



HISTORY OF THE HOUSE

LISTENERS are soon to hear seven feature programmes (prepared by the BBC) recording important chapters in the life of the British Parliament. *Four Centuries of Parliament* is the title. The series will take in the period from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to Parliament as it is to-day. Specialists in the study of the various periods wrote the scripts and technical advice was given by Strathearn Gordon who is in the office of the Clerk to the House of Commons. The series was produced by Robert Gittings and the recordings listeners will hear were made by the BBC Transcription Service at the time of transmission to the BBC's Home listeners.

The first programme, written by J. Scupham, tells of Parliament's successful stand for its liberties when Elizabeth was queen. Scupham, assistant head of the BBC's Schools Broadcasting Department, had given much time to broadcasts of an educational nature before he took up his present appointment. The struggle between Charles I. and the Long Parliament is brought to life again in the second programme, called "King Against Parliament." The writer of this episode is C. V. Wedgwood, assistant editor of the review *Time and Tide*, and a distinguished woman historian. The 17th Century is her speciality; she wrote her first book on the period, *Stratford*, when she was only 23 years of age. She has been working recently on a book about the war between King and Parliament.

Days of the Orators

Parliament and George III.'s Empire is the theme of the third programme. It deals with a period of the great Parliamentary orators, Burke and Pitt notable among them, and recalls a critical time in the relationships of America and India with England. This script was written by Dr. David Thomson, a history don at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. To his interest in 18th Century history he adds a specialised knowledge of modern French politics.

The fight for the reform of Parliament embodied in the Great Reform Bill of 1832 was bitter, waged with every device known to parliamentary procedure.

This struggle is portrayed in the fourth programme by a young English historian, A. P. Pearce (P. for Philippa), who has already made a name for herself as an expert on the early 19th Century. She is a scriptwriter and producer in the BBC Schools Broadcasting Department.

The fifth episode covers the middle period of the 19th Century, when, as one historian put it, "British politics was simply Disraeli versus Gladstone." Those were the days when a packed House of Commons listened to exchanges that were to go down to history as the epigrammatic, volatile "Dizzy" clashed with the ponderous Gladstone. The programme was compiled by Hugh Ross Williamson who has written historical books and plays, including a play about Mr. Gladstone. Williamson has had a rather unusual career. After working for years as editor of various periodicals, he took Holy Orders in 1943. He still writes extensively on historical subjects.

War and Franchise

The last years before the outbreak of the first world war, a time when the growing menace of Germany led to an outcry for more dreadnoughts, and the women of Britain were raising another outcry for the vote, open the sixth programme. The author of this script is D. C. Somervell, who for many years has been on the staff of Tonbridge School of which, incidentally, he recently wrote a history. He has published several historical works, including *The Life and Times of George V.*

The series will close with a look at Parliament as it is to-day, this episode coming from Strathearn Gordon. While writing this script he consulted members of all parties to make sure that it gave a true picture. Gittings, the producer, is a historian and poet and for seven years was a history don at Jesus College, Cambridge. He had been writing broadcast scripts for eight years before joining the BBC as a scriptwriter and producer. Recently he has been specialising in verse plays for the Third Programme.

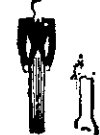
This series of programmes will be heard first from 2YA, beginning on Sunday, June 6, at 3.30 p.m., and from other National stations later.

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