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"Did you know that Iceland's licence fee is £4 and going up to £6 shortly?"

"I didn't—and I'm glad to hear it. That's more like a proper price."

"Do you find you can pay high enough fees to bring the best artists from America and Europe to broadcast—can you in general pay enough to get good standards?"

"In theory we can pay as much as we like. We're not subject to Government audit, and the corporation can pay what it feels it ought to pay. An income of £600,000 a year, spread over six programmes and all the technical side, is not much. We have about 380,000 licence-holders. Actually the licence fee is graded according to distance from one of the three regional stations—the average fee works out at about 28/4 to us."

"Do your stations run continually all day?"

"No. They come on at 6.30 a.m. and go to 8.30. They start with physical exercises which are very popular, market reports, and popular music—no vocal music at that time, and no dance music—mostly 'middlebrow music.' Between 10.0 a.m. and 3.0 p.m. there are the morning prayer and hymn, light music, schools broadcasts, talks to women, and the news from London. Then there's a break between 3.0 and 4.0 p.m. and the stations come on again with miscellaneous entertainment. The more serious work begins at 6.0. We have the London News then, and after that the main programme for the day, with music, plays, features and so on."

"Do you have the Big Ben chimes and silent prayer at 9.0 p.m.?"

"No. We haven't had that at all. But in Capetown, all through the Great War and right through this one, they had a two-minute silence at noon every day. It has a very dramatic effect—after the firing of the time-guns which has given the noon signal to Capetown for many years—everything stops, trams and so on. It is so quiet that suddenly you can hear a horse champing its bit away down the street."

"What about your Parliamentary broadcasts—will there be a language difficulty to be considered there? Are the debates conducted in English or Afrikaans?"

"They tend to become more and more Afrikaans. A member has the option of using either language and a good many of the English-speaking ones talk in Afrikaans."

Talks and Discussions

"Have you any means of finding out what your listeners want?"

"Listener research? No, we have no actual scheme for doing that."

"Brains Trusts? Controversial discussions?"

"Yes. We have frank discussions on the air—not on political matters or on religion. Religious services are broadcast as they are here, but we don't have arguments about the churches."

"Foreign affairs?"

"Yes. We have those. They are very popular. We have never broadcast election speeches yet. I feel we should."

"Are your announcers named? Do you build up 'radio personalities'?"

"No. But producers of features are named, and of course authors of scripts. And commentators are named when we do outside broadcasts."

"Do you review books, and films?"

"Books, but not films. You can't review films on the air. We give previews, with highlights from films that are coming."

"Isn't that a form of advertising?"

"It is advertising—very good advertising. But it's also entertainment."

Orchestral Music

"Do you find it necessary to support orchestral music, or do the cities maintain orchestras of their own accord?"

"We employ an orchestra of about 50 in Johannesburg, which is made available to the municipality for orchestral seasons in the City Hall. In Durban and Capetown we use the local municipal orchestras and we have our own smaller orchestras of about 20 players each as well."

"Television?"

"I'm very interested in it, but I think we're a long way away from the time when television will be used by the smaller countries. It seems certain to me that the BBC's present system is a temporary one—a gallant determination to provide a service for the existing receivers, and to enable the BBC to learn something from running it. But I feel that you and we must wait till the bigger countries have finished making their experiments. In this and other ways things are just 'cooking' at the moment, and we're waiting for results."

"Outside broadcasts?"

"Yes, we do quite a number of outside broadcasts. We've done them from Victoria Falls, and Cape Point, and so on. And sports of course. But we don't have nearly as much sport on the air as you do. We do the biggest races of the year, but only the single race, not the whole meeting."

"Is there any special service for the natives?"

"As a matter of fact we are considering a scheme for them now—a re-diffusion scheme. With that, you don't have to have a set. It's cheap. All you have is a wire, like an ordinary telephone wire, and a speaker and a switch. We may be able to do something on these lines."

"And one last question—you haven't told us anything about yourself."

In It From the Start

"Well, I was a musician back in 1921, a clarinettist. And I broadcast as an amateur in South Africa when transmitters were being operated by people who were inspired by the 2LO example—transmitters optimistically rated on their input power, you know, so that they were described as 6 kilowatt stations when there was only about 600 watts coming out of the aerial. Eventually there were three of these stations, one each in Capetown, Johannesburg, and Durban, and then they were consolidated as one company under I. Schlesinger, the big man in the theatrical world in South Africa, and I became general manager of this company in 1934. In 1936, on the recommendation of Sir John Reith (now Lord Reith), who was brought out by the Government to advise, the company was handed over

to a public Corporation, and I remained as Director. Since then I've seen broadcasting in all the Dominions except Canada—and we've incorporated what we feel are the best things from them all, or are doing so. But like all changes in broadcasting, we've made them all slowly; that's one lesson all broadcasters have learnt, not to try to change things too quickly."

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