

Broadcasting and the Peace of Nations

IN this article Vernon Bartlett, writing to the "Radio Times," throws a new light on the value of broadcasting. His views are those of one who has had experience of war and national animosity, and for that reason are worth careful consideration.

IN my opinion, it could stop it. The reasons for this belief are simple and straightforward. You can understand a war breaking out in a moment

of international bad temper, but it cannot continue without deliberate efforts to keep the war feeling alive by letting your own people know one set of facts and your enemy another.

You depend upon ignorance, because ignorance breeds fear of the unknown, and fear is the mainstay of war. De-

liberately you exaggerate your own gentler characteristics, and the inhumanity of your enemy.

Eavesdropping on the Enemy.

BUT, as I see it, broadcasting would change all this. The suppression of the other man's point of view would surely become impossible. Those of us who, during the last war, had the opportunity of reading neutral or enemy newspapers, will remember how frequently versions of the same incident varied, and how subtle the explanations of a setback could be when the blunt and unpalatable truth could be suppressed.

This art of deception was carried to extraordinary lengths. In a certain hotel in Berne which housed British and German diplomatic missions, it used to be quite the thing for the British or the Germans, as the case might be, at critical moments of the war, to drink champagne and to put up a great show of rejoicing, in the hope of persuading their enemies at the other end of the restaurant that all was going well, and according to plan.

BUT if every possessor of a valve set could listen day by day to the enemy's version of the progress of the war, censorship would become futile, and I do not believe that any war could last.

Some little sentimental song broadcast from a music hall in the enemy's capital would so easily undo efforts of weeks to prove that one's opponents must be brought to their knees because they and their wives and children had no decent human feelings, but were

bloodthirsty brutes who were dangerous to mankind. And it would be more difficult to abolish all valve sets in another war than it would have been to suppress every newspaper in the last war.

And now, what can broadcasting do for world peace? I think this is a question that needs to be answered in two different ways, just as the work of the League of Nations is divided into two categories. There is the general development of international co-operation, which, by helping countries to understand each other, quite definitely makes war less probable; and there is the perfecting of the machinery which the League Council can use to prevent a sudden quarrel from developing into a war.

THE best example of this machinery at work is the Greco-Bulgarian dispute of October, 1925, when rumour so much exaggerated a chance quarrel between a Greek and a Bulgarian sentry on the mountain frontier between the two countries that the report which reached Athens asserted the Bulgarians were attacking in force, and the Greek army promptly marched its troops several miles into Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian appeal for aid was received by the League of Nations on October 23, and a special meeting of the Council was summoned immediately. Such decisive action was taken that by October 29 all troops had been withdrawn behind their own frontiers and Greece paid a handsome indemnity to Bulgaria for the damage done by her soldiers.

A Radio Station for the League?

ALREADY broadcasting has so developed that, were a similar incident to arise to-morrow, people would be much less likely to believe (Concluded on page 10.)

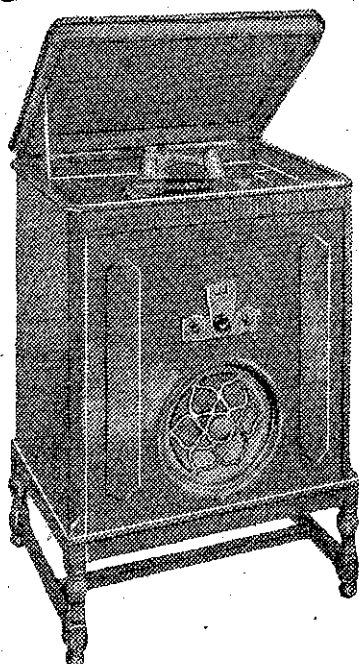
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