and would not be permitted to detract from the programmes. Moreover, in selecting advertisements, the 'programme contractors' were to be expected not to show 'unreasonable discrimination either against or in favour of one particular advertiser'. The most substantial difference from the earlier White Paper, however, was the provision of an annual grant of £750,000 from public funds to the new Authority, along with an authorization to the Postmaster-General (with Treasury consent) to lend the Authority up to £2 million.

This concession, which *The Economist*—in favour of it—called a 'subsidy against advertisers', had been advocated in November 1953 by Lord Waverley and the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> It was strongly attacked, however, both by opponents of commercial television, who objected to money being taken from viewers' licence fees 'to pay for commercial television',<sup>2</sup> and by some of the leading figures in the Popular Television Association, which was unhappy about the whole chain of concessions and compromises insisted upon by the Government. Why tamper with the market? To critics of 'controls', the Government's plans suggested that an attempt was being made 'to infuse the sordid commercial world with a shot of the Third Programme': the 'initial ideas' had been 'lost in a maze of restrictions'.<sup>3</sup> For Sir Herbert Williams, an implacable opponent of all 'Butskellite' versions of Conservatism (and, indeed, of all 'intellectuals' in politics), 'the bulk of this

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 6 March 1954: 'The "subsidy" is, of course, a protection against advertisers, not a buttress for them.' There were some doubts in the National Television Council, as an undated note on the parliamentary debate brings out. It had never been revealed 'for what precise purpose this money is intended'.

<sup>2</sup> For the licence fees argument, see a speech by Dr. Maldwyn Edwards, the Superintendent Minister of the Birmingham Methodist Mission, who flatly disapproved of the Archbishop of Canterbury's approach (*Birmingham Post*, 6 March 1954). The *Yorkshire Post*, 6 March 1954, referred to 'a loss of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money'. Cf. the *Daily Express*, 6 March 1954: 'The Bill for commercial TV will not stop there. . . . The burden will grow. . . . It happened with the Road Fund. It will happen with TV.'

<sup>3</sup> *Birmingham Mail*, 6 March 1954; letter to the *Birmingham Post*, 25 March 1954.

Bill has been invented to placate a whole lot of sloppy-minded people who do not wish to get on with the job.<sup>1</sup>

The Government seemed to its critics to be 'giving something with one hand and taking back three-quarters of it with the other'.<sup>2</sup> For the *Glasgow Herald*, the Bill read like the Bill of Rights of one of the newer democracies, and for *The Scotsman* the Government by trying to please everybody was running the risk of satisfying nobody in the end: 'we shall have commercial television in the sense that advertisers will pay for most of the programmes. But it is doubtful whether this can be called competitive television except in a very restricted sense.'<sup>3</sup> The *Financial Times* claimed that the Bill was as stuffed with guarantees as the Woolsack was of wool; and the *Daily Mail* that ITA would be *ITMA* and that commercial TV would be 'tensored TV'.<sup>4</sup> 'In view of the Socialist party's opposition,' one journalist asked, 'is it really politically expedient that a Conservative government should draft a Bill so uncompromisingly divorced from the White Paper?'<sup>5</sup>

Many of these points and others were made in a memorandum presented to De La Warr by the Popular Television Association. 'Some of the clauses and provisions contained in the bill,' it stated flatly, 'unless amended or clarified, are contrary to the original intention of the Conservative Government, and this Association, of breaking the state-controlled monopoly of television.' They might be used by a future government 'to reduce commercial television to the status of a state-owned and government-subordinated corporation'. Another BBC would have been brought into existence.<sup>6</sup> A whole schedule of amendments was presented, therefore, most of them of substance; and on the basic question of the contractual terms relating the new companies to the Authority—not dealt with in the Bill itself—strong objections were raised to any sharing of one single national commercial network by different companies on a days-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 527, col. 209, 4 May 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *The Recorder*, 6 March 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 6 March 1954; *The Scotsman*, 6 March 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *Financial Times*, 6 March 1954; *Daily Mail*, 6 March 1954.

<sup>5</sup> K. Mason, 'Thirty Questions on the Television Bill' in *The Recorder*, 20 March 1954. Cf. *Leicester Mercury*, 6 March 1954: 'Any relationship the present Television Bill has to the Government's first ideas on the subject is purely accidental.'

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Hansard*, vol. 529, col. 289, 22 June 1954. Even the *Manchester Guardian*, 6 March 1954, called it a 'rival BBC'.

of-the-week basis. This would be monopoly under a new name. Yet the new programme contracting companies should have reasonable security of tenure, and should be able to establish their identity with their viewers.<sup>1</sup>

The contractual terms were challenged elsewhere, not least by Norman Collins who feared that under the proposed system all the contractors—for reasons of administration and economy—would be London-based and that the chance to produce local programmes would be lost. So, too, would the sense of competition. ‘Our Association’, Simms added, ‘envisages the day when each large centre has two or three transmitters.’<sup>2</sup> There were serious technical difficulties, according to the Post Office, in the way of such competition. The BBC was already using all the available frequencies on Band I, and the continuing limitations on Band III meant saying ‘goodbye for the time being to any idea of a fine free-for-all of small private stations competing with one another and with the BBC’.<sup>3</sup>

There was certainly little salute to ‘enterprise’ in the draft Bill, which contained far more don’ts than do’s. Not surprisingly, therefore, it continued to be attacked from the other side also until it received the royal assent on 30 July. Herbert Morrison thought of it as a plot; Mayhew called it a sell-out. The *Manchester Guardian* asked for a ‘twenty-third hour’ repentance. Why not admit a ‘well-intentioned error’ and offer enough money to the BBC to enable it to provide alternative services which would be ‘competitive between themselves’?<sup>4</sup> In a letter from Lady Violet Bonham Carter to De La Warr on behalf of the National Television Council nine objections were raised;<sup>5</sup> they ranged from the estimate that only 55 per cent of the population would be able to see an alternative programme to a sharp criticism of the ‘subsidy’. On the much publicized question of standards it was argued that ‘if the Authority uses

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum presented by the Popular Television Association, 18 March 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Wolsencroft, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1954. The Organizing Committee of the National Television Council spent a good deal of time on the question of how much a second BBC channel would cost (*Minutes*, 14, 27 April, 11 May 1954). There was correspondence on the subject between Mayhew and Sir Ian Jacob.

<sup>5</sup> A claim by Simms that the National Television Council was divided on the nine points was denied in a Lewis letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 17 March 1954.

the powers conferred on it by the Bill, it will result in division of responsibility and administrative chaos; if it does not use these powers standards will decline.' No possible amendments could get round the first objection, however, that 'the Bill infringes the fundamental principle that programmes should not be dependent for their revenue on advertisements'. The Council strengthened its organization during the period of debate, appointing a Parliamentary Committee with a drafting sub-committee.<sup>1</sup>

All in all, there were 206 amendments to the Bill, few of which the Government felt that it could accept. No single Labour amendment was carried, and there was strong feeling behind the Labour Party's view that 'a Government which represents a minority in the country [was] forcing through a Bill which, it is common knowledge, would have been defeated had there been a free vote of the House'.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Government used the guillotine during the Committee stage certainly did not contribute to any intelligent crossbench discussion.

The Parliamentary Labour Party began by criticizing the very name of the new Authority—why should it be called 'Independent' (as if the BBC were not)?—and the Opposition ended by mustering 265 votes on the Third Reading against the Government's 291, when the Liberal Jo Grimond voted with the Government and the Liberal Clement Davies against. It was Gordon Walker who wound up for the Opposition, reiterating Herbert Morrison's assertion that the Labour Party reserved the right 'to abandon the entire scheme' after the next election and might well choose to eliminate advertising. Thus, while Conservative members were pressing for an early start for commercial programmes—Captain Orr spoke of September 1955, a perfect forecast—Morrison and Gordon Walker warned possible programme contractors that they might well 'find in due course that they are put out of business'.<sup>3</sup> Whatever

<sup>1</sup> National Television Council, *Minutes*, 25 May 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 529, col. 369, 22 June 1954; Lady Violet Bonham Carter to De La Warr, 12 March 1954. A private National Television Council note read that if there had been a free vote on the Second Reading, 'there would have been enough abstentions, and even a few votes against the measure from the Government side, sufficient to make its carrying doubtful in the extreme'.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 525, col. 1473, 25 March 1954; *ibid.*, vol. 529, cols. 333, 370, 22 June 1954.



'supports' the Government offered to prop up the new Authority, they could never satisfy Labour opponents of commercial television who believed that even if advertisers were strictly prohibited from communicating directly or indirectly with any programme producer, their interests and wishes would still be the dominant factor in programme production.<sup>1</sup> There was an enormous gulf between them and those Conservative MPs like Ian Harvey who asked for 'full-blooded advertising' as 'a natural part' of programming.

Some of the most interesting speakers in the Commons debates were those who diverged slightly from party lines. Thus, George Darling spoke from the Labour benches as an opponent of the BBC's monopoly and as an author of the Fabian Society's evidence to the Beveridge Committee,<sup>2</sup> while Squadron-Leader A. E. Cooper stated from the Conservative benches, even at the end of the debates, that he had found it 'very hard to give support to my hon. and right hon. friends'.<sup>3</sup> In the House of Lords there were, of course, far more privileged 'rebels' than there were in the Commons, and the most forceful opponents of the measure were not the Labour peers but the bloc led by Halifax, Waverley and Hailsham.

Little was said, however, which was 'startlingly new or original'<sup>4</sup>—to use a phrase of Lord De La Warr, the Postmaster-General—during the Lords' initial two-day debate. Samuel and Jowitt made it clear from the start—as did Halifax—that they would continue to oppose the Bill to the last. They were strongly backed in their resistance by the National Television Council which had decided late in May 'to persuade the Peers to be militant', and not to accept a timetable in the House of Lords: 'it was thought essential to convince the Peers of the scandalous way in which Government had "railroaded" the amendments.'<sup>5</sup>

Samuel quoted the *Advertisers' Weekly*, an unlikely journal for him to read, and Jowitt ventured into unusual parliamentary territory when he described himself as a 'keen viewer', but

<sup>1</sup> *The Star*, 26 March 1954. Cf. a statement of the National Television Council: 'There are no effective sanctions to enforce the application of the various standards, and the programme contractors will remain completely at the mercy of the advertisers.' <sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 357 ff. <sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 529, cols. 292-3, 22 June 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 188, col. 185, 30 June 1954.

<sup>5</sup> National Television Council, *Minutes*, 25 May 1954.

Halifax kept to the familiar landscape and reiterated that 'so long as the main principle on which the scheme is drawn is wrong, the matter is not greatly affected, one way or the other by minor modifications'.<sup>1</sup>

The 'principles' still seemed clear. On the one side, the opponents of the Bill followed *The Times* in claiming that commercial television would play down 'to the least common denominator' and enthrone vulgarity; more was made of the 'vulgarity' and less of the 'commercialism' than in the Commons. On the other hand, supporters of the Bill talked of the necessary 'abandonment of the monopoly' and were not in the least discouraged when De La Warr refused to reveal any more clearly than Gammans or Maxwell Fyfe had done in the Commons precisely what form competition would take within the ITA set-up.<sup>2</sup> That, the Postmaster-General insisted, was a matter for the ITA.

Issues of 'monopoly' and 'competition' arose time and time again during the debates, with many different points of view being expressed. For Beveridge, effective competition would only be possible if licence fees were divided between the ITA and BBC and both parties were free to accept or reject advertisements, but for his fellow Liberal, Lord Layton, who was to become one of the first members of the Board of the new Authority, the Government's 'new and exciting proposals' allowed at the same time 'competition before the viewer' and 'competition within the profession'.<sup>3</sup> For Kenswood, the BBC already offered 'a great measure of competition within itself' and for Hailsham, winding up the debate, 'you do not break a monopoly by creating two bodies each with an exclusive franchise'.<sup>4</sup> Hailsham went on to broaden the economic argument:

<sup>1</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 188, cols. 197, 210, 224, 30 June 1954. In his summing up Lord Salisbury, *ibid.*, col. 413, 1 July 1954, referred to the Lords as 'this rather antique and detached body' and said that few except Lord Hailsham were frequent viewers or even owned a set. 'Those long streets of small houses in our great towns' were 'the real home of television' (*ibid.*, col. 412).

<sup>2</sup> In the Commons Maxwell Fyfe said that duopoly or a four-power 'opoly' would be better than monopoly, but he did not say how the ITA would actually 'work the system'. Gammans said that 'there is no conceivable reason why we should put in a Bill how this point was to operate' (*Hansard*, vol. 529, col. 290, 22 June 1954).

<sup>3</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 188, col. 270, 30 June 1954; col. 394, 1 July 1954.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 273, 30 June 1954; col. 394, 1 July 1954.

'In place of a great public service, [the proposal] . . . is erecting the statue of the tycoon all over the land.'<sup>1</sup> For the Bishop of Bristol, Chairman of the BBC Central Religious Advisory Committee, there was a great danger of 'unseemly competition'; and for Reith there was as much need for monopoly as there always had been on moral grounds. It was sad, he said, that 'the altar cloth of one age' had become 'the doormat of the next'.<sup>2</sup>

There were many charges and counter-charges. Woolton accused Beveridge of 'a peculiar strain of dictatorship' and the Archbishop of Canterbury chided the Postmaster-General for forgetting that he had once been Minister of Education. Lord Winterton was very strongly rebuked by Viscount Samuel, Lord Hailsham and others for suggesting that the BBC had created 'the most successful lobby' in his twenty-five years' experience, and had to withdraw the remark.

In concentrating on the 'pressures' in 1953 and 1954, Professor Wilson underplayed the parliamentary debates themselves, their many interesting undercurrents and the ultimate compromises on many points which ensured that even after the end of the BBC's monopoly Britain would still retain within a dual system provision for a single basic approach to the regulation and control of broadcasting. Nor did he note how the Post Office, with its strong views not only about technical but about organizational restraints, actually strengthened its position in 1954 despite the fact that the Assistant Postmaster-General was such a committed believer in 'commercialism'. The powers of Government as a whole had certainly not been curtailed in 1954. Some Conservative MPs asked why it was necessary to have any legislation at all in order to break the monopoly. Was there not a natural 'freedom of the waves'? Yet this was no more the view of the Post Office or the Government in 1954 than it had been in 1922. The Government demonstrated, if very falteringly, that whatever was happening elsewhere to television, 'the unknown force', in Britain an attempt would be made to keep it under control. Gamman himself had told Mayhew in May 1953 that it was his 'genuine belief' that 'television in this country will have its

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 394, 1 July 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 262, 30 June 1954; col. 355, 1 July 1954.

own British stamp and we in the Government will do all we can to bring this about'.<sup>1</sup>

The constitutional structures of the new Authority drew very heavily on BBC models. The ITA, like the BBC, was to have governors appointed by the Crown through the Postmaster-General, and he could dismiss them at pleasure; and the ITA, like the BBC, was to be required by Charter to broadcast 'any matter with or without visual images' which the Government might specify. Indeed, it was not to have the right, which the BBC possessed, to inform its public that specific broadcasts were being made or withheld at the request of the Government, and in this respect it was even more under the tutelage of the Post Office than the BBC itself. As for the programme-operating companies, *The Economist* suggested that, given that the ITA could 'cut off their livelihood at a whimper', they were more likely to be frightened of 'authority' than any individual BBC producer would ever be.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC in a sense was 'the victim' of the legislation of 1954, although it was praised by Ministers and by backbenchers, and it was eventually to adapt itself to an entirely new situation in such a way that many of its leading officials were to come to the conclusion that the introduction of competition was right. Perhaps the main significance of the change constitutionally was that while the Corporation had survived all the Beveridge tests carried out behind closed doors, it had not been able to deal effectively with a frontal political attack in public. The third of the nine objections raised by the National Television Council to the new Bill was that, 'while purporting to set up an Independent Television Authority, Section 6 of the Bill opens the way to complete political control of this new Authority by the Party in power'.<sup>3</sup> There was no guarantee that the BBC's position, buttressed as it had been by convention not by statute, would be any more secure.

The National Television Council decided to remain in existence after the new Bill received the royal assent on 30 July. The 'gallant resistance', as Mayhew called it, was over. So, too, was the spate of words: more had been spoken on the subject in

<sup>1</sup> Gammans to Mayhew, 21 May 1953 (Mayhew Papers).

<sup>2</sup> *The Economist*, 13 March 1954.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 929.

Parliament, it was claimed, than in the whole of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> But there were still hopes of 'a change of government'. There was obvious political danger here, too, although it was not for Mayhew as a Labour MP to point to it. For him and for the Council 'the whole controversy' might still be stirred up again in more favourable circumstances. After all, 'television can hardly be said to have been "introduced" until it has actually been started'. The Government scheme might 'simply not work', because programme companies might not be able 'to operate profitably on terms acceptable to the ITA'.<sup>2</sup> The Council, Mayhew believed, could provide 'watchdog' machinery for the future: it had provided 'a remarkable link between diverse elements in the public life of the country, and has shown that it can exert considerable influence on events'.<sup>3</sup>

What future events would be no one knew. There were, in fact, many doubts about profitability in 1954, most of them expressed in the Press. 'It is perhaps an unfortunate coincidence,' *The Statist* wrote, 'that efforts to interest advertisers in an expensive broadcast medium may well coincide with an increased flow of newsprint for national and local newspapers.'<sup>4</sup> 'If the commercial money does not flow in,' the *Manchester Guardian* argued, 'then the rival BBC [the term was beginning to stick] will be driven back to ask for still more state aid.'<sup>5</sup>

Such 'ifs' soon became irrelevant. There were to be many dark moments ahead—in 1956—but the most intelligent advertisers already recognized in 1955 that they would be the winners in the future, if not immediately. They knew also, as the Association of British Chambers of Commerce put it, that there was always the possibility of a 'relaxation' in the permitted methods of advertising 'in the light of experience gained'.<sup>6</sup> After all,

<sup>1</sup> Wolstencroft, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> National Television Council, Organizing Committee, *Minutes*, 28 July 1954. The Pembroke Road premises of the Council were vacated on 25 September, and the paid staff was disbanded. Letters were sent to members by S. K. Lewis explaining the position on 12 Aug. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, includes a statement by Mayhew. A further meeting of the Organizing Committee was held on 4 November 1954, when there was a discussion on the choice of programme contractors. See below, p. 966. This is the last meeting recorded in the *Minutes*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Statist*, 13 March 1954.

<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 6, 25 March 1954.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 March 1954.

more than a hundred individuals and organizations had by then applied for operating licences.<sup>1</sup>

The Popular Television Association, which through Lord Derby had welcomed the Government's proposals—whatever the reservations felt by many of its members—now hoped that competition between contractors would be 'achieved by multiplying the number of stations' as soon as possible;<sup>2</sup> and Sir Robert Renwick added that while many of the safeguards in the Bill would be deplored by 'true supporters of public enterprise', nevertheless, 'free enterprise may be taken as ready to co-operate, provided that the Authority does not in any circumstances become a programme planning or operating corporation'.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the parliamentary debates the BBC had not been inactive, and it was now ready to face up to competitive television, determined not to change its principles or standards.<sup>4</sup> There was a last flicker of discussion on the eve of the 1955 election as to whether a Labour government would repeal the Act—and Attlee said that he intended to do so<sup>5</sup>—but the new Conservative Postmaster-General after the election, Charles Hill, made it clear that in his view 'the ITA is now a fact. The clock could not be put back. It was important that the BBC realised this.'<sup>6</sup> In order to understand how the BBC met the challenge and the nature of its intentions towards the 'rival BBC' which the Government had created, it is necessary to turn back from Westminster and its lobbies to the committee rooms of Broadcasting House.

<sup>1</sup> *World's Press News*, 12 March 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *The Observer*, 7 March 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to *Nottingham Guardian and Journal* and *Liverpool Daily Post*, 6 March 1954.

<sup>4</sup> H. Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time* (1968), p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> \*Miall to Barnes, 13 May 1955, reported a conversation with Attlee and Lord Tedder: 'He [Attlee] said it would be impossible to stop ITA once it was on the air but that if the Labour Party were returned they could take action urgently to revoke the ITA legislation. His actual words were "We could put it through by the end of July". Tedder did not believe that the House of Lords would obstruct.'

<sup>6</sup> Barnes, Note of Interview with the Postmaster-General, 2 Aug. 1955 (Barnes Papers).

## 2. 'The Competitor'

'COMPETITION will be deathly,' Barnes told the BBC's television staff in January 1955. 'Do not underestimate the money behind this: the motive for it [earning money] and the prestige attending to its success.'

By then, the BBC was collecting all the information it possibly could about what it called 'the competitor'; and in February 1955 it began to produce a fortnightly house information bulletin with that title.<sup>1</sup> The bulletin had a strictly limited circulation and was designed to set out 'a classified system of information' that could be drawn upon for 'a review of any particular aspect of the competitor's activities at any time'.<sup>2</sup>

The term 'competitor' was suitably neutral. Eighteen months earlier, *The Economist* had published an article called 'Ariel and Caliban',<sup>3</sup> and at the time of the publication of the Television Bill in March 1954, the National Television Council had written of the Government creating a new 'monster', 'Caliban in chains'.<sup>4</sup> Lord Hailsham had gone further in referring to Caliban emerging from his 'slimy cavern'.<sup>5</sup> Although the BBC's long-standing 'house journal' was called *Ariel*, even during the stormy months of 1954 and 1955 the BBC did not seek to recreate the plot of *The Tempest* and respond to Caliban in Shakespearian fashion.

The first formal recognition inside the BBC that there might be a real independent 'competitor'—if not a 'rival BBC'—can be traced back to July 1952, just before the Corporation's new

<sup>1</sup> Barnes, Notes of a Talk, 12 Jan. 1955 (Barnes Papers); \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 28 Feb. 1955; *The Competitor*, 10–17 Feb. 1955 (Trial Run, Number One). George Campey, then in charge of television publicity, originated this idea. He had joined the BBC's staff in 1954, he said, to fight commercial television in what Beaverbrook would have called 'a competitive position'.

<sup>2</sup> \*M. Farquharson to R. McCall, 14 Feb. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *The Economist*, 15 Aug. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 6 March 1954. The phrase had been used in Lady Violet Bonham Carter's letter to the Postmaster-General, 12 March 1954 (see above, p. 929).

<sup>5</sup> *House of Lords, Official Report*, vol. 184, col. 518, 25 Nov. 1953.

Charter came into operation.<sup>1</sup> 'Should we not give serious consideration to our strategy and . . . tactics?' Barnes asked the Board of Management. 'Is it enough to say that we think sponsored television evil or that it cannot happen here? Surely we must plan the moves that we will make to defeat their initiative or better still take the initiative ourselves.'<sup>2</sup> Yet having raised the issue in such dramatic terms, Barnes's follow-up was something of an anticlimax. He noted that in order to receive competitive programmes viewers would need 'converters' or 'adaptors' on their sets, which would cost between £5 and £10 each, and concluded that it was unlikely that the Government would allow 'capital investment' for the manufacture of such set converters, given the economic situation of the country.

Whatever the obstacles to commercial television, this was never to be one, although it should be noted in retrospect that there were still tough controls on private spending as well as on investment, and that a month later Barnes was not alone in thinking that Gammans, for all his advocacy of commercial television, seemed to be suggesting that the Government still wished to restrict the sale of sets.<sup>3</sup> There was also evidence from across the Atlantic of listener and viewer resistance to converting sets if it cost money, even where there were no government controls.<sup>4</sup>

The BBC watched every turn of the situation, for physical controls continued to affect its own freedom as well as to limit possible competition. While the Conservative Government was far less attracted than the Labour Government had been to a long-term capital investment policy closely defining national priorities, it could not avoid 'stops' and 'goes'. Indeed, as late as December 1952 Gammans could still explain to Parliament frankly that the reason why the BBC could not go ahead with the provision of temporary television stations in Aberdeen, the Isle of Wight and Plymouth before the Coronation was due entirely to 'the drain on national resources'. 'The suggestions that have been made that commercial enterprise might be

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 426.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Barnes, 2 July 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Barnes to Bishop, 28 Aug. 1952.

<sup>4</sup> G. Chester and G. R. Garrison, *Television and Radio* (1956), pp. 38-40, 46-8.



allowed to provide stations,' he went on, 'would not dispose of this objection.'<sup>1</sup>

While the Conservative Government's television policy was unfolding step by step—and at times, it seemed, reluctantly—there was still scope during the autumn of 1952 for the BBC to offer limited co-operation to at least one potential competitor. A temporary arrangement for the loan of a producer to work with Norman Collins's venture, High Definition Films, a company seeking to make films for television using television methods, was being carefully considered, although only if the BBC's monopoly of distribution was maintained,<sup>2</sup> and a proposal by ABDC to rent BBC transmitters during 'blank periods' was also being considered.<sup>3</sup> There were fears at that time that key members of BBC staff would be lost to commercial concerns which could offer more favourable rates and that such a loss would 'imperil the standard of the Corporation's output'.

A few months later, while the Government was still meditating on what to do next in its own timetable, a newspaper was reporting that 'in the canteens and bars where TV gossip flourishes, hardly a week passes without a crop of new rumours of outside offers to members of the staff. . . . If commercial TV Licences are granted, an acute shortage of skilled producers and technicians is inevitable. Salary levels might easily soar upwards overnight.'<sup>4</sup> The BBC's Staff Association, it went on, had hitherto denounced commercial television—and it was to continue to do so<sup>5</sup>—just as vigorously as the Governors. Yet if there was a 'TV Eldorado' just around the corner—one of the first times this evocative phrase was used—would the Association be able, despite the opposition to commercial television of the Sound staff who made up its majority, to withstand pressure from ambitious performers, producers and administrators?

It was in late April 1953, when the Government's intentions

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 509, col. 40, 8 Dec. 1952. According to Bishop, it would have been technically impossible to establish these temporary television stations before the Coronation.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 28 July 1952. An arrangement for one year had been ratified by the Board of Governors (*Minutes*, 30 Oct. 1952) on condition that the BBC would have sole broadcasting rights in HDF Ltd. films in the United Kingdom. For HDF, see above, p. 889.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 6 Oct. 1952, 2 Feb. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> *News Chronicle*, 6 April 1953.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 891 n. 5.

were becoming somewhat clearer, that the Board of Management decided formally that the time had come to 'give thought to the problems which were likely to arise with the introduction of sponsored television' and 'to consider their effect on Corporation policy or plans'.<sup>1</sup> Jacob, who had already discussed timing with the Board of Governors,<sup>2</sup> outlined 'some of the considerations which might have to be borne in mind' and asked Directors to let him have in writing their ideas on the subject by the end of May.

At a further meeting of the Board of Management in July 1953 to consider the effect of competitive television, the question of staffing still figured at the head of a six-point agenda. It was agreed first that raising salaries would not be an effective way of keeping staff, especially for staff in certain categories, like studio managers—people who had little opportunity within the BBC of 'demonstrating their ability as producers'—and, second, that more intensified training and rapid recruitment would be necessary on both the engineering and programme sides.<sup>3</sup> Another category of staff whose future caused 'special concern' was that of 'comparatively junior but valuable young engineers'. Once again, however, apart from offering *ad hominem* awards in a few cases, the Board felt that it was difficult to see what steps could be taken 'to ensure they remain with us'.<sup>4</sup>

The Board of Management considered three other items in July 1953—on the eve of the Government's statement<sup>5</sup>—artists, writers and equipment. 'Competitors' would be likely to use 'known artists', it was thought, which meant that the BBC would have to take the risk of developing 'new ideas and new personalities'. Names as different as those of Noël Coward, Sir Thomas Beecham, Margot Fonteyn, Wilfred Pickles and George Melachrino were already being bandied around by commercial television interests as proof that it was not only lucrative but respectable to 'go commercial', and it was known in Broadcasting House that some of them were being offered exclusive and long-term contracts.<sup>6</sup> In response, the BBC was urged not only to look for new stars but to take out a

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 27 April 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 16 April 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Barnes to Jacob, 10 June 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Bishop to Jacob, 29 May 1953.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 898.

<sup>6</sup> *Sunday Graphic*, 17 May 1953.

copyright in panel games and similar programmes in which well-known 'stars' appeared. While writers, it was thought, might be less directly affected by competition, they could and would legitimately expect the BBC 'to offer better terms and larger contracts than any competitor'. Whether it would be possible to meet their expectations was a matter for serious consideration. Finally, as far as equipment was concerned, one of three supplying firms on which the BBC depended might become virtually closed to the Corporation following the advent of commercial television, and this would mean that the BBC might have to do more manufacturing.<sup>1</sup>

As Director of Technical Services, Bishop added two other items to the current agenda of preoccupations when he wrote a note to the Director-General on patents and colour broadcasting. Bishop did not advocate any change in the BBC's 'liberal' patent policy—that of allowing manufacturers to use BBC patents and design information 'on reasonable terms'—but he wished to see it tightened up 'in one or two directions to ensure that our competitors do not obtain any unfair advantage'. Likewise, in relation to colour, he advocated that the existing policy of keeping in close touch with work at home and abroad should continue to be followed, adding that 'our competitors must not be allowed to steal a march on us by introducing reliable colour transmissions before we can do so'.<sup>2</sup>

In a parallel note, which was concerned not with technical questions but with questions of values and of high broadcasting politics, Harman Grisewood, the Director of the Spoken Word, argued that the end of the monopoly would involve completely new policy issues given 'the withdrawal of exclusivity'. In the past, in deciding how to answer 'many questions' of public importance the BBC had asked itself what were the responsibilities of monopoly applied to particular cases; it had taken all its decisions 'bearing in mind the effects of exclusion', whether the exclusion of religious bodies, like the Christian Scientists or Moral Rearmament, or of political organizations like the minor parties. In this way its treatment of minorities had always been 'largely coloured by the responsibility of monopoly'. What should happen in the future? Grisewood did not believe that politics and religion could be excluded from

<sup>1</sup> \*Barnes to Jacob, 10 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Bishop to Jacob, 29 May 1953.

the scope of competing stations, as the Government had at first suggested,<sup>1</sup> and he expected that the competitors would be tempted 'to go to the limit of what the regulations allow'. It was Grisewood's opinion that whatever the competition, the BBC should maintain its 'faithfulness to impartiality', no longer as the direct outcome of 'the monopoly responsibility' but as 'the best policy'. It should also be the judge of its own programme output. 'Our only sound course is to preserve our standards and to preserve or add to our reputation . . . by enhancement of what we already attempt.' 'Our response to the competitive situation should be: (i) to secure to ourselves all the resources we need effectively to fulfil what we know to be our aims as a public service . . . and (ii) to study in detail the present expression of our avowed aims—both in Television and Sound—and to improve wherever weaknesses are discerned.'

Grisewood did not wish BBC Television, when confronted with competition, to be as 'defensive' as Sound had been when confronted with Radio Luxembourg. It should rather be 'irre-dentist'. There might have to be radical changes, but there should be no flinching from belief in 'the value of non-commercial broadcasting'. 'We are friendly to our rivals only in a frankly self-interested way; we should keep clear ourselves and make clear to others by what we do that these rivals are unnecessary to the well-being of broadcasting; we would like to see the elimination of these rivals and we resolve to do nothing that will bring them prosperity.'<sup>2</sup>

Sir Norman Bottomley's note to the Director-General suffered from being completely wrong about the shape of things to come in at least one important respect. Like many MPs, Bottomley foresaw advertisers dictating both the content of programmes and the names of the starred artists to be engaged in them. He also forecast a sharp fall in the advertisement income of the *Radio Times*. His main preoccupation, of course, was with staffing, and here he was willing to be co-operative with the competitor. Indeed, he contemplated BBC staff being seconded to commercial television and the Corporation collaborating with 'the competitor' in the field of trade-union negotiations. He was writing from a different angle from that of Grisewood, and unlike

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 919.

<sup>2</sup> \*Grisewood to Jacob, 29 May 1953.

Grisewood he emphasized 'common interests' as much as 'competition'.<sup>1</sup>

These carefully considered notes to Jacob, along with other papers which were considered during the discussions in the Board of Management, formal or informal, in May and June 1953, showed how intensive and far-reaching was the concern of the BBC's highest officials for issues of a new complexity only hinted at in the protracted parliamentary debates. Jacob had a very friendly reception, therefore, when he addressed the General Liaison Meeting on 16 June 1953 and spoke of the need to 'develop our many parts as *members of a unity*'. 'We are one Staff,' he stressed. 'You are the leaders of the Corporation. *You must pass it on.*'<sup>2</sup> McGivern had already called a meeting of Heads of Departments at which the frankness of the opinions expressed was remarkable. The majority of producers felt that on financial grounds alone 'practically every producer who was offered higher wages by commercial television would be forced to leave the BBC': 'the greater creative freedom and higher standards of the BBC would not be strong enough to hold them'. The same would be true of designers and secretaries. The studio managers, by contrast, it was felt, would be less concerned with higher salaries than with better work opportunities. As for the writers, 'they would go for the highest money'.<sup>3</sup>

Jacob's desire to have the widest possible canvass of BBC opinion at every level before the Government's plans were published shows that he was fully prepared for 'the worst'. All this activity inside the Corporation was taking place at a time when, according to Professor Wilson, 'all but a handful of the most devout advocates [of commercial television] were convinced that their cause was lost'.<sup>4</sup> It was part of Jacob's purpose to ensure that everyone in the BBC understood 'the whys and wherefores'. 'Much that . . . the Corporation does or does not do is incomprehensible unless explained.' He wanted to be sure everyone had told him of his 'whys and wherefores' first.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Bottomley to Jacob, 3 June 1953, 'Future Attitude towards Sponsored Television Organisations'.

<sup>2</sup> \*Notes for Address to General Liaison Meeting, 16 June 1953. The meeting actually took place on 23 June.

<sup>3</sup> \*Television Programme Board, *Minutes*, 18 June 1953.

<sup>4</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group* (1961), p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> \*Notes for Address, 16 June 1953.

Having canvassed his colleagues in June, Jacob prepared a draft agenda of his own for special July meetings, to be held at a distance from Broadcasting House, at Clymping in Sussex, to discuss the problems and opportunities of a competitive situation. 'We are likely to have eighteen months', he began, 'before competition actually starts, though some problems will arise earlier, probably when the first Licence is issued. Our general attitude to our own task and to our competitors requires to be defined.' Among the critical questions were, 'How do we interpret competition?' 'Should we do all we can to drive them out of business. Or should we remain aloof? Or should we seek on all practical planes to establish close working arrangements?'

While Jacob wrote of 'safeguarding our programme resources, including sport and parlour games', his note was no more defensive in tone than Grisewood's note to him had been. Indeed, having listed problems, Jacob went on at once to talk of the importance of launching a second BBC Television Service, rumours of which quickly reached commercial television circles.<sup>1</sup> It was 'too early to examine what should be done when a second TV Service begins': it could 'hardly happen for five years'. Yet thinking about it should begin without delay. There would have to be 'overall economy to our operations . . . simplicity and speed in our developments, in our equipment and in our specifications'. Yet economy was no substitute for enterprise: in particular, he was to spell out later in the year the need to co-ordinate and direct efforts to secure this necessary improvement. 'The treatment of current affairs in BBC output is not at present of the standard required,' he stated flatly, and more attention should be paid to topicality and the handling of current affairs both in Television and in Sound.<sup>2</sup>

There is no full account of the July discussions in the Board of Management Minutes. Certain 'provisional conclusions' were set out, however, in the form of a Board of Management paper. Discussion at Clymping started from the assumptions, first, that the obligations laid upon the BBC under the Charter remained unchanged, and, second, that the first competing service would start in January 1955. 'It will be very difficult

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 894-5.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Jacob, 22 June 1953, circulated before the July meetings along with papers by Bottomley and Grisewood.

for the Corporation to continue to do something which is not being done by our rivals,' the paper admitted, 'if in so doing we sacrifice a large part of our audience. . . . Our aims cannot be fulfilled unless we retain the attention of the mass audience as well as of important minorities.' To 'inform, educate and entertain' was a general task, and 'the justification for the existence of the Corporation, supported by a universal licence, largely disappears if the mass audience is lost'.

There were three corollaries. First, 'there must be at least for a part of the transmission time every day a programme or programmes of a kind that will attract the mass audience'. Second, 'the range of programmes coming within this classification will be increased if all the programmes are of the highest possible standard of excellence in their own field'. Third, 'our intention of starting an alternative Programme must be realised as quickly as possible'. More specific suggestions were subsequently made, including the introduction of a Television News Service, the improvement of afternoon programmes, and further development of Regional television. 'It should be the aim of the Corporation', the paper concluded, 'to encourage the conception of the Sound and Television services as offering to the public a complete range of programmes.' There would have to be more 'streamlining' in television, and 'the pattern of the sound broadcasting services both now and as they might be in the future' would require further review.<sup>1</sup>

These provisional conclusions were summarized in the form of a Paper which was communicated to the Governors late in the same month<sup>2</sup> and the Governors went on to consider the whole range of issues at their September and October meetings. They were concerned, however, not to accept 'the inevitability of commercial television' and decided stalwartly to resist all compromises, to continue the battle against commercial television, and to lend full support to the activities of the National Television Council.<sup>3</sup>

At this stage it was still not certain what precise form the Government's autumn proposals would take. Most people in

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management, 'Provisional Conclusions of Meeting July 11th-13th', 13 July 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*Corporation Policy in the face of Competition', July 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 23 July, 3 Sept. 1953.

favour of commercial television still talked of 'sponsoring', and no one had yet clearly formulated the idea of 'contracting companies', least of all companies with a 'Regional' character. Indeed, as late as October 1953 at a Conference of the Advertising Clubs of Great Britain more concern was expressed about the image of advertising in the life of the nation than about specific organizational proposals.<sup>1</sup> *Advertisers' Weekly* had recently shown that a poll of fifty advertising agents revealed that while 52 per cent personally favoured commercial television, 44 per cent were personally opposed, and as few as 46 per cent thought it would benefit advertisers as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Many smaller agencies feared that only the big ones would benefit, and some of the larger agencies had very strong ties with newspapers which remained publicly and privately hostile to commercial television.

In such circumstances, while the pressures mounted and there was increasing public debate, it was natural first that the BBC should wish to examine fully all 'possible broadcasting systems'—not taking any particular scheme for granted—and, second, that it should consider carefully to what extent it should lend its own facilities for the expression of public debate on the issue.<sup>3</sup> On the first point, Jacob prepared a paper on 'Possible Broadcasting Systems' which was not finished until after the November debate in Parliament had ratified commercial television.<sup>4</sup> On the second point, the Governors procrastinated.<sup>5</sup> The Board of Management came to the conclusion, following a line of argument advanced by Grisewood earlier in the summer, that 'as a monopoly' the BBC could not 'rightly prevent the expression on the air of views advocating a change in the system'. Yet while a question on the subject was discussed in an *Any Questions* programme on 25 September, the Governors decided to tell both the National Television Council and the Popular Television Association that there should be no broadcast discussion until after the publication of the Government's White Paper.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harrogate Advertiser*, 3 Oct. 1953, quoted in Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Advertisers' Weekly*, 17 Sept. 1953. <sup>3</sup> See above, p. 906. <sup>4</sup> See above, pp. 922 ff.

<sup>5</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 23 July, 3 Sept. 1953.

<sup>6</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 14 Sept. 1953. Jacob prepared a paper summarizing the case for and against a BBC debate, 'Broadcasts about Commercial Television', 9 Sept. 1953 (Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 17 Sept. 1953).





17a. *Inventors' Club*, 1953



17b. *World Nurse*, 1954



17c. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, 1949.  
Macbeth (Stephen Murray) and  
Lady Macbeth (Ruth Lodge)



18a. The Daily Service, 2 December 1946, conducted by the Rev. Kenneth Grayston



18b. The Pope on Eurovision, 6 June 1951

The key proposal in the White Paper—to abandon 'sponsoring' and to create 'operating companies' which would be responsible for programme output<sup>1</sup>—was in line with proposals made by an influential joint committee of the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising and the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers presided over by Cyrus Ducker. Indeed, the Presidents of the two organizations, Hubert Oughton and P. G. E. Warburton, had signed an 'Open Letter to the Postmaster-General' proposing such a pattern on 23 April 1953. For a time the approach of the Ducker Committee continued to be criticized even by advertisers, but it was very quickly recognized as being 'realistic', and it was shared by Mark Chapman-Walker (and Woolton), who won the support of influential Conservatives for it.<sup>2</sup> He associated with it the idea of a state-appointed Corporation, the future ITA. For a columnist in *Advertisers' Weekly*, the Ducker Committee was stamping 'the future of competitive TV in this country' and its recommendations, when implemented, would serve as a 'lasting reminder of the part played by advertising in the establishment of a public service'.<sup>3</sup>

Given the change in the Government's proposals which was accepted by Parliament in November and December 1953,<sup>4</sup> BBC papers on 'Possible Broadcasting Systems' necessarily acquired a somewhat academic character. The most that the Corporation could do was to encourage continuing public opposition while attempting behind the scenes to influence the shape of the Television Bill which the Government was preparing. There seemed less and less point in mounting a sound or television debate about basic issues which for good or ill had been resolved. The date of the paper on 'Possible Broadcasting Systems', however, fell between the Lords and Commons debates, and reflected the natural reluctance the Corporation showed in admitting that the range of possible action had greatly narrowed since June. At their meeting later

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 9005 (1953). See above, p. 919.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times, Magazine Section*, 14 May 1961, 'The Men and the Money in ITV'. According to the author, Heathcoat-Amory was one of the Conservatives won over. At Chapman-Walker's suggestion he rang William Paley in the United States, who informed him that in Chicago one company owned the television mast and another the studios.

<sup>3</sup> *Advertisers' Weekly*, 19 Nov. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> See above, pp. 922 ff.

in November 1953 the Governors had only gone so far as to agree with Jacob that 'there was little chance of the *status quo* being maintained' and they had asked him to continue discussion with the Directors, 'to submit possible alternative plans for their consideration', and to tell the Postmaster-General that they would 'wish to have an opportunity of giving their views'.<sup>1</sup>

When Jacob consulted his Board of Management at the end of November, he was seeking opinions which would enable him to complete his paper. Given that the *status quo* could not be maintained, the alternative plan which 'found the greatest measure of favour' was one which from the start had no chance of potential success. It was based on BBC control of two separate services, 'both services having the same terms of reference and a national coverage', with the second service consisting of programmes provided exclusively from outside the BBC and financed out of advertising revenue, supplemented by licence fees. There would be common central services, particularly technical services, to ensure economic operation.<sup>2</sup>

This plan duly figured in Jacob's paper as Plan III. 'The BBC, in the shape of the Board of Governors, was to assume the functions to be attributed to the new [public] corporation in addition to its present ones, and to run as a separate entity a television service partly financed by advertisements and partly by licence revenue.' Plan I was the Government's White Paper as it stood. Plan II took up a suggestion of the Archbishop of Canterbury:<sup>3</sup> it was based on a sharing of licence revenue between the BBC and a new public corporation parallel to the BBC, with both corporations raising television revenues from advertising. Jacob added a Plan IV, 'The BBC was to provide the basic technical facilities for the second service, and the second service itself was to be run by a Board which would be entirely responsible for the programmes. This Board would be independent of the BBC Governors. It would be given a share of the licence revenue out of which it would pay the BBC for the technical facilities provided.' There would be no advertising, 'the maggot which will rot any system that is set up'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 26 Nov. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 30 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 927.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note by Jacob, 'Possible Broadcasting Systems', 3 Dec. 1953.

The last phrase was a strong one, but Jacob went on to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the four Plans as dispassionately as he could. Like the Board of Management, he eventually came down in favour of Plan III as 'a compromise which might be acceptable, and which might be workable without undue damage', although he admitted that it was doubtful whether the Government could accept it 'because it would be argued by many of their supporters that the ultimate control would still rest in the hands of the BBC'. If the plan could be made acceptable, he was prepared to envisage a new name for the joint corporation, possibly British Broadcasting Board of Control, instead of the familiar BBC. His own realism was reflected further in his statement that Plan IV would not meet the Government's requirements 'if, as we think probable, advertising in some form . . . is what they really want'; but his sense of principle was reflected also in his rejection of Plan II on the grounds that the introduction of advertising into the BBC system itself would in the long run be fatal.

Where Jacob miscalculated, as so many people did in 1953 and 1954, was in suggesting that Plan I was unworkable. 'If the new corporation exercises any measure of real control,' he suggested, 'it is doubtful whether the scheme will pay its way. There will not be enough in it for the advertisers.' It was not only unworkable, he added, but unwise. 'It divides the overall control of broadcasting in this country and thus makes the sensible conduct of educational, political and religious broadcasting very difficult.' Nonetheless, Jacob conceded that from the point of view of the BBC it had 'the great advantage' that it left the Corporation intact. His conclusion, though based on a miscalculation, was a subtle one. While he came down in favour of Plan III, he could see a case for the BBC being prepared to support Plan I. 'If it turns out to be successful, it would make it difficult for the BBC Television Service to maintain its standards, but as it is highly possible that the scheme might be a failure, it is for consideration whether it would not be wise for the BBC to recommend its adoption.'

Jacob also took account in December 1953 of party factors. 'All our information goes to show' that the Labour Party was 'in no mood to compromise' and would insist on attacking the Government's scheme 'root and branch' when the debate took

place in the Commons. 'It is for consideration whether we would be wise ourselves to compromise if the Opposition maintains this attitude.' While he himself favoured 'an agreed solution which would remove the whole subject from the party arena', he felt obliged to ask the Governors whether they felt that it might be better 'to say to the Government, if asked for our opinion, that they would do better to proceed with their own scheme [Plan I] until the Commons debate has taken place and until it can be seen whether any fresh ideas come forward from that debate which would make a compromise more acceptable to all concerned'.<sup>1</sup>

The reference to the Commons debate (which did not start until 14 December) shows that this important and revealing BBC document on 'alternatives' was related to short-term rather than to long-term considerations. Jacob recognized frankly, however, that whatever future plan was adopted, the monopoly would come to an end: from the very moment of this change, indeed, it would be generally recognized that what was happening marked the end of a volume in the history of British broadcasting. The Government was seeking a television service run by 'other minds', it would probably require advertising revenue in order to provide 'adequate financial resources' for the future development of television, and it would attempt after changes of structure to assure 'the maintenance of political impartiality and of programme standards' of all broadcasting. 'Moral' arguments would no longer matter.

At a further meeting of the Board of Management on 2 December it was agreed that while it might be unwise to approach the Government before the Commons debate, in the long run it might be better to accept some compromise 'if by so doing the future of broadcasting could be removed from the arena of Party controversy'.<sup>2</sup> Between 2 December and a meeting of the Board of Governors on 4 December, therefore, Jacob and Cadogan, the Chairman of the Governors, saw Sir Ben Barnett, the Deputy Director-General of the Post Office, at St. Martin's-le-Grand. Nothing of Plans I-IV was discussed, however, and instead Barnett asked them on behalf of the Postmaster-General whether the BBC would be willing to hand over to 'the new Corporation' £500,000 'to enable

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 2 Dec. 1953.

them to provide sustaining programmes'. This was a strange but not uncharacteristic request, and Barnett was told that the BBC would consider 'a loan of that amount on strictly business terms'.<sup>1</sup>

Such dubious expedients were not to be discussed during the Commons debate, and when at their meeting on 4 December the Governors considered what the BBC should do before the debate, they were divided as to whether the Corporation should 'intervene in the matter at all'. Confronted with Jacob's Plans I-IV, they not surprisingly preferred III and IV to I and II, with one Governor, Lady Rhys Williams, tentatively proposing a new Plan V. Meanwhile, Jacob was asked to find out what surely was obvious—whether or not advertising was 'essential' to 'the Government's plans'.<sup>2</sup>

There were two further special Board meetings before the debate, when the Governors were told frankly by Jacob that R. A. Butler had explained to him that there were no other means of financing a new television service except by advertising. They decided, in consequence, while still reiterating their objections to advertising, 'to place their experience at the Government's disposal' in the last stages of policy-making. On both occasions Lady Rhys Williams's ingenious and 'open-minded' Plan V was discussed. It provided for the BBC ceasing to produce television programmes altogether and becoming a holding company for two television producing companies.<sup>3</sup> The plan was rather too conciliatory. As in *The Tempest*, all that was past would be reconciled, for Barnes would become Director of the first producing company and Collins the Director of the second. Both companies would receive a share of the licence revenue, and this income would be supplemented either by 'the American system of slot machines attached to sets' or by advertising, either of which would be handled by the BBC. The Board of Governors did not accept the Plan, most of them feeling that it would break up the BBC and thus destroy 'the strongest weapon for the maintenance of existing standards'.<sup>4</sup>

Nor did the Board of Management accept a Plan VI—details of which are lost—which Jacob outlined at a meeting,

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 4 Dec. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 10 Dec. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid.

after the Commons debate, on 21 December: at the Governors' request it had been designed ambitiously to include 'the good points of all the Plans' combined in 'an alternative which would have some chance of meeting the wishes of the Government and the hopes of the BBC'.<sup>1</sup>

Such an alternative was ruled out by parliamentary debate which made it clear that the Government would go ahead with its proposal to introduce television backed by advertisement—in face of the unanimous protest of the Labour Opposition—and that it did not intend to leave the BBC in full charge. The most that could now be expected was that it would consult the BBC before drafting the Bill. Such consultation, as Jacob well recognized, might, of course, be about details only: on the other hand, the Government might be 'ready to listen to more far-reaching proposals' if the BBC designed them specifically to meet the basic requirements of the Government's policy while preserving in the future development of television 'those elements which seem to us essential'.<sup>2</sup>

In these changed circumstances, opinion both in the Board of Management and the Board of Governors began to veer around to Plan I, since Plan III, even in modified form, now seemed to involve the danger of 'encroachment' into the BBC both by advertising and 'Americanisation', possibly affecting Sound as well as Television.<sup>3</sup> No alternative to Plan I now seemed possible. At the worse, the Corporation would 'keep its entity and organization intact, in the hope especially of being enabled to establish a second programme', and at the best, the new service might not get on the air until the next general election, 'which might leave the whole system in the melting pot'.

There were no longer any illusions at this stage. 'It was recognised that there were dangers and difficulties in all the courses now open to the Corporation.'<sup>4</sup> The objections to accepting Plan I, in particular, were clearly stated. 'The establishment of a separate system of television financed entirely, or almost entirely, by advertising revenue creates something that

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 21 Dec. 1953; Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 10 Dec. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*'The Future of Broadcasting', Note by the Director-General, 1 Jan. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 Jan. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 21 Dec. 1953.



will never be reversed or brought further under control. To bank on this happening after the next general election would be a foolish gamble. Future development is certain to be in the direction of further freedom for commercial television, as the power of the advertisers increases, as the operation rapidly becomes more profitable and as additional channels in Bands III, IV and V open up. The available evidence points to there being a great deal of money behind those who will be concerned with commercial television, an amount ample to tide over the initial unprofitable period and even to pay some or all of the cost of converting existing television sets in the hands of the public.<sup>1</sup>

The Board of Management meeting on 4 January and the Governors' meeting of 7 January 1954 took up another suggestion of Jacob—that within the new structure of Plan I there should be no commercial operating companies and that instead the new 'Independent Television Authority' itself should provide programmes 'on a non-profit-making basis' from revenue derived from advertising. All six BBC Directors were present at the morning session of the Board of Governors' meeting when the issues were thoroughly discussed, and when Jacob argued that the Governors would legitimately put forward this suggestion to the Government 'on the grounds that they were charged with carrying out the BBC Charter and that in their view their ability to do so would be seriously prejudiced if they were in competition with a system dependent . . . on the making of profits and the seeking of the mass audience'.

The Governors concurred, although there were two other distinct voices. Bishop continued to favour Plan III on the grounds that 'if the BBC were linked with the new body there would be some chance of the latter's being influenced, in time, to accept the BBC's principles and practice',<sup>2</sup> while Lady Rhys Williams actually proposed a resolution, which was not seconded, that the BBC should have as its primary consideration the securing of a second corporation charged with the

<sup>1</sup> \*'The Future of Broadcasting', Note by the Director-General, 1 Jan. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> He had stated his position at the Board of Management on 21 Dec. 1953. He added also that if at any future time a Government should decide to revert to the *status quo* it would be far easier to do so if both the BBC and the commercial system were under one single Board of Governors.

same duties as the BBC was in its Charter. Lady Rhys Williams forecast ruin for the BBC if commercial television was introduced on the Government's terms, for the BBC would 'lose all its viewers', would become 'a burden on the tax-payer', and would gradually lose its influence 'at home and abroad'. Whereas Jacob and other Governors were still sceptical about the financial prospects of commercial television under the Government's plan, Lady Rhys Williams was just as certain (and wrong) in her opinion that the BBC would collapse. She felt, therefore, that the BBC should be prepared to 'make some sacrifice' in order to avert disaster. Indeed, such sacrifices were in her view essential if the Government were to do as Jacob suggested and give up the idea of commercial operating companies.

The general mood of the meeting was that there should be no compromise. That, indeed, was the main reason why it was almost unanimously agreed that, having spent weeks collecting and examining possible models, they should present no particular alternative model to the Government. The Vice-Chairman, Lord Tedder, took the lead, and Sir Philip Morris, Barbara Wootton, and Cadogan, the Chairman, all followed. They said that while they had all felt at one time or another that the BBC might put forward 'a Plan', for all their careful study of the problem they had been unable to formulate a particular plan which had any chance of acceptance and which 'did not make too large a sacrifice of the BBC's principles'. The most they could do was to comment on the Government's plan, but they faced an almost impossible task in trying to do so, since the Government's plan had changed completely since Jacob had first heard of it. He could argue, indeed, that the Government had abandoned its 'original intention'. But this was no basis for a continued exchange of views between Government and Corporation.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob was soon told by the Postmaster-General that 'the Government was very anxious to avoid the possibility of a monopoly in the form of a single programme company'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 7 Jan. 1954; Board of Management, *Minutes*, 4 Jan. 1954, showing that Jacob obtained the approval of all Directors, except Bishop, for his suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1954.

and that separate producing companies would be set up as planned. Indeed, when he approached the Post Office on behalf of the Governors, Jacob knew as well as the Postmaster-General that different and competing interests had already been pressing for months for operating licences. He knew, too, that if the Government's plan became law then many interests which had hitherto been hostile to commercial television—including Press and theatre interests—would move from opposition to participation. Some would even come to claim that they thought of it first. There would be talk of a bandwagon. Another image was conceived. Commercial television, when it began to move successfully, would be a river that had grown 'from many little rivulets and streams'.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, in 1953 and 1954 Jacob and the Governors persisted. Even if there was now no possibility of their advice being taken, the Governors were anxious to have their opinions placed on the record in the form of an *aide-mémoire*. However varied the interests behind commercial television—and some were obviously competitive, not complementary—in the considered view of the BBC, the new Independent Television Authority or whatever it was to be called should itself produce and disseminate programmes, applying 'the whole of its income solely in promoting its objects'. The independent production of programmes by private enterprise, would not be excluded, but these programmes would be commissioned or bought on their merits, 'just as they now are by the BBC'. For reasons set out in the BBC's Charter, the Governors claimed that they were under an obligation to speak 'frankly'. 'The essence of public service broadcasting' was that it should be conducted 'with impartiality by people who have the single-minded aim of giving people the best possible service', and this aim should be interpreted as the dissemination of 'the widest possible range of information, education and entertainment so as to meet the needs of all sections of the community'. If there were to be a new broadcasting authority, it should be 'genuinely independent'. 'Advertising and the need to make money bring into the conduct of broadcasting a new motive which will inevitably become primary.' 'The Programme Companies are there to make a profit by satisfying the advertiser, that is to say, by

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday Times*, 14 May 1961.

conveying his message to the largest possible audience. The idea of giving a service to the public may still be there, but it can only be a secondary motive.'

The Governors did not stop at this point. They went on to repeat what had often been said by others in public and what had already been rejected by a majority in Parliament. The introduction of advertising and the profit motive into broadcasting was wrong in principle. They recognized the need for an alternative television programme—and reiterated that they were ready to supply it—yet they considered that 'the merits of competition in broadcasting' were 'doubtful'. 'Competition between commercially operated services means competition for advertising revenue . . . the public being merely "the market". When the competition is between commercially conducted services and public services, it cannot be valuable in terms of broadcasting, as it chiefly involves competition for the largest audience.'

The Governors' *aide-mémoire* to the Government touched finally on finance for television development, a major pre-occupation both of the Government and of the BBC. 'The introduction of advertising revenue may be thought at first sight to save licence revenue, but by the very nature of the competition set up and the increase of costs that will result, the requirements of licence revenue to maintain public service broadcasting are likely to be higher than . . . if this competition were absent.'<sup>1</sup>

On financial questions the Post Office was willing to talk, and finance was one of the main issues discussed at the Post Office when the *aide-mémoire* was handed over on 19 January. Yet the talk was not of the kind which had been anticipated. There was discussion instead about the help which the BBC might give the new Corporation, mainly in relation to equipment and capital, and little attention, if any, was paid to the BBC's argument about future running costs. Cadogan and Jacob stressed, as they had done before, that the BBC 'could not commit itself but would be ready to consider specific requests'.<sup>2</sup> The Post Office, anxious to make the best possible bargain, had already raised the question of the sharing of masts and aerials

<sup>1</sup> \*'Aide-mémoire on the Future of Broadcasting', 15 Jan. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 21 Jan. 1954.

and even of station facilities.<sup>1</sup> 'The whole question of assistance to the proposed new television corporation is a difficult one,' Jacob told Barnett, but nothing would be turned down out of hand.<sup>2</sup>

At a further meeting between Cadogan, Jacob, Maxwell Fyfe, Crookshank and the Postmaster-General on 26 January, Cadogan began by saying that 'apprehensive' as the BBC was about the Government's scheme and its possible effects on the standard of BBC programmes, it would co-operate fully on technical matters. The mood was shared by the Postmaster-General, who, seeking as always to be conciliatory, began by saying that for his part he recognized that the BBC's expenses would increase as competition started and that this would have to be 'reflected in their revenue and licence arrangements'. Very quickly, however, the meeting passed to other matters, only some of which had been discussed earlier in the Board of Management and the Board of Governors. First, there was talk of 'religion' and, second, of 'education', and in these and other programme matters the discussion understandably left its mark on the Government's ultimate proposals.

After Jacob had described the work of the Central Religious Advisory Committee<sup>3</sup> and outlined the way BBC schools broadcasts were organized and operated,<sup>4</sup> 'there was general agreement that the new Corporation's religious broadcasts should be handled by the BBC's Religious Advisory Committee'; while on education Jacob argued strongly that even if the new Corporation did not wish 'to undertake' schools broadcasting, it should have some definite obligation 'in the field of education'. He urged also that the new Corporation should be required to televise party political and pre-election broadcasts simultaneously with the BBC, and national events 'such as broadcasts by the Queen, the Coronation,' etc. The Minister confirmed that news bulletins would be handled 'impartially and objectively', and Jacob, referring to the BBC's own plans, anticipated 'strong competition' in this field.<sup>5</sup> On sporting

<sup>1</sup> \*Barnett to Jacob, 22 Dec. 1953. There had been earlier talks on the subject between Bishop and Radley of the Post Office. Studio facilities were referred to in a letter from Barnett to Jacob on 31 Dec. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Jacob to Barnett, 20 Jan. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 823.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 765.

<sup>5</sup> See above, pp. 593-4.

programmes, Jacob feared competition not only from operating companies but from 'pay-tv' (he did not call it such):<sup>1</sup> in both cases, he pointed out, the effect would be to push up costs. Hitherto the BBC's policy, he said, had been to steer a middle course between giving listeners or viewers 'a reasonable show of major sporting events' and not endangering live sport or small local clubs.<sup>2</sup>

Once again the final point raised at this meeting was finance, and what was broached was, once again, surprising. Crookshank asked for the BBC's views on a proposal that 'some non-licence revenue, e.g. from advertising, should be provided for the BBC'. This, of course, was the converse of the proposal which he set alongside it, that of providing non-advertising revenue for the new Corporation, as the Archbishop of Canterbury had suggested.<sup>3</sup> Jacob replied briefly that the two proposals did not in fact go together. The new Corporation might need money from sources other than advertising during the early stages, for purely operational reasons, but if the BBC were to receive any funds from advertising, even indirectly, its character would change. It would become 'completely commercialised'.<sup>4</sup>

This meeting marked the first and last of the 'far-reaching discussions between BBC and Government', and while it was certainly not a substitute for the kind of inter-party discussions which the Opposition continued to demand, it had clarified a number of outstanding matters. There were many more limited exchanges on particular points between the BBC and the Government and between representatives of the BBC and other interests before and after the publication of the Television Bill on 4 March 1954.<sup>5</sup> Not all the points raised were matters of detail. When the Governors distributed a list of detailed comments to the Postmaster-General in early April

<sup>1</sup> \*He described a 'telemeter' which was used in California: it was an adaptor fitted to television sets which, on insertion of a coin, would unscramble sports programmes sent out in scrambled form. The Governors asked for and received a paper on 'Pay-as-you-view' on 24 June 1954.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 838 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 948.

<sup>4</sup> \*Note of a Meeting at the House of Commons, 26 Jan. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 926.

1954, they noted that numerous statements had been made by Ministers that 'nothing in the new arrangements is intended to affect the BBC which is to continue exactly as before', but they feared that particular provisions of the Bill would in certain respects contravene these statements. They would also raise public doubts about similar statements that the Government still regarded the BBC as 'the main broadcasting and television vehicle in the country'.<sup>1</sup>

The first complaint anticipated parliamentary criticism: it was about the very title 'Independent Television Authority' itself, a title suggested by Collins in discussion with Chapman-Walker.<sup>2</sup> It would be misleading, the Board suggested, 'because it suggests by implication that whereas the new body is independent, the existing body, namely the BBC, is not independent'. There would certainly be misunderstandings abroad where there were many people already who thought that the BBC was 'controlled by the Government'. Nor was it only the adjective 'independent' which was wrong. The use of the word 'authority' suggested that the new body had authority in the whole field of television, 'whereas the Government had stated their intention that the BBC should remain the main broadcasting instrument of the nation'.

There was a good deal of 'strong and specific language' in the Bill, the Governors continued; for example, in the clause that 'nothing shall be included in any programmes broadcast by the Authority, whether in an advertisement or not, which states, suggests or implies, or could reasonably be taken to state, suggest or imply, that any part of the programme broadcast by the Authority which is not an advertisement has been supplied or suggested by an advertiser'. Yet there were several other phrases in the Bill which were 'very weak' or 'vague' or 'equivocal'; for example, 'so far as possible' on page 5, line 1, and 'due impartiality' on page 5, lines 15 and 18. And why

<sup>1</sup> \*For example, Jacob to Barnett, 19 Feb., expressing concern about possible restrictions on the import and transmission of foreign film for television purposes. There was a discussion on this subject (and the implications of the Cinematograph Acts) at the Board of Trade on 26 Feb. 1954. The matter deeply concerned the trade unions.

<sup>2</sup> \*Jacob to Barnett, 2 April 1954. The Board of Management had drafted the original comments (Note by Jacob, 25 March 1954). Jacob added that many of the comments had already been communicated to the Post Office.

insert the word 'due' before 'impartiality' when the BBC was committed to complete impartiality?<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there were several inconsistencies of wording. Thus, on editorial matters, the BBC was required to refrain from expressing its own opinion on current affairs or on matters of public policy,<sup>2</sup> whereas in the Bill the Independent Television Authority was required to exclude all expressions of its own opinion 'on matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy'. Was not this a less narrow injunction?

It was uncertain to the Governors whether in this phrase as in others the Post Office was seeking deliberately to differentiate between the BBC and the new ITA. On page 9, line 13, for instance, powers were reserved to the Postmaster-General and other Ministers of the Crown whereas in the BBC's Licence and Agreement they were reserved to 'Government Departments'. Was this a matter of substance? Even the order of words, they felt, might or might not matter. The basic aims of the new service were described as 'entertainment, instruction and information' and those of the BBC as 'information, education and entertainment'. Leaving on one side what was the significance (philosophical?) between 'education' and 'instruction', was the order significant? Was the order of the clauses significant too? Why was not the general directive to the new Authority placed in the forefront of the Bill instead of being included in one of its schedules relating to advertisements?

A number of points in the Bill touched directly on the powers of the BBC. It rightly seemed necessary to insist that the Corporation should be a party to any agreement as to which 'important' ceremony or sporting event should be selected for non-exclusivity and what 'reasonable facilities' and 'reasonable terms' should be, but why insert the word 'important'? It might well prove in practice that the range of events to be handled non-exclusively would be different from that which could then be foreseen.

Other points of interest to the BBC concerned 'the control' of ITA. Had the Postmaster-General sufficient powers to ensure high standards of engineering practice? There was no equiva-

<sup>1</sup> \*'Television Bill, BBC Comments for Post Office Consideration', 25 March 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 9005 (1953), para. 10.



lent clause in the Bill to that in the BBC's Licence and Agreement (4/1) that 'the constancy and purity of the waves emitted shall be maintained at as high a standard as may be reasonably practicable'.<sup>1</sup> On programming, should not 'give away' programmes be specifically excluded? Would not operating companies be tempted to transmit 'deplorable' programmes similar to 'Radio Luxembourg programmes which were sponsored by Pye Radio'? Finally, the Bill provided for the setting up of ITA for a period of ten years, i.e. until 1964. Yet the Government had already given a pledge that the operation of the system would be open for review before 1962 when the BBC's current Charter expired. Should not this pledge be honoured by fixing the life of the Authority at eight years?

The Government left a great deal open in the Bill as it was published on 4 March 1954, particularly about the detailed working of the programme operating companies—and as we have seen, it was not only the BBC which was interested in substantial amendments.<sup>2</sup> Yet some of the amendments, not surprisingly, were not acceptable to the BBC, and others raised new difficulties. For example, when Equity, seeking to protect its members, wished to have it laid down by statute that 'not less than 80 per cent of the programmes transmitted by the commercial television stations shall comprise British material', its General Secretary asked the BBC whether it would be willing to accept 'a kind of self-denying ordinance' to the same effect. Although the BBC already transmitted over 80 per cent of British material, Jacob was bound to reply that the BBC would be reluctant to bind itself to 'any kind of quota figure which would regulate programme content'.<sup>3</sup> The outcome was, in fact, left vague. A clause in the Bill stipulating that 'the tone and style of the programmes [must be] predominantly British' was replaced by one stating that 'proper' proportions of recorded and other matter must be of 'British origin and performance'. There was no reference to 80 per cent.

There were a number of speakers in the course of the parliamentary debates who made it crystal clear that, whatever constitutional safeguards propped up the ITA, it would be the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 927.

<sup>3</sup> \*Gordon Sandison to Jacob, 23 March 1954; Jacob to Sandison, 2 April 1954.

programme operating companies with their advertising revenue which would provide the real challenge in the future to the BBC. Let it go ahead with its second channel, but the companies, they argued, would offer the most sharply contrasting of all alternatives. Walter Elliot, who knew the BBC well, was the most eloquent.<sup>1</sup> The companies would draw their revenue from 'something outside the sealed pattern'. 'An alternative programme from two different sources is not the same thing as an alternative programme from the same source, any more than two men playing a game of chess against each other are the same as one man playing a game against himself.'<sup>2</sup>

None of the changes made in the Television Bill either in the Commons or the Lords greatly strengthened the position of the BBC, although in the view of its Secretariat the Government had 'allowed a number of additional checks and safeguards to be written into it' and had 'gone some way to meet various BBC objections to the Bill in its original form'.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter events moved very quickly. The Bill passed on to the statute book on 30 July 1954, and within days the appointment as Chairman of the new Authority of Sir Kenneth Clark was announced in the Press.<sup>4</sup> The names of the other members of the Authority were also announced with speed; the first meeting was held on 4 August, the same day as the announcement; within days advertisements for the first officers of the Authority were printed;<sup>5</sup> and within three weeks advertisements had also been put out for programme contracting companies.<sup>6</sup> The speed of the whole operation owed much to the ability and drive of the Secretary of ITA, Alan Wolstencroft, who had been seconded from the Post Office, where he was an Assistant Secretary.

<sup>1</sup> Elliot, a fellow Scot, had served with Reith in the OTC, and they had met again during Reith's brief political career in 1942. See J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (1949), pp. 15-82.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 529, col. 253, 22 June 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*'The Television Act, 1954', Note by the Secretariat.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 4 Aug. 1954. See also K. Clark, *The Other Half* (1977), pp. 137 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Independent Television Authority, *Minutes*, 4 Aug. 1954. The Postmaster-General was present, along with three other Post Office officials. 'The Authority', he told them, 'would face a difficult series of problems, of which the first was how to maintain the standards of the programmes while at the same time interfering as little as possible with the operations of the programme contractors.'

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 25 Aug. 1954.

a THE British Broadcasting Co. (In formation).—Applications are invited for the following offices:—General Manager, Director of Programmes, Chief Engineer, Secretary. Only applicants having first-class qualifications need apply. Applications to be addressed to Sir William Noble, Chairman of the Broadcasting Committee, Magnet House, Kingsway, W.C.2.

THE BAVILIERS.—Two really Al Balesmes wanted for

b THE INDEPENDENT TELEVISION AUTHORITY invites applications for the post of DIRECTOR GENERAL.—Applications should be addressed to the Chairman, care of Postmaster-General, G.P.O. Headquarters, London, E.C.1.

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION AUTHORITY.  
The Independent Television Authority invites applications for the following, to act as chief assistants to the Director General:  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL.  
CHIEF ENGINEER.  
SOLICITOR.  
DIRECTOR of ADMINISTRATION and FINANCE.  
DIRECTOR of PROGRAMME CONTRACTS.  
Reply, stating age and qualifications, to the Chairman, care of General Post Office, Headquarters, E.C.1.

23. (a) Advertisement for General Manager, British Broadcasting Company. *The Times*, 14 October 1922  
(b) Advertisements for Director-General and senior staff, Independent Television Authority. *The Times*, 6 and 17 August 1954

Clark's appointment was a brilliant one, even if Charles Hill, who was to succeed Lord De La Warr as Postmaster-General in April 1955—after the next general election—had found it 'odd'.<sup>1</sup> It was De La Warr's idea, but was doubtless backed behind the scenes by Brendan Bracken, who had been Minister of Information when Clark was Head of the Film Division. This was the least of his many qualifications. He had been Director of the National Gallery and for a year Chairman of the Arts Council; he was also a member of the General Advisory Council of the BBC.<sup>2</sup> He had immense curiosity and zest and soon proved just as keenly interested in the entertainment side of television as in its artistic possibilities. 'Freshness, brightness and independence' were what he promised viewers.<sup>3</sup> Later, of course, he was to become a BBC television star himself, and he had first appeared on the screen as long ago as 1938; he had also been a member of the *Brains Trust*, which was

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hill of Luton, *Both Sides of the Hill* (1954), p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> His resignation was accepted by the Governors on 2 Sept. 1955. For his early autobiography, see *Another Part of the Wood* (1975).

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 9 Feb. 1955.

becoming almost a required qualification for holders of all posts of this kind.

Clark, highly cultivated as he was and well known as he was in so many different social circles, was not the kind of competitor the BBC had expected. He was far more interesting—more formidable, indeed—than Cadogan, the BBC's Chairman of Governors, who was content to stand firm by the principle that the BBC should 'resist competing in vulgarity or degeneration of the programmes'.<sup>1</sup> For Clark there was always 'something doing'.<sup>2</sup>

His first colleagues as members of the ITA were not dissimilar in background and experience from the Governors of the BBC. Their first meeting was held at the General Post Office, when they were still without a Director-General, and although they were anxious to move quickly, Clark wisely told them that appointments should not be made in too much of a hurry. Members included as Deputy Chairman Sir Charles Colston, ex-Chairman of Hoover, Sir Henry Hinchcliffe, a director of Barclay's Bank, Lord Layton, newspaper and periodicals proprietor, Lord Aberdare, ex-athlete and Chairman of the National Association of Boys' Clubs, G. B. Thorneycroft, the inevitable trade unionist, General Secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association, Margaret Popham, future Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, and, best known to most people in the country, Dilys Powell the film critic of the *Sunday Times*. There were also members representing Scotland, Dr. T. Honeyman, Director of the Glasgow Galleries, and Northern Ireland, Colonel Arthur Chichester.

The *Daily Mirror*, which was to become intensely critical of the plans of the new Authority, found little inspiration in the list of Government nominees, some of whom it considered to be too closely associated with the Conservative Party, and the Labour Party took up the same cry later in the year when the first contracts were announced.<sup>3</sup> It was because of the dangers of too close and controversial political associations that Colston,

<sup>1</sup> D. Dilks (ed.), *The Cadogan Diaries* (1971), p. 793.

<sup>2</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 5, 8 Nov. 1954; R. Churchill, 'Sir Robert's Merry Go Round' in *The Observer*, 31 Oct. 1954. See also *Daily Worker*, 4 Nov. 1954. 'Only the boss-class millionaire concerns had the money to do the job.'

who was a leading fund-raiser for the Conservative Party, soon resigned, to be replaced as Deputy Chairman by Hinchcliffe.<sup>1</sup>

Before the Director-General was appointed—the first necessary and urgent task of the Authority—Clark had had discussions with Cadogan and Jacob in which he seemed to them to show 'that he was fully aware of the importance of the ITA retaining a measure of control over the programmes'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Clark and Cadogan met on the evening of the day of the new Authority's first meeting, after the Postmaster-General had told the members that 'very strong' powers given them by the Act of 1954 were intended to be used as 'reserve powers'.<sup>3</sup> At this early stage the BBC was as much concerned about the attitudes of the Post Office, particularly of Gammans, the Assistant Postmaster-General, as it was about the likely policies of the ITA. Gammans was now making equivocal references to the BBC's proposals to start a second television service and drawing attention to the fact that the Third Programme and the reorganization of Regional broadcasting after the war had had to be fully considered by the Government before the BBC could go ahead.<sup>4</sup>

There was more talk of this kind before Sir Robert Fraser, fifty years of age and a South Australian by birth, was chosen as Director-General of ITA and took up his duties on 1 October 1954. He had read the advertisement for the post while on holiday on the Costa Brava, and he knew that he might be asked to fill it. He remained undecided and had talks with Collins and others before saying yes. His, too, was a sensible appointment made in face of considerable initial competition—there were 332 applicants<sup>5</sup>—with Gerald Barry prominent on the short list. Fraser's experience as Director-General of the Central Office of Information since 1946 was widely noted at the time, but so, too, was the fact that he had Labour associations, and had been employed for nine years as leader writer on

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 15 Dec. 1954; Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 2 Sept. 1954. Clark wrote a very friendly letter to Jacob on 6 Aug. 1954 in reply to a letter of good wishes from Jacob: 'As you say, there is much on which we can co-operate, and in which the ITA will be the learners.'

<sup>3</sup> Independent Television Authority, *Minutes*, 4 Aug. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 2 Sept. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> Independent Television Authority, *First Report*, Aug. 1954–March 1955.

the *Daily Herald*. Most important, he had known Clark as a colleague in the Ministry of Information during the war, and it was Clark personally who chose him. They set out to create a team in London while finding provincial programme contractors and nationwide transmitter sites.

Fraser attended his first meeting on 21 September 1954, and the Authority, which from October held its meetings in the Arts Council offices, now acquired temporary premises in a quiet Mayfair backwater, Wood's Mews. A. W. Pragnell, an able young Assistant Principal in the Post Office, became Assistant Secretary of the Authority and Secretary (after Wolstencroft's return to the Post Office) in 1955, and Bernard Sendall became Deputy Director-General in 1955. Sendall had read the initial advertisement in the train and applied for the Deputy Director's post which was not filled until several months had elapsed. As Principal Private Secretary to the Minister of Information from 1941 to 1945, he had been at the centre of all Ministry discussions about the future of broadcasting. Pragnell, who was to play a major part in the future, was also to become a Deputy Director-General.

The ITA Press advertisement asking for applications from those 'interested in becoming programme contractors in accordance with the provisions of the Television Act' appeared on 25 August 1954 before the executive team had got to work, but before any licences could be allocated it was essential for the team to settle the 'system' of allocation as well as the procedure. One school of thought advocated allocation on the basis of 'one station per programme contractor'; another feared the creation of a powerful advertising monopoly if the London station were in the hands of a single programme contractor and suggested the formula of 'one day of the week for each contractor'. The Authority came to a decision which had never previously been conceived—that of splitting each station by weekdays and weekends, allotting each station to one programme contractor from Monday to Friday and to another for the weekends.

The arrangement seemed to have both administrative advantages and programming rationale. 'Programme patterns', both in the USA and in the BBC, 'tended to be the same in character from Monday to Friday', it was agreed, 'and quite different at

the weekend'. The Press, moreover, reflected the same kind of distinction.<sup>1</sup>

The ingenious decision to split the first three stations on a 5:2 basis ('plural, co-operative, and internally competitive') meant that the Authority was in a position to distribute six 'franchises'. 'The London weekday concession, followed closely by the Northern weekdays' seemed the most challenging 'in terms of time on the air and population coverage'. It was with no precedents to guide them that the members of the Authority now turned to possible contractors, separating out the News for special treatment.<sup>2</sup> The three area programme contractors were not to be allowed to put on news programmes on their own initiative. 'The chief element of competition,' the Authority stressed, 'must be competition for the network.'<sup>3</sup>

Applicants for contracts were asked to give a 'broad picture of the type of programme they would provide, their proposals for network or local broadcasting of their programmes, some indication of their financial resources and the length of contract they would desire'. There were twenty-five applications, and each applicant was sent a questionnaire asking for detailed plans, including specimen programme schedules, 'ideas on news', and whether there were proposals to 'stockpile programmes'. Face-to-face interviews followed for all applicants, with the members of the Authority sitting in what Dilys Powell called 'a menacing half circle'; they lasted for half an hour to an hour and a half, and all the members of the Authority were present. Inevitably, questions of finance figured as prominently as questions relating to programming. Most of the applicants had as many financial doubts about the success of the operation as sceptical MPs had expressed during the protracted parliamentary debates, and even one of the few initially

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, for an excellent account of the system.

<sup>2</sup> A. Wolstencroft, 'Setting up the Independent Television Authority', a paper of Jan. 1955 stressing the lack of precedents. Cf. J. C. W. Reith, *Broadcast over Britain* (1924), ch. 1. The allocation was arrived at in face of initial scepticism on the part of some members of the new Authority. 'Why was it that New York could have eight simultaneous television programmes,' one member asked, 'and London only two?' (Independent Television Authority, *Minutes*, 17 Aug. 1954). The argument about 'quasi-monopolistic' arrangements continued. The News arrangements are covered in Independent Television Authority, *Minutes*, 9 Nov. 1954. See also R. Fraser, *The Coming of Independent Television* (1955).

<sup>3</sup> Independent Television Authority, *Minutes*, 14 Oct. 1954.

successful combinations had to fall out later for financial reasons.<sup>1</sup>

Programme plans offered were diverse, 'as quaint as the first flying machines':<sup>2</sup> they ranged from local news for the Birmingham area to three hours a week of cultural programmes. Some applicants had wished to offer only a few broadcasting hours each day, some only a few each week. The four contracts eventually awarded were awarded unanimously. The fact that the country was split up on a geographical basis was even more important than the division of the week into two parts. It was, indeed, a fundamental decision on the part of the Authority which shaped the whole future of commercial television, placing it on a quite different management basis from that of the BBC, 'which operated nationally with regional offerings'.

The first contract went to Associated-Rediffusion Ltd., a well-established company, then chaired by John Spencer Wills, with Paul Adorian as Managing Director; Rediffusion had been set up as early as 1928, and in 1954 already had broadcasting interests overseas. As late as January 1953, however, a Board resolution had been carried (for largely technical reasons) resisting the introduction of commercial television into Britain, although Spencer Wills and Adorian recognized plainly that if commercial television became operative Associated-Rediffusion would have no alternative but to come in. They expressed interest, therefore, long before the 1954 advertisement. By the time the advertisement appeared, Associated-Rediffusion was backed financially by Lord Rothermere, Chairman of Associated Newspapers, and by the financier Harley Drayton of British Electric Traction. It secured the weekday London contract on 27 October 1954, a contract which, against most expectations, was during its early stages to prove a money-loser rather than a money-spinner.

Other contracts announced on the same day included one for Northern weekday programmes from Manchester and one for both Northern and Midland weekend programmes from Manchester and Birmingham. The former went to Granada, Sidney Bernstein's cinema and entertainment chain, and the second to an ill-assorted consortium or 'group', including Maurice Winnick and Lord Kemsley. Granada had supported

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 935, and below, p. 972.

<sup>2</sup> P. Black, *The Mirror in the Corner* (1972), p. 71.



the BBC before the Beveridge Committee,<sup>1</sup> while seeking to transmit its own television programmes in cinemas.<sup>2</sup> In 1954 it did not wish to see commercial television pass entirely into the hands of large-scale financial interests, and secured the area in the provinces which it tried for and which it was soon to make its own, 'Granada-land'. The Winnick/Kemsley alliance was awarded the latter contract, which seemed to some to be 'the plum of the allocations'.<sup>3</sup> Other observers, however, reserved that epithet for the Associated-Rediffusion contract.<sup>4</sup>

Few knew of the complex relations between Winnick, a fashionable band leader who had had a meteoric career in show business and who from 1940 onwards had been accumulating lucrative programme rights (among them *What's My Line?*, *Twenty Questions*, and, most appropriate, perhaps, *Ignorance is Bliss*), and Lord Kemsley, the newspaper proprietor, who had come into the picture very late indeed—September 1954. (Winnick's first application did not include him.) A third 'partner' in this very loose consortium was Sir Isaac Wolfson, the furniture millionaire.

The fourth contract—for weekday broadcasting from Birmingham and weekend broadcasting from London—was announced last, a week later, and this completed what Fraser called the 'merry-go-round'. It went to the senior applicant in the field, the Associated Broadcasting Development Company, the company of Collins, Sir Robert Renwick, C. O. Stanley and Lord Bessborough, later to become ABC and later still ATV. ABDC had always wished to call itself ABC because from its very inception Collins had envisaged a day when its programmes would be printed in the newspapers and, if only for alphabetical reasons, would precede those of the BBC. The reason why it signed its contract a week later than the other three was that its initial offer was deemed unsatisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> See Cmd. 8117 (1951), p. 540: 'The right of access to the domestic sound and television receivers of millions of people carries with it such great propaganda power that it cannot be entrusted to any persons or bodies other than a public corporation.'

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 'This public monopoly of broadcasting to the home should not be artificially shielded from the competition of forms of entertainment which are made available outside the home.'

<sup>3</sup> *The Director*, Jan. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Pictorial*, 31 Oct. 1954.

Collins had always wanted a seven-day service in London and a competitive service in Birmingham.<sup>1</sup>

The announcement of the first four contracts—each ran to forty pages—was received quietly in most circles but very noisily in a few. Indeed, it is clear from reactions in late October and November 1954 that the political battles which had been fought so hard were not yet over. The National Television Council objected to the incursion of the largest newspaper chains into the field of television as extremely dangerous and undesirable.<sup>2</sup> So, too, did Randolph Churchill, who said the newspaper proprietors were ‘a limited class of human beings who, in the opinion of many people, already exercise more than enough power in the land’.<sup>3</sup> The *Daily Mirror*, a newspaper with ample power in the land, which desperately wanted a large stake in commercial television, objected that it had been excluded. It supported a powerful fifth applicant, the Incorporated Television Programme Company, which had brought together (after lively negotiations) Prince Littler’s theatrical interests and those of the Moss Empires Variety chain, Harry Alan Towers, experienced in all the ways of commercial radio, the merchant bankers, Warburgs, and eventually Lew Grade. For the *Sunday Pictorial*, ‘organisations with the greatest wealth of entertainment talent and experience on call’ had been ‘left out in the cold’.<sup>4</sup>

It seemed paradoxical to the *Daily Mirror* group—although it did not use that word—that while the *Daily Herald*, which was opposed to commercial television, had actually been invited to apply for a licence, the *Mirror*, which had always been in favour of it, had never been approached.<sup>5</sup> It couched its critique, however, in political terms, which were taken up by the Labour Party. ‘The TV Air’ was ‘Too Blue’.<sup>6</sup> There had been a ‘sell-out to the Tories’.<sup>7</sup> (This was a headline before

<sup>1</sup> C. Jenkins, *Power Behind the Screen* (1961), p. 125, for an interview report.

<sup>2</sup> The statement is appended to the National Television Council, Organizing Committee, *Minutes*, 4 Nov. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 31 Oct. 1954. Cf. ITA, *First Report*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Pictorial*, 31 Oct. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> For a sharp criticism of the *Daily Mirror*, see the *Daily Sketch*, 5 Nov. 1954.

<sup>6</sup> *Sunday Pictorial*, 31 Oct. 1954.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* See *Daily Sketch*, 5 Nov. 1954: ‘Why was it left like a forlorn and wilting wallflower at the dance? It certainly has the money. What does it not have? We wouldn’t be rude enough to suggest an answer.’

it actually happened—and the details were wrong.) The answer was to 'scrap the commercial television plans altogether—or rewrite them so that they make sense'.<sup>1</sup>

The Labour Party raised these issues in the House of Commons on 3 and 23 November 1954, on the latter occasion challenging the Government on what amounted to a vote of censure.<sup>2</sup> Renwick was said to be behind Collins, Kemsley was said to be behind Winnick, and even Dilys Powell was suspect because she was employed as film critic by Kemsley. 'Tory-vision' was triumphant or, as the *Manchester Guardian* put it rather primly, 'as those of us who dislike the commercial exploitation of broadcasting foresaw from the start, the Government's Independent Television Authority has soon got into hot, if not dirty water. It is no doubt a high-minded body, but it has been unable to keep its high-mindedness long.'<sup>3</sup> Yet there were Conservative protests also at the choice of Bernstein and the award of the Manchester contract to Granada, and Clark found himself being criticized, as had so many BBC Chairmen and Governors in the past, from both left and right.

During this strange but not unexciting time, when all kinds of rumours were rife, the BBC was quietly but uneasily discussing the sharing of masts with ITA. The ITA was content to let the BBC install and operate a transmitter for ITA at the Crystal Palace but uneasy about similar arrangements at Sutton Coldfield and Holme Moss.<sup>4</sup> It had approached F. C. McLean, Deputy Chief Engineer, BBC, to ask him whether he would like to be Chief Engineer, and asked for separate installations on BBC sites. McLean refused the offer, and Jacob reported that many of the BBC staff 'felt very strongly that the BBC should not help the ITA in any way',<sup>5</sup> particularly since the Post Office was refusing to give the BBC any guarantee that it would be allotted Band III frequencies for an alternative programme.<sup>6</sup> During the spring of 1955 no fewer than fifty engineers had resigned to join commercial television companies, among them P. A. T. Bevan and R. H. Hammans, who became Chief

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Nov. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 533, cols. 1125–86, 23 Nov. 1954. For a critique of the Labour Party's attitudes, see the *Glasgow Herald*, 4 Nov. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 4 Nov. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 16 Sept. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 30 Sept. 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*Jacob to Barnett, 24 Aug. 1954; Barnett to Jacob, 1 Sept. 1954.

Engineers of ITA and Granada respectively; by September 1955 nearly two hundred had left.<sup>1</sup> There were similar difficulties with other members of staff, particularly as the programme companies got to work. Dorté left, for example—no effort was made to influence him—but later many names were put on a list of people thought to be ‘indispensable’.<sup>2</sup> The sense of ‘erosion’ continued even after ITA had started its programmes on 22 September 1955. Nor had the argument about masts and shared technical facilities been finally resolved.

The award of the first ITA contracts was only the beginning of the story of commercial television, and there were to be many further twists even on the ITA’s side before opening night. The first move was the withdrawal first of Wolfson and then of Kemsley from the Winnick/Kemsley/Wolfson ‘alliance’. Wolfson claimed that he was uneasy about ITA guarantees that the alliance would get the Yorkshire audience; Kemsley, who moved more slowly, withdrew as Chairman before leaving finally in June 1955. Winnick, keen as long as he could be, was isolated and despondent—some said ‘heartbroken’—and left the country altogether. Meanwhile ABDC had its financial problems also. It was short of funds, and eventually ended with a very different composition from that at the time of the signing of the contract.

The most important transformation came last, when Incorporated Television Programmes Ltd. was drawn into a merged company, ATV, bringing together in its executive committee a remarkable combination—Collins; Richard Meyer, an important go-between, who had been made General Manager of the International Broadcasting Company, a commercial radio concern, as long ago as 1930, at the early age of twenty-eight; Harry Alan Towers, with his experience both in commercial radio and in show business; Lew Grade, ex-dancing champion and soon to become impresario of impresarios in commercial television as in all else; and Val Parnell of Palladium fame, sixty-four-year-old General Manager of Moss Empires Ltd. The merged group was to prove almost as unstable a group in its early months as the Winnick/Kemsley/Wolfson ‘alliance’, but its chief members were eventually to fashion the pattern of

<sup>1</sup> E. Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (1972), p. 421.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 11 Nov. 1954.

commercial television at least as much as the ITA itself. It was after the end of the period covered in this volume—and there had been heavy losses—that the *Daily Mirror* became associated with this group.

Only one night before the first night's programmes, the gap left by the withdrawal of the Winnick/Kemsley/Wolfson alliance was filled by ABC Television, an offshoot of ABPC, which not very long before had loaned Sydney Lewis to the National Television Council to manage its campaign to resist commercial television.<sup>1</sup> The Head of its Documentary Department, Howard Thomas, among much else the man who had launched Vera Lynn's *Sincerely Yours* programme series and architect of the BBC's *Brains Trust*, saw the opening and became ABC's Managing Director. The subtleties and complexities of the television scene in 1954 and 1955 are well brought out in the fact that before the die was cast the BBC had made an approach to Thomas to succeed McGivern and that at the time of becoming ABC's Managing Director he was actually under contract to the BBC to introduce that month a television version of the *Brains Trust*. Anxious to acquire experience of television production, he did so, thus competing with commercial television (if not with ABC) on a Sunday afternoon. Elliot was wrong (or nearly wrong) when he said that a man cannot play chess against himself.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC's internal bulletin, *The Competitor*, charted many of these interesting moves on the part of its rivals, relying mainly, but not exclusively, on published sources, particularly at the start. It noted in February 1955, for example, that Granada's Denis Foreman was contemplating twenty-six hours a week of programmes when he had no offices or studios<sup>3</sup> and that Fraser had told a journalist that ITA would have to win over one-third of the BBC's audience within six weeks.<sup>4</sup> The difficulties of the Winnick/Kemsley/Wolfson 'alliance' were correctly diagnosed; 'it had never coalesced into a company'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 903.

<sup>2</sup> See H. Thomas, *With an Independent Air* (1977), pp. 144-7. Thomas had left the BBC in 1943 to join Pathé Pictures Ltd., a subsidiary of ABPC, the Associated British Picture Corporation.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by R. H. Postgate, 21 Feb. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \**The Competitor*, Second Trial Run, 18-25 Feb. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 26 Feb.-9 March 1955.

The appeal of Tam Meter, the audience-measuring device invented by Bedford Attwood, was studied before any of the great battles between rival 'measurement' agencies actually started.<sup>1</sup> It also included a running report on the prospects for the introduction and reception of the first rate-cards and on estimates of likely advertising revenue.<sup>2</sup> Clark, it reported, felt that advertising would spread like wildfire; it had 'a persuasive and almost hypnotic quality which no other advertising can approach'.<sup>3</sup>

In March 1955 Fraser forecast that London would become 'operational' in September and the Midlands and Lancashire in December,<sup>4</sup> but not even the staff of the operating companies knew just when. They were led to believe that *early* September was the most likely date, possibly to allow a margin for time lost in strikes. Nor were these the only union troubles. The Musicians' Union was said to be threatening not to allow the Hallé Orchestra to implement a contract between Sir John Barbirolli and ARTV unless it was fully satisfied about pay and conditions.<sup>5</sup> Some observers felt that commercial programmes could not possibly start until October, however great the effort.<sup>6</sup>

The general election of 1955, which was announced for May,<sup>7</sup>—and was preceded by an optimistic 'give-away' Budget, inevitably followed by serious financial problems later in the year<sup>8</sup>—certainly did hold back the pace. The Labour Party manifesto, which in somewhat uninspired fashion described

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 8–14 April 1955. It quoted the *Investors Chronicle*, 2 April 1955, which had anticipated revenue of £7 million in the first year, possibly rising to £16 million when twice the number of stations were in operation.

<sup>3</sup> \**The Competitor*, 22–28 April 1955. He was speaking to the Radio Industries Club.

<sup>4</sup> *The Star*, 11 March 1955. The Post Office representatives had emphasized how tight the schedule was at the first meeting of the Authority.

<sup>5</sup> \**The Competitor*, 26 March–7 April 1955. The Performing Right Society was reported as canvassing composers of advertising jingles and signature tunes to join the society to protect their rights (*ibid.*, 26 Feb.–9 March 1955).

<sup>6</sup> *World's Press News*, 29 April 1955.

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 677.

<sup>8</sup> See S. Brittan, *The Treasury under the Tories* (1965), and J. C. R. Dow, *The Management of the British Economy, 1948–1960* (1965). In October R. A. Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, told the Conservative Party Conference that he did not know 'the horse would be quite so fiery and quite so excitable when it saw the oats of freedom for the first time' (see *The Times*, Oct. 1955).

television as 'a growing force for good or ill', did not specifically state that the Labour Party would abolish commercial television; it rather said that it would establish an alternative service 'free from advertising'. In any case, the result of the election was an overall increase in the Conservative majority to sixty. The new Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, who had taken over on 6 April 1955, doubtless won votes as a result of a round of strikes in March and April, including a newspaper strike from 26 March to 21 April, which gave new significance to broadcast news.

Independent Television News, with Aidan Crawley, who was in the process of transferring his allegiance from the Labour Party to the Conservative, was certainly making the most of its willingness to respond to changing needs. *The Competitor* noted how he introduced the word 'newscaster'—the first to be appointed was Christopher Chataway, with Robin Day soon to follow—but it noted too how his Deputy, Richard Goold-Adams, was surprised to learn that he was now 'unlikely to be booked for BBC Sound broadcasting'.<sup>1</sup> There was another flutter about Ronald Gillett, the Programme Director of ARTV, who had been invited to act as production adviser for the Conservative Party in its television broadcasts: he was not allowed into the BBC studios.<sup>2</sup>

As the summer went by, there was regular news about entertainment plans. In early June Harry Alan Towers was in New York said to be negotiating for *I Love Lucy*<sup>3</sup>; he was also said to have signed up Billy Graham—and later in the month there was talk of Associated-Rediffusion securing rights in *Dagnet*, devoting over one-fifth of its time to sport, and launching 'a top give-away show with big prizes for challengers'.<sup>4</sup> In July ABC was said to have reached agreement with Boothby, Hailsham, Foot and A. J. P. Taylor for a programme on the lines of *In the News*, with Lustgarten as editor;<sup>5</sup> and there was talk of a Hughie

<sup>1</sup> \**The Competitor*, 29 April–5 May 1955; 5–12 Aug. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 9 May 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \**The Competitor*, 3–9 June 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 17–24 June 1955. R. D. Pendlebury had produced an interesting BBC note on American give-away programmes on 25 May 1954. He referred to *Beat the Clock*, *I'll Buy That*, *Place the Face*, *Strike it Rich* and *Bride and Groom*.

<sup>5</sup> \**The Competitor*, 1–8 July 1955. See above, p. 605. It was later predicted that Kenneth Adam would chair it and that the old team of Boothby, Brown, Foot and Taylor would be employed (*The Competitor*, 5–12 Aug. 1955).

Green series, *Double your Money*, which had previously been broadcast on Sound by Radio Luxembourg.<sup>1</sup> Gracie Fields was said to have been offered the largest fee ever for a televised Palladium performance.<sup>2</sup> It was finally confirmed in early August that ITA's opening transmission would be on 22 September and that there would be a celebration at the Guildhall.<sup>3</sup>

'There continues to be much speculation about the BBC's plans for the autumn,' *The Competitor* reported in July 1955, 'and, in general, about its ability to withstand competition.'<sup>4</sup> Before turning to ITA's opening night, it is necessary to assess how well prepared the BBC itself was on the eve of the change. One American visitor, C. R. McCulloch, the Chairman of the Board of the Television Bureau of Advertising, thought it was only a matter of time before the BBC went commercial.<sup>5</sup> 'Commercial television has set such a cracking pace,' wrote the *Daily Sketch* (before any programmes had been broadcast), 'that the BBC is already panting way behind.'<sup>6</sup> The Radio Show, which opened at Earl's Court in August, was marked by 'a big publicity effort on behalf of commercial television, not unmixed with belittling of the BBC'.<sup>7</sup> Even the *Radio Times* said that the publicity would be bound to 'have a pretty sharp impact on the trade'.<sup>8</sup>

There was a last twist of history, however, which should be taken into the reckoning before the assessment. When it became clear in the late summer that the British economy was under very severe strain, there was a final burst of newspaper correspondence and leaders asking, as Lord Moyne had asked during the final House of Lords debate,<sup>9</sup> whether all the fuss about commercial television was really desirable. 'Shopping guides' were proving very popular programmes, but should citizens be encouraged to go on shopping sprees at all? The

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 15-22 July 1955. The first programme was prerecorded in London on 21 August.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 22-29 July 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 29 July-5 Aug. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 15-22 July 1955.

<sup>5</sup> *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, 5 July 1955; ITA, he said, would change the face of British television as much and as rapidly as 'programming for U.S. G.I.s changed the face of British radio' through the introduction of the Light Programme.

<sup>6</sup> \*Quoted in *The Competitor*, 19-26 Aug. 1955.

<sup>7</sup> \*Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> B. Mycock, 'Present and future trends in Radio and Television' in *Radio Times*, 19 Aug. 1955.

<sup>9</sup> See above, p. 924.



twist came too late. Opening night had come and gone by the time the *Investors Chronicle*, scarcely the voice of the Labour Party, wrote that 'the whole concept of independent television might be questioned at a time when we are faced with increasing competition in world markets and a difficult balance of payments situation'.<sup>1</sup> The competition that now mattered was not that in world markets but that at home between the BBC and the ITA.

### 3. On the Eve

AN ADEQUATE assessment of BBC strengths and weaknesses in 1955 requires a backward look. Despite the knowledge that the monopoly would soon disappear, the pattern of programming in BBC Television in 1954 and 1955 was in most respects influenced less by the sense of imminent competition than by creative and restrictive forces within the organization itself. Both were strong. What was happening had its own internal pace and momentum. The staff total at the end of 1954 was 1,700, 380 up on the previous year, and viewers had had 2,133 hours of viewing. Staff qualities stressed by Barnes included competence, experience, enterprise, responsibility, authority, service, and range.<sup>2</sup> In general, more financial resources were being made available to television producers than ever before, and as a natural consequence there was an accession of confidence. 'The competitor' might be casting its shadows, but in that long-standing form of competition to which members of the television staff were already so well accustomed—that with Sound in Broadcasting House—Television for the first time seemed to be winning within the BBC itself.

The point has been well made by one of the BBC's leading television personalities of that period, Eamonn Andrews, who sensibly related the balance of internal to external forces. 'People said, and I was one of them, that the best thing that ever happened to the BBC was the setting up of the ITA. . . .

<sup>1</sup> \*Quoted in *The Competitor*, 30 Sept.—7 Oct. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Barnes, Note for a Speech to the Executives' Association of Great Britain, 27 Jan. 1955 (Barnes Papers).

In fact, I think the change was there before ITV. The rumour, the threat, was almost sufficient to release forces . . . that were anxious to gallop down the field of communication without always pulling a coach and four.<sup>1</sup>

The change of mood can be illustrated from a sequence of internal documents. In January 1952 J. A. C. Knott, then Head of Television Administration, was continuing 'to sound a warning' about 'television development'. 'We have got . . . as much on our plate as we can tackle efficiently.' A current proposal to bring into play Studio H at Lime Grove for recruitment and training purposes was at the top of his mind. But close to the top, too, were such diverse matters as the reorganization of Make-up and Wardrobe; an investigation into the Television Booking Section; the mounting of 'the Schools experiment'; 'giving effect to devolution and the setting up of necessary controls'; and the organization of Regional outside broadcasts. This was a list of worries of a kind which had long been commonplace at Alexandra Palace. And Knott's conclusion would have been familiar to anyone working in television since 1946. 'What I fear is that if we take on much more in the next few months something is bound to suffer.'<sup>2</sup>

A few months later during the summer of 1952, however, Barnes was offering the Director-General not a list of worries but a list of 'projects completed' and of 'projects decided upon or begun'.<sup>3</sup> It was a lively document which admitted limitations and restraints—and growing anxieties about the attitudes and policies of Equity—but which pointed throughout to interesting new departures. In particular, Barnes drew attention to the fact that training for writers and for designers as well as producers had started: indeed, six key members of staff had actually been 'lent abroad' for periods lasting from six months to one week.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eamonn Andrews, *This is My Life* (1963), p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> \*Knott to Barnes, 10 Jan. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> \*Barnes to Miss Singer (for the Director-General), 23 June 1952.

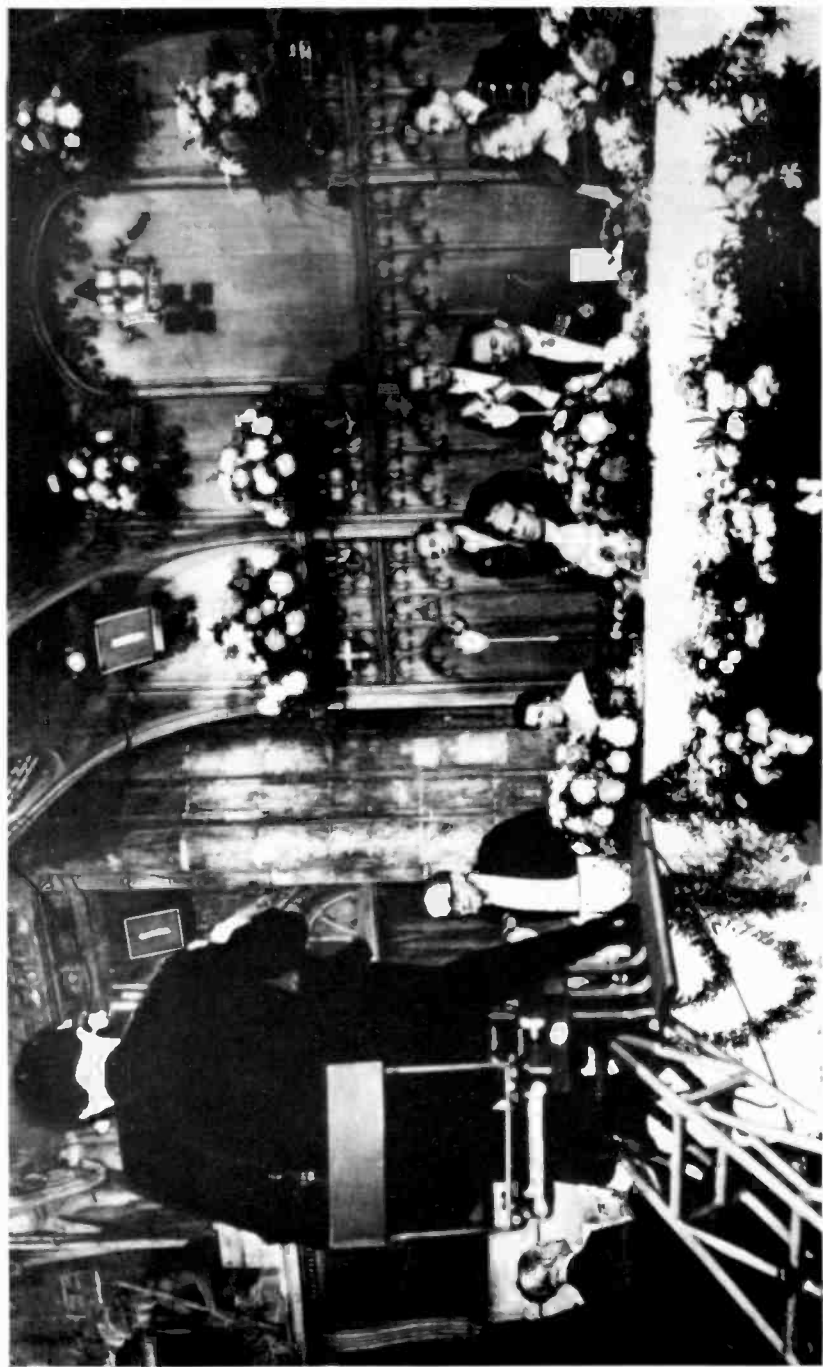
<sup>4</sup> \*As early as 20 December 1948 Collins had told Nicolls how important staff training was, but McGivern was still having to insist in November 1950 that 'training for Television production is useless without a camera and a channel' (Barnes to Hughes, 7 Nov. 1950). See above, p. 286 n. 5, for the appointment of Royston Morley and Roland Price. Twenty-four producers were trained under the so-called 'external scheme' (for candidates new to the BBC) between November 1951 and the end of 1953, and a further twelve in the first nine months of 1954 (L. Page, 'Television Training', 9 July 1954).



*a.* Test Match between  
England and New  
Zealand at The Oval,  
August 1949



*b.* F. A. Cup Final at Wembley between Newcastle United and Manchester City, 7 May 1955



20. Independent Television. Inaugural Banquet at the Guildhall, 22 September 1955

The outward-looking sense was dominant in this report. There was far more to be achieved, it suggested, than had already been accomplished, and three years later Barnes was insisting that 'training was of the utmost value . . . without it we would be frightened of competition'.<sup>1</sup>

An internal statement prepared during the spring of 1953—before the great success of the Coronation broadcasts—concentrated optimistically on development needs, including an increase in transmission hours; more 'hard news' (requiring a new studio with telecine and two camera channels); the use of a theatre, 'so urgent that when one is found we must operate it without rebuilding or rewiring it'; and, above all, more films. There was a new note of urgency in this 1953 statement. 'Since we cannot wait to see whether the Film Industry will make some feature films available to us as soon as they start turning production and exhibition over to three-dimensional films, we must seek celluloid outside this country.'<sup>2</sup>

There was also a growing interest, still frustrated, in selling BBC television programmes outside the country. Before commercial television interests suggested that Britain should and could become the Hollywood of the international television industry, there had been several people inside the BBC who had seen the possibilities without being able to exploit them. Collins had referred to the possibility of exports as early as September 1948;<sup>3</sup> and in the same year, Jacob, then in charge of the Overseas Services, had foreseen that as television developed in the United States as 'the major medium of broadcast communication', what was 'left of sound broadcasting' would not provide the BBC with 'sufficient outlet in terms of direct broadcasting or re-broadcasts'.<sup>4</sup> Yet although the opening was recognized, progress was very slow, by fits and starts. It was tersely described to the Postmaster-General by Sir Alexander Cadogan in 1953 as a 'deplorable story of delays'; but while Cadogan would have attributed all the delay to

<sup>1</sup> General Staff Meeting: Notes of a Speech, 12 Jan. 1955 (Barnes Papers).

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Jacob, 17 April 1953. See above, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> \*N. Collins, 'Television: Long-Term View', 15 Sept. 1948. See above, p. 279. Collins took up the point on his visit to the United States in 1949.

<sup>4</sup> \*Paper of 22 Sept. 1948. There was a discussion of the whole range of complex issues, including copyright, at the Board of Management a few months later (*Minutes*, 20 June 1949).

Government, part of the reason lay in the BBC's own uncertainties about how best to achieve its object.<sup>1</sup>

In 1951 it had been decided to finance 'experimental Television transcriptions out of licence revenue', but little had happened in practice because the Television Service as a whole was not 'geared to produce guaranteed series of programmes for the American market'.<sup>2</sup> In 1952 a report by Hugh Carleton Greene, then Assistant Controller, Overseas Services, recommended an initial testing of the market: 'if it is to enter this field, the Corporation must take a jump, if not in the dark at least in the twilight.'<sup>3</sup> Yet this time the Board of Management decided that it could not finance development out of licence revenue, and the whole matter was swallowed up in governmental discussions on British Overseas Information Services.<sup>4</sup>

By then the BBC was perhaps less concerned with exporting programmes to America than with preventing the United States from establishing a monopoly in a growing international market. If the BBC did not enter the business, Jacob warned, then 'the American way of life would be the only way of life to be seen on the television screens of other nations'. 'Because broadcasting of every kind is a continuous operation, the first problem for all who control it is to fill the hours.' Even the American television system was 'hungering for material' at the same time as it was exporting it. 'Celluloid [this was pre-video-tape recording] is used now and will be more and more to sustain the comparatively few live programmes.'<sup>5</sup> Could not Britain act? The plea was eloquent, but the Government stalled. Some Ministers, including Lord Swinton, proved hostile to its plans,<sup>6</sup> and the BBC itself did not wish to work

<sup>1</sup> \*Cadogan to De La Warr, 31 July 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 30 July 1951; Note of a Meeting, 15 Oct. 1951; McGivern to Marriott, Head of Transcription Service, 29 Feb. 1952, explaining that the Drama Script Unit was 'not equipped to handle such a considerable task'; Marriott to Jacob, 10 March 1952. Mary Adams was convinced that there was a field for the sale of 'talks, actuality and documentary programmes'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Report of 10 April 1952. The report envisaged co-operation with Collins's High Definition Films. Board of Management discussed the report on 28 April 1952.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 524. \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 28 April 1952.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid.; Note to the Lord President of the Council, 10 March 1952.

<sup>6</sup> \*Notes of Meetings, 30 Dec. 1952, 18 Feb. 1953; Note by Barnes, 6 Aug. 1953; De La Warr to Cadogan, 25 Aug. 1953; A. H. Joyce to J. B. Clark, 6 Nov. 1953;

through the Central Office of Information, then headed by Sir Robert Fraser, or to join in a consortium with private enterprise.<sup>1</sup> When during the parliamentary debate on the Television Bill Mayhew referred to a BBC scheme to export programmes which had been put to the Government in May 1952 and to which there had been no response, Gammans replied that there had been no sabotage, as Mayhew had suggested. 'We hope', he went on, 'that private enterprise without any government subsidy at all, will be able to build up this export trade.' The BBC moved very cautiously indeed until 1956, although a small Overseas Film Unit supplied telerecordings and films both for the American and European markets.<sup>2</sup>

The critical change in BBC attitudes towards television development as a whole and the allocation of a growing share of its own resources to it came with the acceptance in 1953 and 1954 of the idea of a prospective 'Television Plan' capable of adjustment and review, but looking ahead realistically within an agreed framework for a period of ten years. The Governors accepted Jacob's demand for such a plan (jointly with Sound) in February 1953,<sup>3</sup> and although decisions not of the BBC but of the Government determined what parts of it could actually be implemented, the outlines of the plan were filled in during the course of 1953. The advice given to the Government by the Television Advisory Committee was taken into account in arriving at national policy.<sup>4</sup>

The Ten-Year Plan—like the Government's decisions—concerned both finance and communications technology.<sup>5</sup> It set out to bring 95 per cent of the population within 'effective reach of the Television Service'—and this meant in all adding

<sup>1</sup> \*Note of a Meeting at the Foreign Office, 22 May 1952; Greene to Jacob, 27 May 1952; Note by J. B. Clark, 3 Sept. 1952; references to meetings of the Overseas Information Services (Official) Committee, 6, 11 Nov. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> \*Barnes to Miss Singer (for the Director-General), 23 June 1952, dealing with the idea of the Unit; Report on the first fifteen months of its Operations, June 1956.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 449; \*Board of Governors, *Minutes*, 5 Feb. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 900.

<sup>5</sup> \*Jacob, 'Outline Statement on BBC Plans', 23 June 1953; Directive by Jacob, 21 Dec. 1953; Note of a Meeting on Television Capital Development, 14 Jan. 1954.

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G. Winter to Clark, 5 Jan. 1954. Jacob saw Swinton on 15 Jan. 1954 and believed that he had been converted to the idea of a grant-in-aid; Greene to Clark, 20 Jan. 1954; Clark to the Foreign Office, 3 May 1954.

to the five medium-power stations which were already being planned a chain of eight additional stations; an extension of television hours by two hours a day; the introduction of an 'alternative television service', details of which had been sent to the Television Advisory Committee; and the active encouragement of new experiments with colour transmissions.

As far as colour was concerned, it was felt to be important to prevent the Americans from getting there 'before us in all parts of the world';<sup>1</sup> yet the possibilities were stated modestly in a phrase of Jacob's, that 'at some point in the course of the ten-year period it may be possible to transmit colour'.<sup>2</sup>

A committee set up by Jacob at the end of 1953 to prepare a Five-Year Plan for television development called for the completion in three phases of the new Television Centre. It was felt to be essential to move ahead of all competitors, British and foreign, in the design of studios, offices and related accommodation at the new Centre.<sup>3</sup> It was known that Alexandra Palace would not be available for most television purposes after June 1954 at the latest. The plans for a new Centre, which had been first approved in March 1950 and were carefully scrutinized at every stage by a Television Development Committee, were already well advanced before 1953. Stage I, 'the Scenery Block', which cost one million pounds was ready by the end of the year.

The Five-Year Plan called also for a 'rate of intake of technical staff on a gradient about 25 per cent steeper' than that which had 'governed intake' since 1947. The total strength of the BBC's television programming staff had risen from 399 to 665 between June 1950 and June 1953, and there was now, it was insisted, a need to increase technical staff, too, at an even faster rate; the number of staff in the Engineering Division as a whole had risen by 1955 to 4,827, of whom 1,203 were in Television (the 1945 figure was just over 3,700). The Engineering Division comprised the Operations and Maintenance Departments of three output directorates (Sound, Television,

<sup>1</sup> \*Lord Cherwell to Jacob, 28 Oct. 1953.

<sup>2</sup> \*'Outline of Statement on BBC Plans', 23 June 1953. For colour, see also the article by F. C. McLean, 'The Application of Colour to Television Broadcasting' in *Engineering*, 2 Oct. 1953. This was a paper read to a British Association meeting.

<sup>3</sup> For the earlier history of television accommodation, see above, p. 237. The first stage of the new Centre was finished in 1954 (*BBC Handbook*, 1955, p. 27).



and External Broadcasting), which were responsible to the Directors of those services for day-to-day working; the Operations and Maintenance staff from the five specialist departments (Designs, Planning and Installation, Research, Equipment, and Building); and four service departments (Establishment, Engineering Information, Engineering Secretariat, and Training), the last three of which formed at the end of the period an 'Engineering Services Group'. Revenue expenditure on engineering then amounted to £6 million and capital expenditure to £2.45 million (as against figures for 1944/45 of £2.59 million and £0.148 million respectively).<sup>1</sup>

The Five-Year Plan was reviewed in 1954 and 1955, the first review being completed during the summer of 1954, and while it was not given the status of 'a document carrying any executive authority', it imposed 'upon each member [of the BBC staff] receiving it a general obligation to take such steps, at the appropriate time, to see that the Plan is realised'.<sup>2</sup> It also gave key dates. Colour transmissions would 'start in 1956/57, increase during 1957/58 and could be enlarged when the new studios at Television Centre, all of which will be equipped for colour, become available at the beginning of 1959'.<sup>3</sup> During the same period, 'the programme of providing Regions with outside broadcast and film facilities'—the subject of a committee, chaired by Gerald Beadle, a future Director of Television—would be 'completed'.<sup>4</sup>

The second channel, it was forecast, would begin to operate during the financial year 1957/58, offering two to two-and-a-half hours of viewing each evening in the first year of operation and three to three-and-a-half in the second. In 1955, almost as much time was being devoted to preparing for this programme as was being devoted to preparing for the advent of commercial television. It was quickly decided that the programme would 'complement, not compete with, the first Programme, offering

<sup>1</sup> Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972*, p. 421. Barnes always made much of the higher ratio of engineers to programme makers in television than in sound broadcasting.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by R. McCall, 18 Oct. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*'Television Development, Jan. 1954-March 1959', 27 Jan. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Jacob to Beadle, 23 July 1953, setting out the terms of reference of the Committee. The terms of reference were 'to study and report on the potentialities of the Region as a source of TV programmes and on the facilities required to exploit them'.

the listener alternatives (light against heavy, etc.)', but it was left open as to whether the two programmes would differ from each other 'in cultural level (as Home and Light in Sound do)' or whether each would offer 'a mixture of both' and, if so, how one would be distinguishable from the other 'in the viewer's mind'. It was left open also whether the first would 'be provided wholly or mainly from London and the second from Regions, or both from both'.<sup>1</sup>

The last entertainment programme from the Alexandra Palace studios—a nostalgic farewell, *Thank You, Ally Pally*—was broadcast on 19 March 1954. It dealt mainly with the pioneering days of British television between 1926 and 1939, but Collins was a party guest,<sup>2</sup> sitting at the same table as McCall, Madden (the *doyen* of the evening, who did much to arrange it) and Leonard Schuster; and the post-war 'personalities' included Petula Clark and Googie Withers. An excerpt from *Journey's End*, an early television success, was broadcast; Leslie Mitchell and Jasmine Bligh organized an egg-and-spoon race (Wyndham Goldie, the actor, was a competitor); and Harry Rutherford, the artist, and D. K. Wolfe-Murray arranged a 'Blackboard game'. W. Lyon-Shaw was producer, and Berkeley Smith, who was to move over to commercial television, the narrator; and the television journalists included Leonard Marsland Gander, Jonah Barrington and Collie Knox. The party which ended the evening was perhaps more memorable for those who attended it—and those who tried to get in—than it was for the viewers. 24 per cent of the viewers rated it C and 9 per cent C—, whereas only 9 per cent thought the scripted programme C and 2 per cent C—; while for *Journey's End* the figures were 4 per cent and 1 per cent. At the end of the evening it was the 'noise and muddle' rather than the history which had come through.<sup>3</sup>

The BBC was considering it necessary to pay increasing attention to viewers' preferences in 1954 and 1955, and Barnes discerned a 'great improvement' in the programme schedules from April 1954 onwards.<sup>4</sup> 'The competitors,' it was believed,

<sup>1</sup> Note of 5 Aug. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> McGivern asked Barnes's permission to invite him (Note of 18 Jan. 1954). 'Of course,' Barnes replied. Gorham also was invited.

<sup>3</sup> Audience Research Report, 2 April 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Note on Programme Schedules, April-June 1954.

'though they might be short of buildings and equipment, would be in a position to spend on "programme allowance" at possibly double the rate per hour of the BBC',<sup>1</sup> and the BBC would have to take care in the meantime, therefore, to eschew 'costly programme development and embellishment which could not be sustained permanently'. This was cautious reasoning. Yet while there was much talk in the press that the ITA would offer 'more attractive fare' once it started than the BBC, tersely dismissed as 'a bureaucracy whose monopoly is now broken',<sup>2</sup> there were plenty of ideas inside the BBC as it broadcast forty hours of television a week—three full hours every evening—on the eve of the great change.

In these circumstances there seemed to be good reason for a new strategy of public relations, and McGivern and Huw Wheldon, the Television Publicity Officer, who was eventually to become Managing Director of Television in January 1969, were told by the Television Management Meeting to take 'a more positive and self-confident note' with the public and to 'become less apologetic and self-deprecatory'. Criticism by the popular Press might be expected to be maintained, even to increase as the start of commercial television drew nearer, but everyone should be persuaded to recognize first that there were many outstanding programmes, second that the 'balance' was about right, and third that 'much of [the criticism] fundamentally derives from the impossibility of serving, through one programme, both the majority and the minority interests of the public'.<sup>3</sup> It seemed encouraging that Press reactions, which had been bad in the first three months of 1954, had improved so much by the summer that critics 'were searching for programmes to criticise'; the autumn reactions were said to be 'very good'.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the programme ideas came from Cecil Madden and some had a long English pedigree. Thus, a televised version of one of the BBC's oldest Sound programmes, *In Town Tonight*

<sup>1</sup> \*Board of Management, *Minutes*, 31 Jan. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> John Irwin, 'To-morrow's Television' in *The Director*, March 1955. See also his book *My Time is my Own* (1955). The theme of the article—a dangerous one—was that 'in the new competitive conditions it would seem to make sense if the BBC was content to provide enlightenment, leaving entertainment to the show business folk who will provide programmes under contract with the I.T.A.'.

<sup>3</sup> \*Television Management Meeting, *Minutes*, 3 Feb. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Barnes, Address to General Staff Meeting, 12 Jan. 1955 (Barnes Papers).

(from 3 April 1954), persuaded Peter Duncan that Television had far more glamour than Sound,<sup>1</sup> and excellent documentaries like Robert Barr's *Medical Officer of Health*, still many steps away from his *ζ Cars*, were influenced by experience of British war-time sound reporting.<sup>2</sup> Other ideas, however, came from across the Atlantic. For all the public criticism of television in the United States, there was a great eagerness to learn what was happening there. Ronnie Waldman, the BBC's Head of Television Light Entertainment—an American once asked him what the British meant by heavy entertainment<sup>3</sup>—was in Hollywood in 1953. So, too, was Andrew Miller-Jones. They could not help but note what happened in television when entertainment was treated 'not as a suspect commodity but as the prize child entitled to everything that time, brains and money can buy'.<sup>4</sup>

BBC sorties into America could produce other reactions. Thus, de Lotbinière in 1954 was most impressed not by the ballyhoo but by the 'comparative simplicity' of American television. *Tot homines, tot sententiae*. There were so many visitors across the Atlantic that Grace Wyndham Goldie, who was never short of ideas of her own, suggested the compilation of a combined BBC report on America on which action might be taken.<sup>5</sup> There were also special messengers. Thus, in January 1954 Leonard Miall had arrived hot from Washington, where he had been BBC Correspondent, to replace Mary Adams as Head of Talks, when she was transferred to special duties in Television Centre.<sup>6</sup> Barnes was a messenger in reverse, and in a talk on WNYC in October 1954 he praised British programming. 'We are proudest,' he said, 'of our children's programmes', but he added also that 'we do less film than you' and that 78 per cent of the output was 'live'—'either in the studio or from outside broadcasts—what you call remotes. . . . The more that we can make television go outside the studio and give it air and space, the better we are pleased.'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See P. Duncan, *In Show Business Tonight* (1954).

<sup>2</sup> For Barr, see above, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> Waldman rightly said that 'the least light part of television' was 'light entertainment in the making' (quoted in the *Radio Times Annual*, 1955, p. 23).

<sup>4</sup> P. Black, *The Mirror in the Corner* (1972), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> \*Television Programme Board, *Minutes*, 13 May 1954.

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 604.

<sup>7</sup> Talk on WNYC, 17 Oct. 1954 (Barnes Papers).

Finding the right procedures for organizing television seemed just as important in 1954 and 1955 as new ideas, particularly when there were never enough resources to satisfy programme producers. 'Administration in television is still in the formative stage, and is likely to remain so for many years,' an important memorandum of J. A. C. Knott, Head of Television Administration, had stated much earlier: 'new situations are constantly arising, for which there are no precedents in sound broadcasting. . . . This state calls for a not inconsiderable measure of creative effort, initiative, organising ability and sound commonsense coupled with imagination from its Administrators.'<sup>1</sup>

Knott had proved an able administrator until he left television in 1953, although an 'equal status' arrangement with him and McGivern had not worked: in 1952 an Assistant Director's post was created and filled by Robert McCall.<sup>2</sup> As the number of 'new situations' multiplied from 1953 to 1955, the demands on people became greater and greater, and it was necessary further to increase the support to McGivern as Controller of Programmes—it was often unwillingly received—and his colleagues, not least those in Outside Broadcasting, who achieved a record output in the summer of 1954.<sup>3</sup> Joanna Spicer, Programme Organizer under Cecil Madden, played a key part in this process; five years younger than McGivern, she became Head of Programme Planning, Television, in January 1954. In the same month a new 'Efficiency Committee' was set up, further 'to improve programme methods and the general efficiency of the Service'.<sup>4</sup> It started its work in May, and its proposals led to a tidying up of procedures and a clarification and classification of objectives.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*'Television Administration', 5 Jan. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> In 1954 Knott was seconded to Nigeria as Deputy Director of the Broadcasting Service, with T. W. Chalmers as Director.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by de Lotbinière, 5 Feb. 1954, 'Efficiency of O.B. Operation'. For the BBC's dependence on Outside Broadcasts (8.3 per cent of total television output in 1954-5), see Paulu, *British Broadcasting*, pp. 261 ff.

<sup>4</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 6 Jan. 1954. At the same time Mrs. Adams moved across to Television Centre to concentrate on 'the development of ideas' and Doreen Stephens became Women's Editor. Later in the year there were important changes in the Design Department. A Design Organizer, James Bould, was appointed to be responsible for the quantitative control of design and the distribution of work to designers.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 11 May 1954. For an earlier Efficiency Committee, see above, p. 87.

Nonetheless, there were complaints from many sides in 1954 and 1955, echoed outside the BBC, that Television was becoming 'committee-bound' just when it needed most to be flexible and that too many programmes were 'committee jobs'. Television Programme Board, which had first met on 25 January 1951, continued to work alongside the Operations Meeting (Television Policy), which included administrators, programme-makers and engineers, but the former body had to be supplemented in 1954 by a Studio Programme Study Group, and the latter body faced increasing difficulties in considering at the same time 'day-to-day requirements, post mortems and matters of major policy, an awkward mixture'. In April 1954 McGivern, who spent much of his time 'glued to the screen', said with characteristic bluntness that he would like to take Heads of Department away from the Operations Meeting so that they could devote more time to programme matters;<sup>1</sup> and in May 1955 it was decided to divide the work of the Programme Board between 'editorial' and 'administrative' sessions, the divided meetings to take place in alternate weeks.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the problems of 1954 and 1955, such as resource planning, the organization of production, studio management, ownership and re-sale of residual rights, and unionization, were now on a scale which made spontaneity far more difficult than in the first post-war years; and in addition there was the threat of losing some of the brightest staff to 'the competitor'. Indeed, Leslie Page, Establishment Officer, Television, was so disturbed in the autumn of 1954 about what he thought was complacency 'higher up' about possible staff losses to commercial television that he called 120 'key' staff to special individual meetings to try to bind them contractually for three to five years in return for higher salaries. Only half a dozen declined. It was 'rather like Waterloo', he said in retrospect, 'a close run thing'.<sup>3</sup>

Further administrative changes introduced in January 1955 had involved de Lotbinière becoming Assistant Controller of

<sup>1</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 13 April 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 18 May 1955. There had been an interesting discussion on the work of the Programme Board at a meeting on 21 April 1955, when it was noted that McGivern himself rarely attended and that the Board was too large.

<sup>3</sup> \*Note by Page, 16 Dec. 1975.

Programmes (Television).<sup>1</sup> 'The old order changeth,' McGivern wrote grudgingly, yet 'we must carry on in the knowledge that no matter what happens domestically, it is the screen which counts. The changes are devised so that it will glow brighter and better.'<sup>2</sup> Jacob chose different metaphors and while he, too, emphasized that it was programmes which counted—he thought the 'average quality' was 'good'—he chose to dwell on the question of 'peak programmes', the 'sledge-hammers'. When competition came, the BBC should continue 'to produce a well-balanced and far-ranging service, striving to do the best in each class of programme'. Yet good 'peak programming' was 'essential', and any 'increase in programme allocation should not be spent only on "raising the floor"'.<sup>3</sup>

The first reference to peak programmes in the Minutes of the Television Programme Board had been in June 1953, the month of the Coronation, when McGivern, who often expressed doubts about relying on too many 'series of programmes as a staple of television fare', had insisted, in face of some opposition, that 'a really big show was needed every so often. . . . Peak shows *must* be given more attention.'<sup>4</sup> By 1954 the discussion on such matters was becoming far more sophisticated, and the absence of McGivern from several Television Programme Board meetings encouraged more open argument than ever before. De Lotbinière was in the chair when it was agreed that while 'intelligent minority programmes' had 'their place in the service', they 'should only be put on when television can contribute something which no other medium can contribute and when they employ the expert. Even so (i) they should be very carefully spaced . . . ; (ii) they should never be put on in an evening which does *not* include at least one *certain* popular show (preferably light entertainment); (iii) they should never be put on on Saturdays or Sundays; and (iv) they should be placed late rather than early in the evening.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 6 Jan. 1955. Madden became Assistant to Controller, Programmes.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by McGivern, 10 Jan. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Notes for the Liaison Meeting, 2 Nov. 1954; Programme Board, *Minutes*, 18 May 1955.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 4 June 1953.

<sup>5</sup> \**Ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1954. On 14 May 1953 Waldman had argued that the best way of developing light entertainment was to build series. McGivern replied that the limit to the number of series had already been reached.

There was further frank recognition of the strategic importance of 'peak listening time' in November 1954 and Silvey, Head of Audience Research, who was present at a meeting of the Television Programme Board, pointed out that 'weekly series' had 'more impact' than fortnightly or monthly series and many separate programmes.<sup>1</sup> By May 1955 the Television Programme Board was welcoming a suggestion from Audience Research to provide a regular service of graphs to illustrate statistics of audience size and appreciation, thus bringing out 'viewing trends more clearly than is possible with the present system'; it was asking also for 'a reserve' to provide the financial means to present 'peak' programmes 'in the face of competition'.<sup>2</sup>

In eighteen months there had been an enormous change. 'No reason why the BBC should not put on its own *Dragnet* series if studio resources and adequate finance was forthcoming,' read a minute of autumn 1954, while a second minute 'recognised that solicited correspondence and audience participation were a valuable part of programmes and likely to be used considerably by competitors'.<sup>3</sup>

There was already a strong and growing Light Programme influence on television—and a desire to draw audience from it—in such a series as the *Grove Family* programmes, which were first televised on 9 April 1954. Bob Grove's main hobbies were sea angling and filling in football coupons, and his favourite food was steak and onions. (In 'real life', Edward Evans, who played the part, collected operatic records and for food best liked 'strawberries soaked in marsala'.)<sup>4</sup> When at Television Programme Board Mrs. Adams questioned 'the wisdom of some of the activities of the Grove family', she was told by Waldman that 'the programme was intended to be entertainment'.<sup>5</sup>

Already the famous (or notorious) *Elizabethan Evening* of 17 November 1953, when the first Elizabethan age was presented to the second, seemed to belong to a different epoch. At the time, it had lent itself to excessive self-praise inside Lime Grove and to excessive criticism outside it, particularly but not exclusively in the popular Press. The *Daily Express* had called

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 4 Nov. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid., 4 Nov., 30 Dec. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 15, 29 April 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 7 April 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Radio Times Annual*, 1955, p. 58.



it 'Twee Vee',<sup>1</sup> but for McGivern, who had no information available to him about audience ratings, it had been 'a good thing to have done' even if it was not 'majority viewing'.<sup>2</sup> McDonald Hobley, announcing in doublet, hose and ruff, had been less convincing, perhaps, than Philip Harben preparing 'a conceit of coney's'.

McGivern continued to believe, however, that ratings as such were less important than informed criticism from the inside by people 'who knew', people who treated programmes with 'affection, skill and erudition'; and the number of such people was growing in 1954 and 1955, even if some of them were outside McGivern's own immediate circle. Young interviewers and producers were certainly being given their chance in what often appeared unlikely ventures. Donald Baverstock, for example, who had been seconded from Sound to Television Talks 'to learn the trade', and Geoffrey Johnson-Smith, who was to become well known to viewers of *Highlight* and *Tonight*, were helping Grace Wyndham Goldie with *Men Seeking God*, a highly successful 1954 series;<sup>3</sup> Stephen Wade was working with Raymond Baxter on *Quest for Knowledge* from the National Physical Laboratory;<sup>4</sup> Michael Peacock was producing *Viewfinder* with Aidan Crawley; and Paul Fox was heavily involved with *Newsreel* and after September 1954 with editorial work for all kinds of outside broadcasts. Waldman's four young producers—Bill Ward, Brian Tesler, Francis Essex and Bill Lyon-Shaw—were presenting up to nine shows a week. They had all been on Page's interview list, and they were all eventually to head ITV companies.

Meanwhile, the popular favourites 'boomed'. *What's My Line?* still kept Gilbert Harding, grumpy as ever, in public view—whether he liked it or not, he was 'a Celebrity', if not *the* Celebrity—and if critics could grumble as much as Harding did about 'What's my Whine?', newspaper placards around Oxford Circus could still give changes in the *What's My Line?* panel 'the prominence of Cabinet reshuffles'.<sup>5</sup> It was difficult to believe that Harding had 'no inherent liking for cameras, hot arc lamps and being made up'.<sup>6</sup> There were so many protests

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1953.    <sup>2</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 19 Nov. 1953.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 3 June 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> P. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> G. Harding, *Along My Line* (1953), p. 186.

in March 1955 when it was suggested that *What's My Line?* would be taken off that it was given a reprieve.

Eamonn Andrews, still 'playing' in Sound's *Twenty Questions*, far more than 'just a parlour game',<sup>1</sup> was chairing *What's My Line?*, and during the summer of 1955 was on the eve of starting



24. 'The Governor's very favourably inclined towards you TV personalities!'  
*Ariel*, Spring 1955

his new programme, *This is Your Life*, the idea of which had originated in the United States and was taken up by Ronnie Waldman. (It was to be directed by Leslie Jackson.) Eric Robinson's *Music for You*, serving up what Wilfred Pickles (complete with a new request programme, *Ask Pickles*) called

<sup>1</sup> Part of a whole-page analysis of it by Harold Nicolson (in its radio version) is printed in Jonathan Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby* (1975). Nicolson, who loved the Mystery Voice, concluded his analysis with the 'moment of "sudden glory" when possessing certainty ourselves we observe others floundering in the marshes of conjecture'. \*Programme Board noted at its meeting on 4 Feb. 1954, when an article was read from the *Evening News* attacking them, that 'panel games were popular with the public and they were cheap to produce both in money and in studio space'.

'a feast of delightful music', had survived all changes in tastes, just as *Inventors' Club*, with its 'baggy-suited handymen and its lucky dip of inventions', was surviving all changes in technology.<sup>1</sup> *Panorama* was making its way (after a shaky start in November 1953) as 'a magazine of informed comment on the contemporary scene'—with emphasis on topicality, quality and significance;<sup>2</sup> it was hailed in the *Daily Mail* in August 1954 as having 'won its place as a responsible Television Magazine' rather than a 'despairing headache'.<sup>3</sup>

There was no Dimbleby (already a television star), however, until 1955, when he became anchor man. 'By his very presence he had added a sense of occasion' to the general election, and although he was soon to give a new look to *Panorama*,<sup>4</sup> a few early numbers of the programme, like that on 'the Atom Bomb' (13 April 1954), with the Archbishop of York, Bertrand Russell, Sir John Slessor, John Strachey and Professor Rotblat, were excellent television.<sup>5</sup> (One skilled viewer called the Bomb number 'the best programme . . . on Television since the Coronation'<sup>6</sup>.) When Andrew Miller-Jones, *Panorama*'s first producer, left the BBC for a year's Senior Fellowship 'to study the effects of television on people', Michael Barsley, the editor, was left 'more or less in charge of the series', anxious to draw it into closer relations with Britain outside London, seeking to make it

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times Annual*, 1955, p. 49; Black, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note of September 1953. It might have been called 'Pan', 'Now', 'Matters of [the] Moment', 'Here and Now', 'Friday Review', 'Outlook', 'Onlooker' or 'Fact and Opinion' (Note of 22 June 1953). The term 'Panorama' picked up unconsciously many nineteenth-century themes in communications history (see A. Briggs and S. Briggs, *Cap and Bell* (1974), p. viii). There were nineteenth-century echoes in a note by D. Bardens, then its editor, to G. J. Lawrence of the *Evening Standard*, 28 Oct. 1953: 'We hope to have as an opening a moving film shot of London becoming smaller and smaller until it is virtually a panorama. This would need to be taken from the air and could only be done from a helicopter' (cf. A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (1964), p. 12).

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 Aug. 1954; \*Miall to A. Miller-Jones, 5 Aug. 1954; Miller-Jones to Miall, 13 Aug. 1954, denying it had been a headache. The first programmes included a 'grumble spot', 'criticism' (including film criticism), and 'topic of the fortnight'.

<sup>4</sup> A current comment quoted in Dimbleby, op. cit., pp. 274-5.

<sup>5</sup> \*American participants had been sought in the most elevated circles. 'As Einstein unlikely, please try for Truman but Stevenson now second choice' (cable from Miller-Jones to Aubrey Singer, BBC Television Officer, New York, 7 April 1954).

<sup>6</sup> \*Note to Miller-Jones from P. Cairns, 'Television Organizer, Midland Region, 21 April 1954.

—in Miall's phrase—'pictorial journalism' at its best, and eager to find new names to associate with it. It was to be the role of Malcolm Muggeridge, for example, 'to appear in a characteristic "spot" in which he tackles a Big Personality without fear or favour, as they used to say in *John Bull*'.<sup>1</sup> By September 1955 *Panorama* was self-consciously 'a weekly Window on the World'.

This was a period, still not in full fruition, of TV 'personalities' or 'celebrities', touchy and often far more complex in character than their public images suggested, a period when the crowds would gather outside the television studios to see them go in and out. This was a windowless view of the television world. And there were always new celebrities to add to the autograph books, like Bob Monkhouse with *Fast and Loose*, a pioneering situation comedy series, Benny Hill with *Showcase* (it was to be left to ITV to cast him as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and Frankie Howerd, who had had a huge success in *The Howerd Crowd* (January 1952) when he deliberately played the television audience and the studio audience against each other. Terry-Thomas was still in great demand, one of the best-known names—and faces—in the country, the star of the appropriately named *How do You View?*

The Minutes of the Television Programme Board deal with programming themes far more than with individual 'stars' or with individual programmes, and the Minutes of the Operations Meeting deal with the fascinating relationship between arts and techniques. In the latter respect, too, there were very great changes of approach in 1954 and 1955—with news and political broadcasting always in the vanguard,<sup>2</sup> but with weather forecasting and announcing also raising interesting questions. How much time should be devoted to past weather? What about maps? Should announcers be 'normally' or 'not normally' in vision? Could they be used more for 'trailers, slogans, identification, etc.'?<sup>3</sup> Techniques were influencing the answers to the questions. It was appreciated, for example, that the use of teleprompters might influence the role of the announcer, even though the teleprompters were slow to arrive. (H. W. Baker, Superintendent Engineer, Television Studios, asked in

<sup>1</sup> \*Note by Barsley to Hywel Davies, 16 Sept. 1954; Barsley to Elwyn Jones, 20 Sept. 1954.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 593, 675. <sup>3</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 8 July, 23 Sept. 1954.



25. 'No, my man. Television staff and artists ONLY in the Front Entrance . . . steam radio—er—persons, round the back.' Lee in the *Evening News*, 31 August 1953

the spring of 1954, if anyone would be interested in trying out an Autocue should one become available.)<sup>1</sup> Harry Alan Towers held key rights in teleprompters, and after several alternative devices had been tried, including a 'Pepper's ghost optical set-up',<sup>2</sup> Aubrey Singer, the BBC's Television Officer in New York, sent a report from the United States on the subject, which revealed that to 'get at teleprompters' it would be necessary (the idea was topical) to break the monopoly.<sup>3</sup>

There were other technical lags. 'Caption boards' were displayed in December 1954,<sup>4</sup> but no manufacturer could produce a large-type typewriter incorporating necessary BBC modifications. It must have been galling also for Outside Broadcasts and Light Entertainment to have to share a Grundig tape-recorder.<sup>5</sup> In general, telerecording facilities remained poor, and telerecording staff were grossly overworked.<sup>6</sup> There could still be difficulties, too, when no expensive equipment was involved, largely because of staffing problems. 'Miss Bradnock said that Googie Withers and John MacCallum had requested to be made up for the last edition of *In Town Tonight* and she had not had staff available.'<sup>7</sup> Jeanne Bradnock, who had been Head of Make-up and Wardrobe since 1947, already had 'under her command' at Lime Grove Mrs. Manderson, the make-up supervisor, and twenty-six make-up girls.

The 'arts' could lag as much as the techniques. 'Interviewing', for example, was beginning—somewhat slowly—to be thought of and dealt with as a quite new kind of informal art, far less of a 'confrontation' than it was in the United States, but it was still influenced very strongly by the conventions of sound broadcasting. (Richard Dimpleby, the earliest informal interviewer, had worked out his mastery of this 'most ticklish form

<sup>1</sup> \*Ibid., 1 April 1954; Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 16 March 1954. Ibid., 1 Feb. 1955, states that there was still an unmet need.

<sup>2</sup> \*Ibid., 13 April 1954. The device was used in *Sportsvieiw* in April 1954. A Towers teleprompter was used for the first time in TV programmes starring the comedian Ted Ray.

<sup>3</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 27 April, 9 Nov. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Ibid., 21 Dec. 1954.

<sup>5</sup> \*Ibid., 23 Nov. 1954.

<sup>6</sup> \*Ibid., 7 Dec. 1954, 10 May 1955; Pawley, op. cit., p. 425: 'A long-term study of the possibilities of recording television signals on magnetic tape started in the Research Department in 1952, did not bear fruit until after 1955.'

<sup>7</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 13 April 1954.

of broadcasting' with *Down Your Way*.)<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Adams believed in March 1954 that the pace of television interviewing was already too fast, but pinned her hopes on Aidan Crawley, soon to be lost to ITN. Grace Wyndham Goldie emphasized how important it was to get rid of 'exact scripting' in interviewing so long as the area in which the question would be asked was made clear beforehand.<sup>2</sup> In this context, 'personalities' could not be ignored: it was believed, indeed, that they could master the techniques whatever their current limitations. When the possibility of using Malcolm Muggeridge as an interviewer in *Panorama* was discussed in June 1954, 'feelings were divided about his manner and voice', but it was generally agreed that he would probably be 'a very successful personality'.<sup>3</sup>

The effectiveness of the medium seemed to depend on finding the right relationship between the projection of the television 'personality' on the screen—steps were being taken to try to cosset him and save the amount of time he had to spend in the studio when making programmes<sup>4</sup>—and the organization of 'the team' or 'studio crew' which was never seen by the viewer at all. Despite the judgement that the crew system was 'working well' in 1955,<sup>5</sup> there were regular complaints from producers that production teams were too small and that increasing preparation time would not necessarily improve the picture. The basic production team, it was maintained, should consist of a Producer, Production Assistant (thought to be particularly necessary in Talks),<sup>6</sup> and Floor Manager or Assistant Floor Manager, with the duties of the last-named varying in different departments. Sometimes a fifth member would be necessary.<sup>7</sup>

There was a similar emphasis on team-work in Outside Broadcasts. Most Outside Broadcast units were now equipped with microwave radio-link equipment, and it was possible for a Roving Eye single-camera unit to revolutionize what the viewer

<sup>1</sup> Some of his comments on interviewing are quoted in Dimpleby, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-14: 'You can encourage, cajole, lure, egg on, even trap but you can't make a person talk who doesn't want to.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 1 April 1954.

<sup>3</sup> \**Ibid.*, 24 June 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \**Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1954. 'The main factors causing artists and speakers to waste their time'—and they wasted far more time in Lime Grove than if they appeared before the microphone in Broadcasting House—were 'the line up period', changes in crew, and the supper break.

<sup>5</sup> \*Operations Meeting, *Minutes*, 18 Jan. 1955.

<sup>6</sup> \*Programme Board, *Minutes*, 2 Sept., 11 Nov. 1954. <sup>7</sup> \**Ibid.*, 11 Nov. 1954.

could actually see at a football match or at Ascot. Yet the effective use of the Roving Eye depended on effective joint operations. 'You will have noticed', Dimmock explained to the readers of the *Radio Times Annual* for 1954, 'that an Outside Broadcast is essentially a team operation. Every member of the team is vital to the others. If anything, however trivial, is not absolutely right at rehearsal then the technicians will remain there until the fault has been discovered and put right.' 'Every credit is due to the engineers,' he concluded—singling out Bridgewater, the Superintendent Engineer, Television Outside Broadcasts. 'On their ability to produce clear and brilliant pictures so much of the success of the broadcast depends.'<sup>1</sup>

To all but a minority of viewers, including those viewers who remained faithful to the BBC during the great debate on the monopoly, what happened behind the scenes in television was still a great mystery. There was ample gossip about the 'celebrities', but there was little knowledge of structures or of processes, let alone of techniques. The seven-storey building in Lime Grove, if they thought about it at all or if they visited it—and it was a drab London street, not a real lime grove—was 'a combination of Aladdin's Cave and a scientist's laboratory'.<sup>2</sup> Even to some of the people who performed there—particularly the one-performance television non-stars who probably constituted the majority of performers in the BBC's programmes—the building was 'a jungle of corridors, passages, staircases, swing doors and corners'. George Campey, who wrote a brilliant article about it in the *Radio Times Annual* for 1955, said that if you set out to visit it—and 'explore' would have been the best term—you did not so much tour it as go on safari.<sup>3</sup>

This whole number of the *Radio Times Annual*, focusing for the first time on television, gives a lively account of BBC television 'on the eve'—with Hugh Burden writing on 'the actor's problems' in television ('I can't tell you what a shock it is to see some fellows whom you've previously known only by their voices'); with Peter Forster dealing with that 'figure of mystery', the producer, 'anticipating the reactions of the unseen audience'; and with Peter Black, in an article 'I am a Television Critic', confessing that he had to live 'a lonely and peculiar life'.

<sup>1</sup> P. Dimmock, 'Television goes to Ascot' in the *Radio Times Annual*, 1954, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> G. Campey, 'Let's Visit Television' in *Radio Times Annual*, 1955, p. 22. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



Wynford Vaughan-Thomas described Sir Mortimer Wheeler; Wilfred Pickles included Ed Murrow's *Person to Person* programmes in his top ten programmes (along with *Press Conference*) and picked out Ted Ray, who had shied off television for so long, as well as Arthur Askey, among his favourite comedians; Richard Dimbleby gave a full account of his election-night marathon; and naturally there was a long, well-illustrated article about the real people behind the Grove family. C. Gordon Glover, a scriptwriter for twelve years, revealed himself as the kind of free-lance person on whom BBC Television (unlike its American counterpart) had relied and would continue to rely. And of what other broadcasting system could he have written, 'Any given number of the *Radio Times* fairly bristles with the bright thoughts of his colleagues—programmes about Witches, Land-drainage, Piers, Peers, Spires, Squires, Elephants, Electricity, and Eccentrics. There is, and there can be, no end to the range of subject matter'?<sup>1</sup>

There were no references to 'The Competitor' in the whole number, but there was a reminder throughout that 'BBC Television will be There' and a brief glimpse of the long-term future which still depended not only on the unmentioned BBC Five-Year Plan but on the doubtful intentions of Britain's politicians. It seemed all too appropriate that the model of the Television Centre was in the shape of a question mark. The one building already in use there in 1955 could even be conceived of fancifully as part of the tail of the question mark. Television professionals, housed in Lime Grove, were already dreaming of moving into 'the largest, best equipped and most carefully planned factory of its kind in the world'.<sup>2</sup> But when the Centre as a whole would be completed was itself a question mark in the autumn of 1955.

Its glittering opening night was not to take place in 'the Grand Manner' until 29 June 1960. Meanwhile, with as much improvisation as had ever been known in the old BBC days of Savoy Hill, ITV was preparing its own much-publicized debut in September 1955.

<sup>1</sup> C. Gordon Glover, 'I am a Scriptwriter', *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Words of Gerald Beadle, quoted in G. Ross, *Television Jubilee* (1961), p. 189. It was, of course, to be 'a factory with a difference', as Ross pointed out (p. 191), 'a factory whose final product must be an enormous number of individual creations'.

## 4. First Night

FOURTEEN months after royal assent had been given to the Television Act, commercial television, 'Thursday's Child', opened in style on 22 September 1955, the month predicted by its supporters during the parliamentary debates.<sup>1</sup> A Guildhall banquet to celebrate the occasion was heralded, however, by the heaviest thunderstorm of the year. Many people were looking for omens, few for continuities. Yet the very first announcement on the service was made by Leslie Mitchell, who spoke exactly the same words as he had spoken nineteen years before at the opening of the BBC's first regular television service: 'This is London'. The subsequent commentary, complete with film and the City's Latin motto, *Domine dirige nos* (God direct us), was different, however, from that of 1936. It was, in fact, rather more rhetorical, so that Bernard Levin thought that part of it sounded like verse.<sup>2</sup> The Guildhall guests, announced by John Connell, were rather more distinguished, also, than the BBC's guests in 1936, including as they did the Lord Mayor of London, a bishop and several peers.

Before the proceedings began, the cameras focused not on guests but on the Guildhall statues of Gog and Magog, which some viewers thought represented the BBC and ITA. The speakers quickly moved, however, from art to philosophy. Looking directly into the camera, Sir Kenneth Clark, not then well known as a television personality, described the Independent Television Authority as 'an experiment in the art of government' and 'an attempt to solve one of the chief problems of democracy, how to combine the maximum of freedom with ultimate discretion'. 'Free television,' he went on, 'like the free Press, would not be controlled by a committee but by the television companies', by 'commonsense and responsibility', and by 'the fundamental good sense and right feeling of the British people'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 930.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> The speech was very widely and fully reported—see, for example, *Daily Telegraph*, 23 Sept. 1955.

Most television critics found the Guildhall ceremony 'subdued'<sup>1</sup> and 'well-mannered', although the still disgruntled *Daily Mirror* called it 'boring'.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, more of the comment concerned the drama of the occasion—and the participants—than the content of the speeches, but one of the main participants, Norman Collins, wrongly described by Connell as Chairman of the Associated Broadcasting Company (he was, in fact, Vice-Chairman), looked (again according to Levin) as if London did, indeed, that night belong to him.<sup>3</sup>

Manchester, too, had a share in the first evening's fare. Sir John Barbirolli, who at the last moment had followed the example of Sir Thomas Beecham and signed a commercial television contract, conducted the Hallé Orchestra in Elgar's *Cockaigne* Overture. This particular work may or may not have been performed because a new land of Cockaigne was now in view. Indeed, there were still some doubts about the project, doubts which were soon to deepen further for a few of the entrepreneurs of commercial television who attended the dinner. Nonetheless, 'commercialism' had triumphed in 1954 and 1955, bringing with it a new noun to Britain, 'the commercials', to describe the advertisements. Few denied that the event marked a significant victory in British history.

The first long-awaited 'commercials' were broadcast almost immediately after the Guildhall opening, at 8.12 precisely. They were announced by Jack Jackson, the compère of a star-studded forty-minute gala programme, with mocking words as remarkable as those of Leslie Mitchell—'Now, the moment you have all been waiting for.' Toothpaste came first, followed by drinking chocolate and margarine. The toothpaste, 'tingling fresh', was embedded in a block of ice; the drinking chocolate was advertised in a studio by four make-believe TV panellists, including Hélène Cordet, who had introduced the BBC's *Café Continental* (she 'guessed' the right brand); and only the margarine was displayed in its proper setting, a kitchen.

The London correspondent of America's CBS found the advertisements more 'subdued' than the programmes, and Jack

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, and *News Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Sept. 1955. So, too, did the *Daily Worker*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 23 Sept. 1955. The Chairman was the theatre impresario, Prince Littler.

Gould, the television correspondent of the *New York Times*, who had flown to London for the occasion, referred to their 'restraint and brevity'.<sup>1</sup> Likewise the *New York Herald Tribune* called them 'painless by American standards'.<sup>2</sup> Most British comment did not draw on such antecedent experience. The *News Chronicle* set the tone. 'Muffled, as if making their entrance like well-mannered tradesmen at the side door, "Commercials" came to British television last night.' The *News Chronicle* also commented on the advertisements televised later during the evening, including an advertisement for beer (in the middle of a boxing contest between Terence Murphy and Lew Lazar): the beer 'was consumed so noisily that the panting of the middleweights could not have been heard above it'. (Gould found this advertisement 'interesting in itself'.)<sup>3</sup> There had been no advertisements during the showing (on film) of specially commissioned excerpts, introduced by Robert Morley, from *The Importance of Being Earnest* (with Sir John Gielgud and Dame Edith Evans), another fact which impressed the Americans. Only *Omnibus*, underwritten by the Ford Foundation, had given Americans the opportunity of viewing for 'a stretch of half an hour or more in their own country without any advertising overtones'.

'For my money,' wrote Clifford Davis in the *Daily Mirror*, summing up the evening's advertising record, the advertisements were 'something of a let down': 'the voices were harsh, strident and distorted. They blared from the screen.'<sup>4</sup> 'Too many of the screen plugs have been hard to hear,' *The People* also complained. 'My ears ring with close-harmony girls singing advertising jingles—but I can't understand a word they sing. This can hardly be intended.'<sup>5</sup> 'Offensive would be too strong

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 Sept. 1955. For a general comment on American reactions, see Alistair Cooke, 'Approving U.S. Nod for British Commercial TV' in the *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Sept. 1955. The sub-title was '“Soap, M'Lord” fails to materialise'. It referred to an article with this theme in the *Wall Street Journal*, 23 Sept. 1955. The *Journal* was a strong supporter of British commercial TV and hoped for 'cross-fertilization of the British and American systems'. It was announced on 24 September that nine members of Congress were to visit Europe and to see British commercial television for themselves.

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1955. It commented that no American sponsor would have given screen time to the 'plugs'. 'They had nothing like the impact of cinema interval advertising.'

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> *The People*, 25 Sept. 1955.

a word by far', wrote *The Times's* reviewer on the Arts page, 'for those comic little interruptions of the entertainment, but one did feel nonetheless that a thick skin of resistance to them would be needed before long.'<sup>1</sup>

The evening's programmes as a whole moved at a quick pace. They included extracts from H. H. Munro's (Saki's) *The Baker's Dozen* and Noël Coward's *Private Lives* (with Margaret Leighton, Alec Guinness, Kay Hammond, Faith Brook, Pamela Brown and John Clements), a News bulletin and a fashion parade; and they were put on jointly by the Associated Broadcasting Company and Associated-Rediffusion, the two London programme contractors. Behind all the ceremony there had been forced but effective improvisation. Thus, half an hour before the News bulletin, presented by Christopher Chataway,<sup>2</sup> floor boards were still not laid in the News Studio. There was a genuine sense of competition, too. Thus, the fashion parade could not have been shown by the BBC because the Corporation would have refused to mention the names of the twelve designers who were responsible for the dresses.

Yet the 'gala programmes' introduced many names which were already very familiar to BBC listeners and viewers – among them 'Goon' Harry Secombe, cinema organist Reginald Dixon, and band-leader Billy Cotton. Shirley Abicair was also on view, along with George Formby, Leslie Randall (a young comedian much in demand by commercial television companies), Elizabeth Allan, Leslie Welch and Derek Roy; and Hughie Green was in at the very beginning describing the plans for his brand-new quiz show which was to offer a dazzling £1,000 in prizes. For Alan Brien, in the *Evening Standard*, the evening began with 'the reverent solemnity of a BBC royal occasion' and ended with 'the feverish puffery of a Radio Luxembourg plug'.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the evening there were frequent references in the programme to the BBC. 'Hello, you BBC deserters,' was

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 23 Sept. 1955. It referred also to 'the nasal, synthetic tone'. For a still more uncompromising verdict, see that of Robert Robinson in the *Sunday Chronicle*, 25 Sept. 1955: 'The new baby drives me crazy.'

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, where a statement of Aidan Crawley was quoted that *TV News* hoped to include 'the reporting of idiosyncrasies'. Chataway's own performance was described in the *Daily Mail*, 23 Sept. 1955, as 'personal, friendly, interested'.

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Standard*, 23 Sept. 1955.

comedian Derek Roy's introduction to his act, while Secombe chatted engagingly, 'I know you are dying to get back to the BBC'. Sir Ian Jacob from the BBC was present at the Guildhall banquet, but Barnes stayed firmly behind in Lime Grove. Neither would make any comment on the evening's performances, but the BBC News bulletin led off with a short description of the opening. Two anonymous BBC producers are said to have remarked after watching everything on offer, 'they did nothing we couldn't have done, given the money'.<sup>1</sup> For the *Daily Telegraph's* television correspondent, Leonard Marsland Gander, the *doyen* of his profession, the whole evening was 'reminiscent of the BBC senior service itself'.<sup>2</sup> Yet he queried whether Dr. Hill had been felicitous in his choice of words at the Guildhall banquet when he had referred to the BBC as 'the elder child' and independent television as 'the lively youngster'. Doubtless Hill had intended to praise the BBC,<sup>3</sup> but was he quite the right person to do it on the screen? As Alan Brien, writing in the *Evening Standard*, put it, 'One can see why the Radio Doctor has never been promoted to Television Doctor. He looks too much of an outsize character in fiction to be completely credible as a character in fact.' Brien's final comment was that 'in this first showing ITA has a long way to go before they can equal the best that Lime Grove would have staged if it had been their gala night'.<sup>4</sup>

Cecil McGivern is said to have treated Opening Night as 'just a normal Thursday evening',<sup>5</sup> although he had been told to make the BBC programmes that night as lively and newsworthy as possible and to advance the starting time by half an hour. The opening announcement was made twice, moreover, with a call-sign interval between. 'This is the *BBC Television Service*'. Donald Duck, Goofy, Horace Horsecollar and Clara-

<sup>1</sup> *The Star*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 23 Sept. 1955. Cf. Maurice Wiggin in the *Sunday Times*, 25 Sept., 'It turned out like one of the less attractive offerings of BBC Television'; and the *New Statesman*, 17 Oct. 1955, 'The new pattern is to be depressingly like the old'.

<sup>3</sup> He praised the BBC for 'the magnificent, the memorable, service which it has rendered the nation over the years. To wish the ITA success was not to wish the BBC ill.'

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Standard*, 23 Sept. 1955. For a tribute to Dr. Hill as a broadcaster after he had gone off the air as the 'Radio Doctor' in 1950, see *Annual Register*, 1950, p. 416.

<sup>5</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, 23 Sept. 1955.

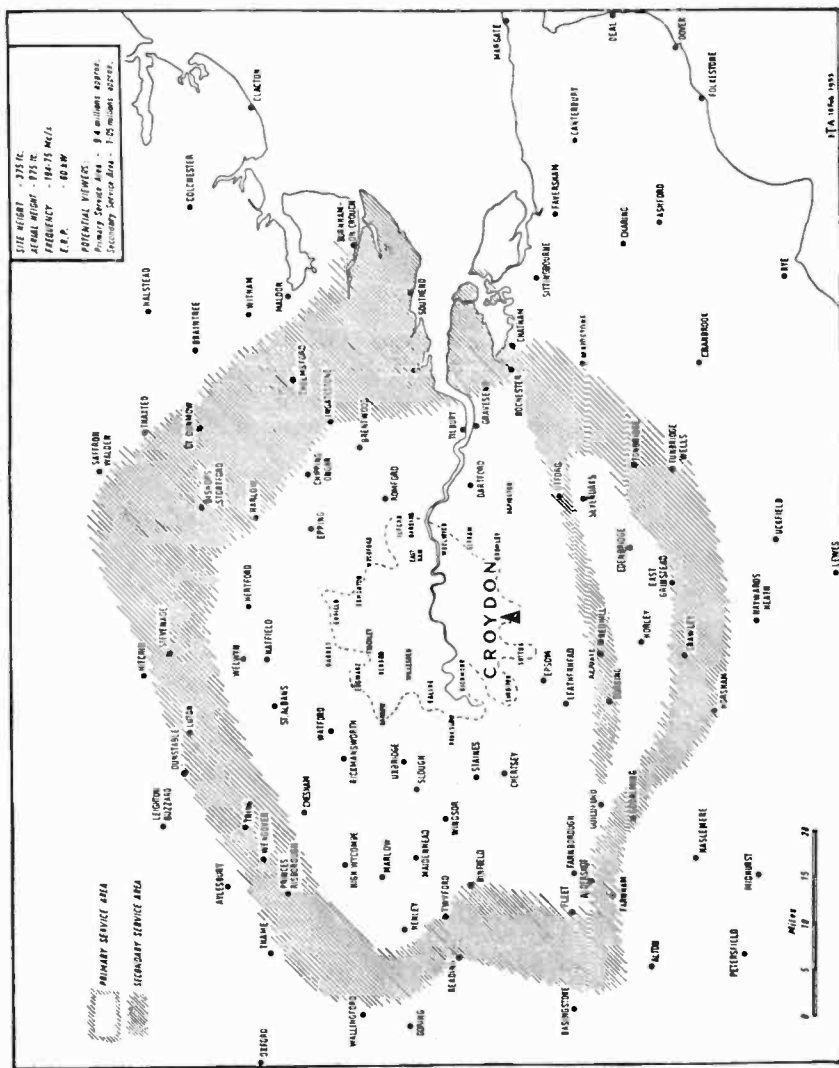
belle were shown on the BBC 'channel' (a term still not familiar to viewers), while ITV was televising the speeches from the Guildhall banquet; and against the Jackson Variety programme on ITV was the familiar BBC sight of Professor Thomas Bodkin skirmishing with Sir Mortimer Wheeler in *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*. There was one additional attraction in the programme, however, in the presence as a challenger not of a named museum (as usual) but of Dawn Addams, the film star wife of Prince Vittorio Massimo, the Italian archaeologist who owned an important private collection. If Dawn Addams 'stole the screen', characteristically Wheeler made the best topical *bon mot* of the evening: 'Nearly everything shown in this programme is BC.' Later in the evening Mervyn Johns appeared in a new television play, *The Hole in the Wall*, adapted from an East End novel by Arthur Morrison. A programme from RTF in Paris followed, *La Tour Eiffel*, and the evening ended with *Newsreel*, the Weather Forecast, and the Road Works Report.

As if in anticipation of Dr. Hill's speech at the Guildhall, Barnes had written in that week's *Radio Times*, an introductory article on 'BBC Television, a National Service' which included the sentence, 'The BBC Television Service is . . . not venerable, but we *do* feel experienced.' Barnes wrote also that even though the BBC's 'powerful competitors' were now using 'exclusive contracts', the BBC would 'continue to give the most varied and diverse television programmes to suit all the tastes of a nation-wide audience—an audience which is increasing through the addition of one million new licences a year. This service is paid for by those viewers and owes no allegiance to anyone else.'<sup>1</sup>

It was estimated that on Opening Night only one set in five in the London area was 'tuned' to ITV and the rest to the BBC. The boom in dual-service sets had not yet started. Yet of those who saw the commercial programmes, two out of three thought that they had got off to a good start and only one in ten was critical.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 16 Sept. 1955. It announced the new pattern of programmes on p. 15. BBC Television would now operate for the maximum hours laid down by the Postmaster-General, up to 50 a week.

<sup>2</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1955.



26. Chart of coverage of ITA Croydon station (18 February 1955)



Technical reception had posed several problems, but 'un-biased reports' from places as far apart as Woking and Gravesend praised the quality of the ITA images on the screen.<sup>1</sup> Before the service was an hour old, more than two hundred people had telephoned Television House for advice from engineers as to how to adjust their sets. Yet there were no technical hitches, and the programmes could be seen as far away as Ipswich, Luton and Tunbridge Wells (even faintly at Bristol and Birmingham).

It is true that the multi-element type of aerial necessary for a viewer to receive commercial television transmissions was highly directional and might bring in reflections from buildings or even trees at which it was pointing unless these were directly in line with the ITA transmitters, but local television engineers and dealers were aware of this particular problem before the opening evening began. Most of them knew, too, that, given the ITA's frequency band, faulty installations could add to the risk of 'ghost' images. Obviously the experience of alternative television could not be judged on the basis of one evening only, but there were reasons for satisfaction. Engineers and dealers expected to install sets in the shortest possible time and many of them during the course of the evening received orders for new or adapted sets.<sup>2</sup>

Immediate reaction was that since there had been only nine months' time to prepare for the whole enterprise—and that 78 per cent of ITA's engineering staff were trainees—the technical achievement (local and national) was a considerable one.<sup>3</sup> 'The job that was thought impossible was done last night,' wrote Peter Black in the *Daily Mail*. 'Experts forecast that it would take two years to build a TV Service.'<sup>4</sup>

If past forecasts could be transcended, what of future hopes? How they were realized or not realized falls outside the scope of this volume—as do even the comments on the later programmes

<sup>1</sup> *The Observer*, 25 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 23 Sept. 1955. One dealer said he had eighteen requests after 7.15 p.m. It was being forecast that by the end of the year 14 per cent of the sets in the London area would be capable of receiving ITV (*Financial Times*, 15 Nov. 1955).

<sup>3</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mail*, 23 Sept. 1955.

that week<sup>1</sup>—but many of the statements made at that very first special moment of time do survive. ‘A wonderful start,’ said Sir Robert Fraser, Director-General of ITA, ‘and a wonderful demonstration of what team work can do. What an audience and what a Press!’ Yet he could not resist looking further backwards and adding, ‘And what a swing of opinion! A year ago, the Television Act reached the Statute Book by the skin of its teeth. Would those who were against Independent TV now please hold up their hands?’<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, the *Daily Telegraph*, which claimed that it had always been prepared to welcome the ITA as an ‘alternative to the dead hand of monopoly’, looked only forwards. The new ITA had three major problems to solve, and time alone would tell whether it was competent to solve them. First, it would have to maintain ‘a high standard of taste and discrimination’. Second, it would have to promote ‘genuine entertainment of a kind which will ensure preference by a large proportion of viewers’. Third, it would have to ‘satisfy the advertisers that, as a costly medium, it is well worth their support’. How far were the answers to these problems ‘compatible’, the *Daily Telegraph* wondered? Opening Night had not been the real test. Commercial TV had ‘made its bow wearing kid gloves, long court gloves as the occasion demanded’. But the rituals were now over. ‘In its competition with the BBC, it must be remembered that the race is not a hundred yards’ sprint. It is a long-distance course and much may happen when the test is one of endurance.’<sup>3</sup>

The BBC’s immediate plans were set out by McGivern in the *Radio Times*. Yet he, too, chose, like Fraser, to begin by looking backwards—long before 1953—to the BBC’s own period of hectic improvisation. ‘In 1947, when I first joined the BBC Television Service,’ he wrote, ‘the producers used to meet every Monday morning in the small conference room on the

<sup>1</sup> The following day Bernard Levin was writing, ‘Worst fears (or hopes?) not confirmed’ (*Manchester Guardian*, 23 Sept. 1955). Cf. Alan Brien in the *Evening Standard*, 20 Sept. 1955: ‘The rivalry between the two TV programmes has led each to undergo an odd transference of personality. The BBC wants to become slick and the ITA dignified. The BBC wants to be indispensable and the ITA respectable. Each hopes to be mistaken for its competitor. If you ask me, they are both crazy mixed up kids.’

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The Star*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Sept. 1955.

third floor in Alexandra Palace. There were eighteen of them arguing fiercely about each other's work. . . . Down below, the little scenery truck trundled backwards and forwards over the courtyard feeding scenery to the two small studios, A and B. Biscuit boxes, I called them, not studios, but in them producers and engineers accomplished feats of ingenuity—and endurance—which would make newer members of the Service gasp with astonishment and horror.' This was in McGivern's best documentary style, and he went on to draw the contrast. The ITA was just starting in 1955, but the BBC now had eighty-eight producers at their disposal, helped by forty-five production assistants and twenty-five floor managers. 'Altogether, there are two thousand five hundred people working to put BBC television programmes on to your screens.' The scenery truck was now 'a museum piece'. The Design Department in 1955 was preparing 'sets' for 2,600 productions, making 7,500 drawings and 9,000 captions, and supplying 350,000 'props'. 'In brief, the department will be turning out a complete "set" with all its properties every thirty minutes of the working week.'<sup>1</sup>

Quantity, however, was less important than quality, McGivern went on. In future weeks, Wednesday's *Sportsview* would have a BBC 'rival' in Saturday's *Sports Special*, for which first-class teams would cover the main sporting items in Britain. 'I have told Peter Dimmock that he is expected to make this the best sports report in television anywhere. I think he will.'<sup>2</sup> Light Entertainment, under tough challenge from commercial television, would be handling twenty-two series within the next six months, 'a fantastic job'. The Music Department was hoping to make Sunday's *Music at Ten* 'a vehicle for the best musicians in the world' and (to test viewers' reactions) trying out *Concert Hour* on Sunday afternoons; it also had in hand a new production of *La Traviata*. The Drama Department was planning thirty plays in less than three months, a sequel to Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass Experiment*, a new serial by Francis Durbridge, a dramatization of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and a cycle of four full-length Sunday night plays by Frank Tilsley, *The Makepiece Saga*, dealing with the story of the cotton industry seen through the lives of a Lancashire family.

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 16 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 850.

*Panorama* would become a weekly programme and *The Brains Trust* was to be switched from Sound to Television. David Attenborough's second series of *Zoo Quest* would go out on Tuesday nights, and the West Region's *Look* would be given a fortnightly placing. There would be programmes for women on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; children's programmes every day (with a new Children's Caravan journeying around the country); and from 4 o'clock to 5 o'clock a 'party spot' in the afternoon presented by Cecil Madden.

'We are still growing,' McGivern concluded. 'Of course, growing includes growing pains. Television has a lot of them. But we are quite happy, thank you.'<sup>1</sup> He did not add that the first experimental television transmissions in colour were due to start on 10 October from Alexander Palace. These were *not* intended for the public, but they pointed the way to yet another First Night.

## 5. Single Sound: Double Vision

TELEVISION was still growing—and growing fast—and colour might be round the corner, but on the first night of competitive television there were still almost twice as many Sound licences in use as combined Sound and Television licences: the figures at the end of March 1955 had been 9,414,224 as against 4,503,766.<sup>2</sup> Television might be 'the ultimate form of radio', but there had been far more listeners to one Sound 'ultimate', *The Goons*—in a new series—on Tuesday 20 September, than there were viewers of the first week's competitive television programmes. There was another Sound 'ultimate' in 1955, too: VHF enabled listeners to have clear, faithful reception substantially free from interference, particularly from the interference of the increasing number of foreign stations, and nine million listeners were within reach of VHF—if they had the

<sup>1</sup> *Radio Times*, 16 Sept. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> The figures at the end of November 1955 were 8,955,624 and 5,261,699 respectively. See above, pp. 239–40.

right set—by the time commercial television started.<sup>1</sup> Some critics of the BBC argue still that it should have speeded the development of VHF—indeed, that it should have introduced local radio with it; others argue still that it was concentrating too much on the development of VHF at the expense of the development of television.

Yet technological advance in Sound as in Television meant little without good programming. To see the situation in perspective, it is useful to recall that on the BBC's Home Service on 22 September there was a Thursday Concert by the Amadeus String Quartet at 7.15 p.m.; Alistair Cooke's *Letter from America* at 8.15; Anona Wynn, Joy Adamson, Jack Train, Richard Dimbleby and Gilbert Harding in *Twenty Questions* (still broadcast and billed in the *Radio Times* as 'by arrangement with Maurice Winnick') at 8.30; after the News, *Farm Subsidies*, a half-hour's discussion at 9.15 between Sir James Turner, Colin Clark and Marghanita Laski (a staunch and witty opponent of commercial television), with Norman Fisher, of *Brains Trust* fame, in the chair; *French Cabaret* on gramophone records from 9.45 to 10.20; *Forgotten Allies*, a recorded feature about concentration camps and refugees; a News summary followed by *Market Trends*; and at 11.30 p.m. close-down. This was rich and varied fare of high quality designed to appeal to different audiences within a great audience.

The two alternative Sound programmes provided real alternatives. There were *Family Favourites* on the Light; Dave Morris in *Club Night*; Jack Warner and Kathleen Harrison in *Meet the Huggetts*; Lester Ferguson and Jessie Matthews in the *Lester Ferguson Hour*; the music of Edmundo Ros and, before the midnight close-down, of Reg Owen; and Peter Irving's *An Italian called Mario* as *A Book at Bedtime*, a regular eleven-o'clock feature since January 1949. On the Third, Herbert

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 562. The price of 'combined sets' capable of receiving both VHF and long- and medium-wave services was at least 30 per cent more than the price of the existing long- and medium-wave receivers. It had been noted in 1953 (\*Draft Memorandum, 'The BBC's Ten Year Plan', 23 Sept. 1953) that Germany afforded a better example than the United States. 'A VHF system using FM modulation has been a striking success in Germany where it has been widely developed (largely owing to the fact that since the war Germany has been very short of medium wave-lengths).' Some supporters of commercial television pointed to the German 'lead' over Britain in VHF as evidence of the general lack of enterprise of the BBC.

Morrison was discussing with its author Professor K. C. Wheare's *Government by Committee* (not an inappropriate subject for ITV's opening night, given the interminable discussions of committees on broadcasting as recorded in this volume). Also to be heard were seventeenth-century duets for tenor and bass, three offerings from the Virtuoso Chamber Ensemble, and Reger's Suite Number Two for unaccompanied cello; a recital of poems by Laurence Binyon; *Comment*, a typical programme on the arts, literature and entertainment, now to be broadcast each fortnight; *The Man who Stole Children*, an adaptation of a story by Jules Supervielle; and a talk by Professor P. Leon on 'The Great Professions and the Modern Mind'.

Lest we forget, this was a characteristic and not a special Third Programme evening. The Third Programme had been among the favourite targets of many of the sponsors of commercial television, but we have never had ambitious broadcasting of this range in this country—or in any other country—since its demise.<sup>1</sup> Haley could be proud of his achievement. During the daytime hours, of course, when the Third was silent and when television was strictly limited, Sound ruled every hour through 'Home' and 'Light', although there were long visits to Ascot on BBC television on the afternoon of the 22nd, with Joan Gilbert's *About the Home* and *Watch with Mother* sandwiched in between, and an hour of Children's Television at 5 o'clock. In the Home Service there were many echoes of the past with *Workers' Playtime* (from a works canteen at Leeds) still catching something of the flavour of the home front during the Second World War, not to speak of Harry Davidson and his Orchestra, with Bill Groves as Master of Ceremonies, in *Those Were the Days*, which looked further back still.

This range of programmes in September 1955 shows that it was possible within a monopoly organization to offer listeners a very wide choice, far wider than that offered at that time in any alternative broadcasting system based on competition. Whatever the British pattern was, it was not a pattern producing

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 551. The Popular Television Association had ensured that just over a thousand column inches of editorial space had been devoted to an attack by Lord Balfour of Inchrye on a Third Programme reading of the poet George Barker's 'Passages from True Confessions' and an apology by Sir Alexander Cadogan. Balfour called the programme 'a piece of pornography which should never have been printed, let alone read'.

'single sound'. Nor was there any sign of the stultifying dependence on gramophone records interspersed with patter—nor always bright—which has characterized later sound broadcasting in most countries.

Yet the power of sound broadcasting over its audiences was revealed in September 1955 less by quality items of fare within this wide range than by the extraordinary public reactions to one single item in the Light Programme—the death of Grace Archer, what would later have been called 'a pseudo-event', in *The Archers* series which had started modestly as a regional offering from Birmingham.<sup>1</sup> The decision to 'kill' Grace had been taken as early as January 1955, several months before she was married. 'The wedding of Phil and Grace will proceed and will take place at Easter,' Godfrey Baseley then wrote somewhat laconically—certainly not in the style of *The Archers*—to Rooney Pelletier, the Controller of the Light Programme, 'but at a suitable opportunity, either at the end of August or early September, Grace will be involved in a motor accident which will prove fatal.'<sup>2</sup>

It was, in fact, on the very first night of commercial television—22 September—that eight million listeners heard, mainly with shocked feelings, the episode in *The Archers* saga in which Grace lost her life dashing into a blazing stable to rescue a horse. The news provoked hundreds of telephone calls to Broadcasting House, some being received two hours after the programme ended; and the following day there was far more prominent comment in the Press about Grace's death—and far more Press leaders—than about Sir Kenneth Clark's Guildhall speech or the first 'commercials'.<sup>3</sup> The death, indeed, had

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> \*Baseley to Pelletier, 10 Jan. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> The *Daily Mirror* headline on 23 Sept. 1955 read 'Radio Fans wept as Grace Archer "Died"'. The *News Chronicle* headed its report 'Why did Grace have to Die?' The *Times* had a short note—not on the obituary page—'Death of BBC Serial Character'; and even the *New York Herald Tribune* (24 Sept. 1955) issued a communiqué. The 'killing off' of 'the heroine of Britain's top soap opera . . . almost plunged the nation into mourning'. From September 1953 a weekly edition of *The Archers* had been broadcast on the Overseas Programme, but the plot was about three years behind the story broadcast in the Light Programme (\**The Archers' Story*, A BBC Report produced for the 1,000th performance in November 1954). Appreciations of the programmes were said to have been received from several countries, including Malaya and Japan. See also K. Bird, 'Life with the Archers' in *The Observer*, 21 Nov. 1954.

the dimensions of a 'national tragedy'.<sup>1</sup> 'Death in the Family' was a *Manchester Guardian* headline,<sup>2</sup> and a writer to the *Daily Mirror* made the same point. 'The Archers are like members of the family. This "death" has brought a sense of grief to me that not even the thought "it's just a play" can quite erase.'<sup>3</sup>

Many journalists remarked that it was not a coincidence that Grace had been killed on the night commercial television began. It was a mean, callous 'stunt', said Denis Pitts in the *Daily Herald*;<sup>4</sup> and, although one of the authors of *The Archers*, E. J. Mason, denied that Grace had died in the cause of publicity rather than of art,<sup>5</sup> the *Herald* was in good company when it pointed out that her death on that particular night 'ensured that *The Archers* made headlines when "in all theory" sound radio should have been pushed right off the news pages by the advent of Independent TV'. Mary Crozier in the *Manchester Guardian* preferred the term 'scoop' to 'stunt' and verse to prose:

She dwelt unseen amid the Light,  
Among the Archer clan,  
And breathed her last the very night  
That ITV began. . . .

She was well loved, and millions know  
That Grace has ceased to be.  
Now she is in her grave, but oh,  
She's scooped the ITV.<sup>6</sup>

Few other tributes were as graceful or as accurate, for although *The Archers* team had agreed to the idea of the 'killing' in March and had set it for a period after the summer holidays, the date of the introduction of commercial television was always

<sup>1</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 Sept. 1955. Grace's marriage, recorded in March, had also received immense publicity. The Rector of Hanbury Church, where the recording was made, was delighted that whatever some 'stuffy' ecclesiastics might think, the 'ordinary person' was 'tickled pink' (\*Rev. L. J. Birch to Baseley, 24 March 1955).

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Sept. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 24 Sept. 1955. Another correspondent wondered, however, why people could get in such a state over a 'harmless fairy tale'. At least one correspondent of the *Birmingham Post*, describing himself (or herself) as 'an Archer Fan Regained', said that he (or she) would start listening to *The Archers* again now that Grace was dead.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Herald*, 24 Sept. 1955.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>6</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Sept. 1955.



in their minds. There was one crucial sentence, indeed, in a letter from the Controller of the Light Programme to the Head of the Midland Regional Programmes written in May: 'The more I think about it, the more I believe that a death of a violent kind in *The Archers* timed if possible to diminish interest in the opening of commercial television in London is a good idea.'<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, this was not the whole truth. First, the writers of *The Archers* script were anxious to cut the number of characters in the series: they felt it was becoming 'cluttered up' and that it would be desirable to introduce 'greater validity' into the situations described.<sup>2</sup> Second, there was an element of competition inside the BBC between Sound and Television, and the managers of the Light Programme were determined to prove that 'in spite of both BBC and independent television, sound broadcasting was still a force in Britain's social life'. Publicity was directly related to this second consideration, and the members of *The Archers*' cast were specially brought to London during the controversial week so that 'any repercussions could be dealt with by Publicity'.<sup>3</sup> Questioned on the brand-new television programme *Highlight*, the scriptwriters replied, 'You feel badly about the death of Grace Archer. What do you think we feel? But why blame us? Do people blame Shakespeare for the death of Desdemona?'

Initially, the controversy swamped the publicity, for it was the BBC, not ITV—or the scriptwriters—which was widely blamed for Grace's death. Hostility to the Corporation did not, however, imply that the programme would lose its popularity. The period of mourning soon passed, and listeners quickly attuned themselves to Dan Archer's own message that 'life must go on'.<sup>4</sup> Paradoxically, given the special circumstances of 22 September, the start of commercial television, there was 'a

<sup>1</sup> \*Pelletier to Morris, 11 May 1955; Pelletier to Baseley, 21 June 1955. Cf. *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 Sept. 1955, which quoted the scriptwriters as saying that they wished to keep the programme 'realistic'. 'Normal families have deaths and other tragedies. Why not the Archers?'

<sup>2</sup> \*The phrase 'greater validity' was used in a memorandum written by J. A. Camacho, Chief Assistant, Light Programme, in September 1955 and designed to assist members of the Corporation in answering outside inquiries. At the same time Grace's death was to be quick rather than long-drawn-out in order to be less harrowing to listeners. Nor, for the same reason, was the death to follow a 'common form of accident'.  
<sup>3</sup> \*Ibid.  
<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Sept. 1955.

little rush of requests', immediately after Grace's death, to surviving members of *The Archers'* cast to advertise a wide variety of products.<sup>1</sup> J. A. Camacho, who noted this, had no doubt that it had been right to 'kill' Grace, although he was uncertain in retrospect whether it had been wise to kill her on 22 September.<sup>2</sup>

Lines could easily become blurred in 1955, and whatever else might be said then and later about the relative power of sound and television, *The Star* could lump both together as 'insidiously immense' influences on public thinking and feeling. 'Radio is not "just another organ of communication"'. It is the permanent guest in the remotest homes able to hypnotize the host. And so easily, unless self-discipline and circumspection are at the controls, this guest can become a monster.'<sup>3</sup>

The idea of 'Sound' as 'a monster' was to survive not much longer than Grace Archer. That role was being reserved increasingly for Television, and 22 September was merely an incident on the way. For Harold Nicolson, who was far more active as a Sound broadcaster during this period than he ever had been in his life—both for Home and Overseas audiences—it seemed all too likely that Television would not only replace Sound but that it would 'abolish newspapers, cinemas, the stage and reading'. Television, indeed, was the '*deinotatos*, most powerful, force ever invented', as he expressed it;<sup>4</sup> and his view had apparently not been challenged by any of his fellow diners at a *Brains Trust* dinner at the House of Lords, held appropriately on 5 November 1953, a day which commemorates, not killings—there might have been many of these—but a plot. The fellow diners had included Lord Hailsham, Lord Samuel and Gilbert Harding.

This had been the month of the Government's White Paper on Television, and it was clear then that this particular distinguished *Brains Trust*, like the Government, was considering Television in very different terms from Sound. (The *Brains Trust* included, of course, two of the Government's main critics.) Haley had always done so. Sound was a medium of entertainment, information and education. Television, however, was certainly more than a new 'medium' to add to the rest. It was

<sup>1</sup> \*Camacho to Pelletier, 13 Oct. 1955.    <sup>2</sup> \*Ibid.    <sup>3</sup> *The Star*, 23 Sept. 1955.

<sup>4</sup> H. Nicolson, *The Later Years, 1945-1962* (ed. by N. Nicolson, 1962), p. 248.

a 'force' with dangerous powers of its own. Such a view contrasted sharply with the earliest attitudes towards Sound during the 1920s—the view that it was a 'toy' or a 'fad'.<sup>1</sup> In one sense, it seemed to matter less whether television was 'commercial' or not than that it gripped people not only through particular programmes, as *The Archers* on Sound, but through everything on the screen. Already ample evidence was being collected from across the Atlantic that, as Frank Stanton, President of CBS, put it, 'the strongest sustained attention' was being focused daily and nightly on television 'as it is focused on nothing else'.<sup>2</sup> Already, indeed, the idea was beginning to take shape that television might influence the world like a new twentieth-century religion, more powerful than earlier religions in that it could enter every home and absorb the attention of millions of viewers for an average of over six hours out of every twenty-four.

Not everyone in Britain looked at television in this light. It was in the pages of *The Tablet*, a weekly devoted to religion, that Christopher Hollis had directed attention (during the same month as Nicolson was writing the word *deinotatos* in his diary) to what he considered the illogicality of treating Sound and Television in different ways. Why should there be two policies? If the monopoly in Television had to be broken by the Government, why was it not necessary for the Government to break the monopoly in Sound?<sup>3</sup> Why treat the ear differently from the eye? At this stage no one replied that the two media were different as media in their activity and their effects, and there were few comments to this effect during the subsequent parliamentary debates.

There had been two main explanations of why the Government chose to deal differently with Television and Sound. For *The Economist*, the answer lay in politics. The Government had a commitment, an 'awkward' one, in relation to television alone.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this had been the shrewd decision on the part of the initial interests to concentrate solely on television, a

<sup>1</sup> See A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (1961), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in G. R. Garrison, *Television and Radio* (1956), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> C. Hollis, 'Ending the Monopoly in Television' in *The Tablet*, 21 Nov. 1953. Cf. the *National and English Review's* reference to 'this arbitrary distinction' implied in the Government's compromise. See also above, p. 409.

<sup>4</sup> *The Economist*, 21 Nov. 1953.

tactical decision of a political kind backed by if not initiated by Lord Woolton.<sup>1</sup> For others, however, the real answer lay in economics. Although few people foresaw a television bonanza in 1953 and 1954,<sup>2</sup> it was clear that the financial potential of advertising by Television—appealing to both eye and ear—was far greater than that of advertising through Sound. And plenty of American evidence was accumulating to identify television as ‘a natural selling medium’. In November 1953 itself, for example, the month of the White Paper, the Dow Chemical Company decided to use television to advertise Saranwrap, a consumer product that had been gathering dust on the grocery shelves for eight months. With television support, sales leapt ahead to 110,000 cases in January 1954, 169,000 cases in February and 600,000 by October.<sup>3</sup>

This was merely one example out of many. The National Broadcasting Company published a detailed study, *Strangers into Customers*, showing just what television could do—with children as well as adults.<sup>4</sup> And American experience pointed also to the conclusion that as television profits soared, the advertising income attracted by radio would go down. This was a far-sighted—and less controversial—proposition than Gresham’s Law.<sup>5</sup> It was fully accepted in Britain in February 1955, when the J. Walter Thompson Company decided to advise its advertisers to switch from Radio Luxembourg to British commercial television, and reorganized their staff with this in mind.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the reasons for the BBC maintaining its Sound monopoly and losing its Television monopoly—economic, political or in the broadest sense social and cultural—the Cor-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 416. <sup>2</sup> See above, p. 935. <sup>3</sup> *Advertising Age*, 29 March 1954.

<sup>4</sup> The study, published in 1955, dealt with the people of Fort Wayne, Indiana. It showed, *inter alia*, that ‘after TV people became more conscious of advertising; that they became more aware of brand names; that the number of customers for televised brand products increased; and, above all, that TV worked fast and continued working’. See also the mimeographed pamphlet produced by the same company on ‘Children’s Influence on Buying’ (17 Feb. 1955). Children often paid as much attention to commercials as to programmes; they remembered them and repeated them; nine out of ten children asked their mothers to buy a TV advertised product; and they played a big part in ‘brand switching’.

<sup>5</sup> By 1954 American network advertisers were spending \$320 million on Television and \$137,600,000 on Sound. Procter and Gamble headed both lists, both of which also included Lever Brothers, Colgate-Palmolive and Gillette (*Broadcasting-Telecasting*, 4 March 1955). <sup>6</sup> \**The Competitor*, no. 3, 26 Feb.-7 March 1955.

poration found itself in what remained a unique position in the autumn of 1955. It was still the unique provider of both Sound (for Home and Overseas) and Television. It still had to work out its own balances, therefore, as it had done since 1936, between the two Services, making calculations, as always, about relative programme costs and relative shares of total expenditure. The new ITA had no such double commitment, and for the time being at least most proponents of commercial Sound were silent.

In these circumstances, the BBC had no intention of abandoning Sound. 'Future of Sound and Television as complementary systems' had been the first heading in a note from Wellington, the Director of Home Sound Broadcasting, to Jacob in June 1953, and 'Degree of joint planning needed to achieve this end' had been one of the first sub-headings. Wellington was replying to a request from the Board of Management to look ahead beyond the end of the Television monopoly.<sup>1</sup> Jacob had made the same point when he met the Press later during the same month. 'It must not be thought that the spread of television will cause a stagnation of thought and action in Sound,' the Director-General had maintained, 'and there is ample provision in the plan [the BBC's Ten-Year Plan]<sup>2</sup> for improvement commensurate with the continuing size and importance of the Sound audience.'<sup>3</sup>

It was envisaged in the Ten-Year Plan that 'sooner or later' the time would come, 'with the growth of television audiences and a consequent shrinkage of audiences dependent on sound alone', when the Corporation might feel 'free to calculate that its obligations towards its various audiences could be met by a differently proportioned set of programmes in Sound only and in Sound and Vision'. The three 'separate but mutually complementary' Sound Services—Home, Light and Third—might have to give way then to two, it was recognized, at the same time as the single Television programme gave way to 'alternative' Programmes.<sup>4</sup> Yet this time had not yet come.

<sup>1</sup> \*Wellington to Jacob, 16 June 1953.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 981.

<sup>3</sup> \*\*Outline Statement on BBC Plans', 23 June 1953.

<sup>4</sup> \*\*The BBC's Ten-Year Plan', 30 Sept. 1953. Grisewood had made the same point in his important paper of 29 May 1953 (see above, p. 941). The Home/Light/Third pattern should be reviewed 'if only to convince ourselves that it is the best'.

Jacob admitted unequivocally on this occasion—a vantage point from which to review past and future—that the BBC's evidence to the Beveridge Committee had been 'couched in terms of Sound broadcasting alone' and was now out of date. Yet leaving on one side the intrinsic merits of Sound broadcasting as a medium of communication, the lesson of thirty years of experience of broadcasting held for Television also—'the needs of multiple audiences cannot be adequately met through one or even two Programmes'. Television could only begin to operate really effectively when it followed Sound in offering viewers a chance to choose and to discriminate and when it could appeal to a spectrum of different audiences.

At some date in the future, therefore, when the number of television licences equalled the number of sound licences, new questions would have to be answered. Might it not be right then to offer two Sound and two Television Programmes only? Would it be better to defer making such a change until the number of Sound licences was less than a third of the combined? On the day of judgement, should it be the Third Programme which should be chopped? (This was the first time this question had been asked openly by the Director-General.) Or should there be one single day-time programme on Sound to be followed by three in the evenings?

As far as Television was concerned, the advantage of alternative Programmes in the evening 'strongly outweighed' the idea of a single 'non-stop' Television Programme day and night. 'The great majority of the audience views for a relatively restricted period during the evening.' Whatever specific answers were given to any of the leading questions, it would be possible to 'cater satisfactorily for the majorities and minorities and maintain proper standards of public service broadcasting' only within 'the framework of two concurrent services'.<sup>1</sup>

The implications for Sound broadcasting of two BBC television channels, not one, were being assessed. Subsequently, BBC 'requirements' were notified in full to the Television Advisory Committee. Early in the following year—before the passing of the Television Act—it was stated specifically that any second television programme would be placed in Band IV (UHF), and the hope was expressed—there were no guarantees

<sup>1</sup> \*'The BBC's Ten-Year Plan', Sept. 1953.

—that the new Service would begin during the financial year 1957/58, along with ‘the development of means whereby more programmes can be produced in the Regions’.<sup>1</sup>

The end of the monopoly, however, changed the position in relation to both these matters. First, it meant that under the new system, management of a second television channel by the BBC would give a great programming advantage to the BBC over commercial television. Second, given the decision, not of the Government but of ITA, that commercial television was to be ‘regionalized’—with only one weekday programme contractor in each ‘region’ outside London—the commercial operators were given an advantage in regional television over the BBC. However many ‘Regional offerings’ the BBC might insert into the programmes of the one or two channels available to it, it would not, unlike the new companies, be able to foster Regional identification through television alone. It was seeking in 1954 and 1955 to complete its plan to provide Regions with outside broadcast and film facilities during the five years 1954–9 and to add to their original studio facilities.<sup>2</sup> Yet among the first new television companies, two were actually to be based—with all that this implied—in Manchester and Birmingham.

The arguments both for a second Television channel and for a Regional component in the BBC’s future pattern of television were derived as much from the experience of Sound—with echoes of the 1920s—as from a sense of the need to compete with the new programme-operating companies. Indeed, it was still the case in 1955 that in every discussion concerning policy the long experience of managing Sound influenced BBC attitudes more than any other single factor. And there remained a strong feeling that Sound needed to be protected. Thus, when the BBC listed its comments on the first draft of the Television Bill in March and April 1954, one of the leading questions was ‘Is the Postmaster-General satisfied that sound broadcasting, without vision accompaniment, is ruled out in the Bill?’ Sub-section (3) of Section 2, it was pointed out, gave powers to the ITA to do ‘such things as may properly arise out

<sup>1</sup> \*‘Television Development, Jan. 1954–March 1959’, 27 Jan. 1954. The same paper planned for colour demonstrations in 1956/7, their increase in 1957/8, and their further extension ‘when the new studios at Television Centre, all of which will be equipped for colour, become available at the beginning of 1959’.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 983.

of the other activities of the Authority'. 'Ought not sound broadcasting', the BBC asked, 'to be explicitly excluded?'<sup>1</sup>

Jacob was 'startled' in April 1954 to find that, while the Post Office was willing to stop the ITA dealing in sound broadcasting rights, its Solicitor thought that this was 'a legitimate type of business for the ITA to conduct'. 'We shall have to fight,' Jacob wrote, to prevent 'the Authority or one of its programme companies from trying to obtain the exclusive broadcasting rights in an event, not because they want to broadcast the event in sound themselves, but in order that they may sell the sound broadcasting rights abroad and perhaps charge an excessive fee to the BBC itself for these rights.'<sup>2</sup> In this connection also the moral seemed obvious. It would be better still if 'the Authority and its programme companies were debarred altogether from dealing in sound broadcasting rights which should remain entirely within the control of the BBC'.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not there was a clear recognition in Broadcasting House in September 1955 of the programming advantages to the BBC of having within its orbit both Sound and Television—and there was certainly less and less talk of 'joint planning' or of 'co-ordination of programmes'—there was no lack of determination to continue to develop Sound within the existing pattern of Home, Light and Third. When Wellington offered good wishes to the Television Service in July 1955 in 'its future competition with ITA' and on behalf of his colleagues in Sound expressed confidence in its prospects, he was at pains to add that 'with over nine million people still entirely dependent on Sound, there could be no question of a public service corporation failing to cater for this vast audience'.<sup>4</sup>

Early in October, with commercial television a *fait accompli*, the agenda of one of the first important special meetings to be called within the BBC after the event was 'a stock-taking about Sound broadcasting'.<sup>5</sup> Wellington's 'simple confession of faith'

<sup>1</sup> 'BBC Comments for Post Office Consideration', 25 March 1954.

<sup>2</sup> \*Note by Robbins, 22 April 1954. Jacob had been to the Post Office that morning, accompanied by Bottomley, Robbins and Geoffrey Cross, QC. The Post Office representatives were accompanied by a representative from the Parliamentary Draftsmen's Office.

<sup>3</sup> 'BBC Comments for Post Office Consideration', 25 March 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Sound Broadcasting Meeting, *Minutes*, 19 July 1955.

<sup>5</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 18 Oct. 1955.



in the future of Sound carried the meeting with him, although there was at least one person present who felt that he did not go far enough.<sup>1</sup> Wellington convinced most of those present when he stated as his 'considered opinion' that there would be 'no serious curtailment of sound broadcasting in the next five years'. There were warnings, however, from John Green, then Chief Assistant, Talks (Sound), and others that while viewers were becoming more adventurous, listeners were becoming more conservative, and Wellington himself talked of the dangers of 'self-sufficiency' and of 'lack of enterprise'. He might have had the special claims of the medium in mind when he added that 'it is time we re-thought the problem of day-time audiences'.<sup>2</sup>

At the top of the BBC's hierarchy, the Director-General, who had spent most of his energies during the previous two years in television campaigning, spoke in the same vein as Wellington during the autumn of 1955. His words have been recorded *verbatim*. 'Intense concentration on television in Parliament and the Press in the last year or two had led some people to imagine that sound broadcasting was disappearing from the map. Indeed, those engaged in sound broadcasting may have been wondering whether they would become a forgotten army, and whether in the intense struggle now taking place, they were going to be sacrificed in the demands for television. But no greater illusion could be fostered than that sound broadcasting was a spent force or was likely to become one in our time. The Corporation must be strong on both wings.'<sup>3</sup>

Jacob with his military metaphors was not simply concerned to raise morale.<sup>4</sup> His was the accepted orthodoxy of 1955. Yet his next two sentences were to point towards new territory. 'Transfers of people and of resources were bound to take place, and many of them would be from sound to television. That was

<sup>1</sup> D. G. Bridson, *Prospero and Ariel* (1971), p. 229. 'I pointed out', he said, 'that the coming of commercial television had completely changed the function not only of BBC television, but of BBC programmes as a whole. The factory would have to be re-jigged.'

<sup>2</sup> \*Report of a Meeting, 18 Oct. 1955.

<sup>3</sup> \*Notes for Liaison Meeting, 2 Nov. 1954.

<sup>4</sup> \*Wellington had used naval metaphors (see Bridson, *op. cit.*, p. 229). He had no intention of scrapping or retiring his battle fleet. 'Tactics might have to be adjusted, but his capital ships would continue at sea.' Bridson was unconvinced.

not surprising when it was remembered that originally sound broadcasting held the entire bank.'

The word 'originally' suggests long vistas stretching back to Reith and Savoy Hill. It was, in fact, over a period of less than ten years that the BBC policy-makers had been forced to acknowledge—willingly or grudgingly—that what they were now most in need of was not a new map of the future, but a new atlas.

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## APPENDIX

### Aide-Mémoire on Political Broadcasting

1. It is desirable that political broadcasts of a controversial character shall be resumed.

2. In view of their responsibilities for the care of the nation the Government should be able to use the wireless from time to time for Ministerial broadcasts which, for example, are purely factual, or explanatory of legislation or administrative policies approved by Parliament; or in the nature of appeals to the nation to co-operate in national policies, such as fuel economy or recruiting, which require the active participation of the public. Broadcasts on State occasions also come in the same category.

It will be incumbent on Ministers making such broadcasts to be as impartial as possible, and in the ordinary way there will be no question of a reply by the Opposition. Where, however, the Opposition think that a Government broadcast is controversial it will be open to them to take the matter up through the usual channels with a view to a reply.

- (i) As a reply if one is to be made should normally be within a very short period after the original broadcast, say three days, the BBC will be free to exercise its own judgment if no agreement is arrived at within that period.
- (ii) Replies under this paragraph will not be included in the number of broadcasts provided for under paragraph 4.
- (iii) Copies of the scripts of broadcasts under this paragraph shall be supplied to the leaders of each Party.
- (iv) All requests for Ministerial broadcasts under this paragraph shall be canalised through the Minister designated for this purpose—at present the Postmaster-General.

3. "Outside" broadcasts, e.g. of speeches at Party Conferences, which are in the nature of news items, shall carry no right of reply by the other side.

4. A limited number of controversial party political broadcasts shall be allocated to the various parties in accordance with their polls at the last General Election. The allocation shall be calculated on a yearly basis and the total number of such broadcasts shall be a matter for discussion between the parties and the BBC.
5. The Opposition parties shall have the right, subject to discussion through the usual channels, to choose the subjects for their own broadcasts. Either side will be free, if it wishes, to use one of its quota for the purpose of replying to a previous broadcast, but it will be under no necessity to do so. There will, of course, be no obligation on a party to use its whole quota.
6. (i) Paragraphs 4 and 5 relate to controversial party political broadcasts on issues of major policy on behalf of the leading political Parties. For the ensuing year the total number, excluding Budget broadcasts, shall be 12—divided as to Government 6, Conservative Opposition 5, Liberal Opposition 1.  
Reasonable notice will be given to the BBC.
- (ii) The BBC reserve the right, after consultation with the party leaders, to invite to the microphone a member of either House of outstanding national eminence who may have become detached from any party.
- (iii) Apart from these limited broadcasts on major policy the BBC are free to invite members of either House to take part in controversial broadcasts of a round table character in which political questions are dealt with, provided two or more persons representing different sides take part in the broadcasts.
- (iv) No broadcasts arranged by the BBC other than the normal reporting of Parliamentary proceedings are to take place on any question while it is the subject of legislation in either House.
7. Where any dispute arises an effort shall be made to settle it through the usual channels. Where this is not possible, the BBC will have to decide the matter on its own responsibility.
8. These arrangements shall be reviewed after a year, or earlier if any party to the conference so desires.

6th February, 1947

Revised July, 1948

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