

A NEW BROOM AT THE BBC

A FEW weeks ago, when renewal of the BBC's Government Charter came under discussion in England, listeners spoke up and said they thought it was time something should be done about the administration of the BBC. And according to *Time*, the BBC "countered with what amounted to a top-drawer shake-up."

English radio listeners (there are more than nine million set-owners), pay 10/- a year in licence fees. For their money they get the product that the *New Statesman and Nation* has called "the usual British compromise between incompatibles."

Constitutionally attached to the office of the Minister of Information by a clause described by critics as "so elastic that the Minister can always disclaim control of it," the BBC is not directly controlled by the Government, except in times of emergency.

Theoretically, it is not a private monopoly either, but a public corporation chartered by Parliament. It can, therefore, avoid direct pressure by the public, and at the same time keep itself free from the commercialisation of private monopolies. And *Time's* opinion is that "the result of this compromise between white and black is occasionally brilliant, usually a monotonous grey."

The Ministry of Information (Brendan Bracken), recently brought the question up in the House of Commons, and invited "a complete examination of the whole set-up of the BBC" before a renewal of its Charter. The House adjourned without committing itself, but the *Economist* took up Bracken's remarks:

Noted Journalist Appointed As Editor-In-Chief



W. J. HALEY
"A top-drawer shake-up?"

"The great vice of the BBC is timidity," said *The Economist*. "The BBC is a monopoly, but it is in the opposite position to the traditional monopolist. It cannot defy the public; just because it is fair game for every-

body, it cannot afford to offend anyone. . . .

"If the test of a broadcasting system is the excellence of its programme, the prescription should be not more public control, but less. . . . To continue with the present system would be to condemn broadcasting to the fate that would have attended the Press if, from its birth, it had been nationalised, or the stage if there had never been more than two or three state theatres, or art if the only commissions were those to be obtained from public bodies. There will be no excellence without competition. . . . The virtues of American broadcasting are not due to its advertising sponsorship . . . so much as to the fact of competition. . . ."

New Job—New Man

This criticism had the support of a good many listeners, who nevertheless had given up hope of seeing anything drastic done until after the war. To their surprise, a new office was created—that of Editor-in-Chief of the BBC, and one of England's best journalists was appointed to fill it.

William John Haley, who was given the job, is a joint managing director of the *Manchester Guardian* and *Evening News*, and a director of Reuters News Agency. Readers from Wales to the Cumberland district (says *Time*), have "squirmed under the erudite, fervently democratic editorialising of Haley, but they have continued to read him. He fought the Munich appeasement harder than any other journalist in England. His stubborn stand ultimately resulted in a vastly increased circulation. He has been loudly in favour of giving the public all the war news 'however unpalatable,' which does not aid the enemy."

WORK FOR ALL

(continued from previous page)

directing manpower and other sources, to that objective. Of course I'm not suggesting that we should reproduce in peace all the conditions of war. The rationing of food, clothing, and other good things, is the result of our having to devote so much energy to making bad things for the enemy instead of making good things for ourselves. It needn't continue after peace has become so settled that we can replace shortage by plenty.

Restrictions on Freedom

Again, the restriction on freedom—such as taking or leaving jobs, the black-out, the separation of families, the overcrowding, the waste and waiting about for things to happen in war—all those have no relevance to our problem, and needn't continue once peace is established. Nor do we want to spend money in peace on the same things as in war, because our needs are different. Again, in war we are taxed heavily, and urge individuals to save because most of the spending has to be done by the State. In peace in a free country, spending can be done much more by the individual and less by the State. It's what the State and the individual together spend that has to add up to giving full employment.

Finally, one doesn't want just employment—but productive employment. That

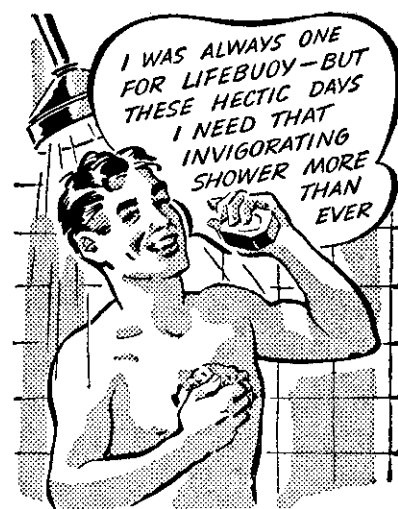
requires not merely spending, but wise spending. That raises many difficult technical problems in the management of money to take the middle course between deflation and inflation. We have to solve all those technical problems and many more. But why shouldn't we? Peace and war, thank goodness, are different in many ways, but we want peace to be much more than having no mass unemployment. But to most of us, one main lesson of the war is relevant: that we get food and employment by making a list of needs in order of priority, and by seeing that there is enough purchasing power to meet them. That lesson is relevant because the needs of peace, though they are different from those of war, are unlimited.

Private and National Interest

Now the second lesson from war: and it is hardly less important. In war we have been able to do tremendous things in production as well as in fighting, because we have subordinated private interest to the national interest. We haven't insisted on working in the places we wanted or in the jobs we were used to, and we haven't objected to new ways of working or training. We've relaxed many customs and rules which might have prevented the full use of manpower. We've been ready to do what was wanted, whether we've been used to it before or not. We've been willing to let anyone able to do work that was wanted, come in to do it

on fair terms, whether he'd been working at that trade before or not. All that was possible because we were not afraid of unemployment. It has also been one of the things that has made it possible to have no unemployment. The needs of peace are as unlimited as those of war, but they are different. We're not in sight yet of having all the good things for everybody that we'd like in Britain. Even then, when we do get all the material good things we'd like, well, we'll want more leisure. Leisure for spiritual things—for the pleasures of the mind, for study, travel, recreation.

If we're to meet the needs of peace, and use our manpower in meeting them instead of wasting it in unemployment, we must be ready for change—adventurous, not hide-bound. Full employment, always more vacant jobs than men looking for jobs. There's a thing worth having! Don't you think so? Like everything else worth having, full employment has its price. We're going all out now in war for one objective: to keep Britain free, and to make the world free of Hitler. For peace I suggest that we should take for our objective making Britain as free as is humanly possible of the five giant evils; of *want*; of *disease*; of *ignorance*; of *squalor*, by which I mean the dirt, congestion, bad housing and discomfort which comes from the unplanned growth of cities; and *idleness*, by which I mean idleness enforced by mass unemployment.



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