

A Long-Distance Interview

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front of a platform where the Speaker and the secretaries are seated. There are usually two microphones in each House when debates are broadcast, one by the Speaker and the other by the tribune.

Q: Did political broadcasting go on unchanged and uninterrupted during the war?

A: Yes.

Q: When did broadcasts from the Althing begin? Have changes been made in the technique since the experiment first began, or do your arrangements still stand as they did in the first place? Have any proposed changes been held up by the war? Are any further experiments proposed for the future?

A: Broadcasts from the Althing began in the very first years of broadcast activities. No substantial changes have been made since the beginning, no proposed changes have been held up by the war nor are any new changes or experiments proposed as yet.

Control is Indirect

Q: Is the Ríkisutvarpid subject to direct control from the Ministry of Education? Mr. Driscoll says in one sentence that it is an "independent organisation" and also "under the control of the Ministry of Education." Does policy tend to alter substantially as power shifts from party to party in the Althing? Or do the members of the Programme Council act as a cushion between the service and the politicians?

A: The Programme Council consists of five men who are elected by Althing (proportional representation). The Minister of Education appoints the

chairman among the elected members and hence the chairman usually is of the same political party as the Minister. Some alterations may take place as power shifts in the Althing, but as a rule the Programme Council acts as a cushion between the Service and the politicians. The News Bureau and the Advertisement Department are under the management of the General Director. He is appointed by the Ministry of Education and must have the Ministry's sanction to engagement of employees and all pecuniary matters.

State Sales Monopoly

In the booklet "Broadcast in Iceland" and a supplement which Mr. Thorbergsson has sent us there are several other points about Iceland's Service that have some interest for us in New Zealand. (The booklet, incidentally, seems to have been produced about 1943, possibly for the information of the occupying Americans, and the supplement is dated October 12, 1945.)

When the Service was established in 1930 there were only about 450 receiving sets in the country (population 118,000) of about 100 different trademarks. Importation was haphazard, and it soon became apparent that spare parts for all these makes of receiver would be hard to supply, and there could be no efficient repair service, so a sales monopoly on radio receivers was decided by law. Profits from this monopoly go to the State Broadcast Service, spare parts are obtainable, and the repair service operated by the Corporation is efficient. Young men from various parts of the country were taught repair work, and repair tours were arranged. The Corporation has also subsidised battery-charging units in rural districts.

The result of all this State assistance to listeners is that in 13 years the number of receivers rose from 450 to 28,000, or 22 per cent of the population. They are expected to reach 30,000 when imports begin again.

The Corporation has its office in Reykjavik. There are three transmitters, a powerful long-wave station at Reykjavik (100 kilowatts) whose programmes are relayed on medium wave from Eider, and a short-wave station at Reykjavik.

Neutral but Sovereign

Here is Mr. Thorbergsson's report on the News Service (from the supplement to his booklet):

"When the Broadcast Corporation was established the local newspapers had a news bureau of their own, which had reporters in most parts of the country. At first the Broadcast Corporation had co-operation with this bureau, but soon found that independence in this as well as in other respects was essential.

"The political struggle has always been rather harsh here in Iceland as in most countries of small population, and the news from the political parties was therefore usually not suitable for broadcasting. The law pertaining to the Iceland State Broadcast Service decides that the Service shall maintain strict neutrality towards all political parties, public viewpoints, enterprises, and private men.

"It has not been easy to maintain this rule and to avoid criticism from the

disputing parties. The News Service and the management of the Broadcasting Corporation are sovereign, i.e. they decide what news and advertisement are fit for broadcast publishing and even the Government of the country must abide by their decisions."

Advertising

Communications are still very difficult in Iceland. There are no railways, and even in summer some remote districts have no communication except by sea, so the radio is much used to break down this isolation. Broadcast advertisements. Mr. Thorbergsson says, "enjoy ever-increasing popularity," and they occupy 5.6 per cent of all broadcast time. The advertising revenues in 1944 were about one-third of the Corporation's total revenue. The licence fee is 60 kronur a year at present, and is to go up to 100 kronur to pay for a new broadcast-house now being planned. There are about 15 kronur to the New Zealand £.

There are about 2,400 broadcast hours annually, or 46 hours a week, and the programmes are similar to those of other Scandinavian countries. Four languages are taught: Icelandic, Danish, English and German. One or two talks or a reading are daily features, and radio plays are broadcast once a week most of the year. The Corporation maintains a small orchestra and choir, and local singers and instrumentalists are engaged.

The Icelanders have become very dependent on their broadcast service by now. Most of them depend on the sea for their sustenance either from merchant ships or fishing boats, and radio has kept them all in closer touch than was possible before, Mr. Thorbergsson says. It has "bridged great distances, increased the knowledge and education of the most isolated inhabitants and urged cultural progress."

Times Change

Mr. Thorbergsson betrays no feeling of nostalgia in his final paragraph:

"From early times it has been a national custom in Iceland that during the darkest winter days the families on the farms and in the rural parts of the country would gather in their living quarters with their handwork, while someone would read aloud to them from the Sagas or some other literature of interest. This custom is abating somewhat, due to altered conditions, but the radio is now providing entertainment and education on broader lines with the aim of increasing the happiness and independence of each home and to strengthen the unity of all Icelanders into one national family, sounder and happier than ever before."

AS an example of the English sporting spirit in war-time the following notice, dated September, 1940, was quoted in a recent BBC talk: "At an emergency meeting of the Committee of the Banstead Downs Golf Club held to consider questions arising from enemy action, the following two temporary rules were passed: 1. Any ball coming to rest in a bomb-crater may be picked up and dropped, not nearer the hole and in a direct line with the hole, without penalty; 2. Ground littered with bomb-debris may be treated as ground under repair."



The care of the Eyes in the Home

Here are a few simple hints that will help keep your eyes healthy and comfortable.

- (1) Sleep with the window well open. Fresh air benefits the eyes.
- (2) Don't read facing or backing the window. Arrange if possible, for the light to come over your left shoulder.
- (3) Never rub the eye if you have a piece of dirt in it, or if you have a sty or boil. Always bathe the eye and if the trouble persists, consult a doctor.
- (4) Don't read in bright sunlight or twilight.
- (5) If you have the slightest doubt as to the efficiency of your sight, consult a Qualified Practitioner at once.

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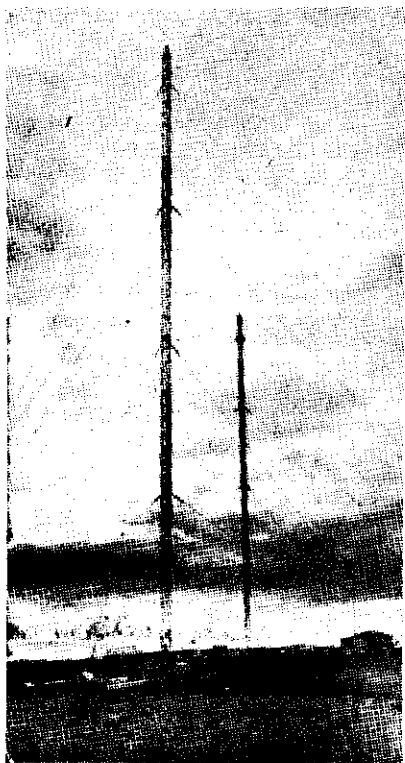
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AERIAL masts of the Reykjavik L.W. transmitter, against a lowering Icelandic sky