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SCIENCE DONE INTO **ENGLISH**

Aim of the BBC's Reith Lectures

WHEN a scientist prepares a a thoroughly reliable authority; that goes talk for broadcasting about nuclear fission or some other highly specialised subject, his terms of explanation are sometimes incomprehensible to the lay listener, because he uses the technical language peculiar to his field of research. But the BBC is now on the point of getting past this difficulty through what will be known as the Reith Lectures, named after Lord Reith, its first Director-General. Neil Hutchison, BBC representative in the Pacific area, explained this to The Listener in an interview last week during a visit to discuss with the NZBS his general liaison work between the BBC and the broadcasting authorities in Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Hutchison was appointed to his Pacific area job two years ago, following on many years' service with the BBC



Spencer Digby photograph NEIL HUTCHISON Striving for truth builds strength of will

in London. His work consists of using his headquarters in Sydney as a twoway clearing house of information, organising programmes for the BBC from the ABC and the NZBS, and keeping London informed of radio development in this part of the world.

"For the Reith Lectures," he said, "the BBC will commission an economist, a scientist, philosopher, mathematician, or world authority in some other subject to carry out a line of research. He will be given a year to do the work and then he will present his findings to the public in from four to seven talks in the BBC's Third Programme. Every year a different specialist will be selected.

"This scheme should have good results. The specialist will have to abandon his esoteric line of argument and express himself in a way understandable by the normal educated man. Incidentally it will, rescue the scientist from the narrowness of his own special department. Generally speaking, there are two essentials in the construction of a good radio talk. First, the speaker must be

without saying. Secondly, he must have complete confidence in the script editor and producer, who also is an expert in his own medium. Thus it is the speaker's job to give the knowledge he has collected and the radio man's job to present an interpretation comprehensible to the public. Each recognises the supremacy of the other in his own line."

Leadership in Broadcastina

Asked, as a BBC expert, what he thought of the NZBS programmes, Mr. Hutchison said he gathered that the NZBS policy in general was precisely the same as that of the BBC. "We conceive our duties under Royal Charter to be to satisfy the public demand, but also to give a lead by raising the standards of taste and appreciation, so that what is demanded becomes progressively better. The principle of leadership in broadcasting consists, I think, in being just a little ahead of your listeners, yet not so far in advance as to be out of touch. We do, I believe, give a little more in terms of programme space to minorities than is their strict entitlement in terms of numbers. But that is in line with British democracy. You, here, are obviously pursuing exactly the same policy.

"It seems to me that you are in a very happy position in many ways because you may have sometimes to improvise and make use of comparatively slender resources. The very fact that you are put to those strains often leads to a spontaneity, brightness and vitality of performance-factors which are sometimes missing in organisations which are older and more formalised."

We asked Mr. Hutchison if the BBC had cut down its broadcasts in foreign languages after the war.

"No," he said. "At the end of the war we were broadcasting in 47 languages; now there are 48, Russian having been added. Of these, 24 are broadcast to people in Europe and 24 to countries outside Europe.

"Can you make an estimate of the numbers of listeners?"

"A recent survey in France showed a listening public to the BBC of 7,000,000, and in the British, American and French zones of Germany 4,000,000. In a sense our foreign language broadcasts are of most value to countries behind the iron curtain, for our news broadcasts are objective."

"Antiseptic Truth"

"Does the BBC use any form of , propaganda in foreign broadcasts?"

"Our policy is not at all propagandist, but we make an effort to put through the world's ether a continuous unemphasised antiseptic flow of truth. We can't always possess the whole truth, but in constant striving for it we gain some strength of will."

Broadcasts of news bulletins were not designed to contribute to the overthrow of this or that Government, or to please or displease any particular "ology" or "ism," said Mr. Hutchison. "We do not consider integrity lies that way. Our

(continued on next page)