

The Opposition to Radio-vision

Spirited Attack Brings Trial from B.B.C.

THE latest number of "Television" has come to hand from England. In it is an article that has done more in the cause of radio-vision in England than has any other. It is the last spirited attack of the supporters of the Baird system against the B.B.C. prior to their assent to radio-vision broadcasts. Shortly after the publication of this article we received the cable news that the B.B.C. had given its consent to Baird to broadcast from the corporation's stations. As yet the science is in its infancy and by no means ready for the home. Yet the decision marks a very important move in the right direction.

A SUMMARY of the article follows: The attitude of the B.B.C. towards radio-vision is to a large extent determined probably by their reluctance to commit themselves in any possible way by affording assistance to its development. The point can be illustrated by a simple parable. Suppose that the greater proportion of the people of the world were blind. The result would be that all places of entertainment would provide programmes appealing only to the sense of hearing. Theatres or music halls would have no scenery, and actors and actresses no "make-up" or wardrobes because no one could see them. Plays would be performed on bare stages by actors in ordinary day dress, and a blind audience would derive its full entertainment by listening only.

Let us then suppose some inventor to devise a kind of spectacles or opera glass which would enable this sightless audience to see to some extent, even if in its initial form only perhaps one actor or actress could be observed at a time. The result would be to create a demand for something to "see" as well as "hear," and thus the management of these places of amusement would be obliged to provide for this new innovation, at great additional expense to themselves. Hence their natural tendency would be to discourage the adoption of this device in every way, and to give no opportunity for its exploitations.

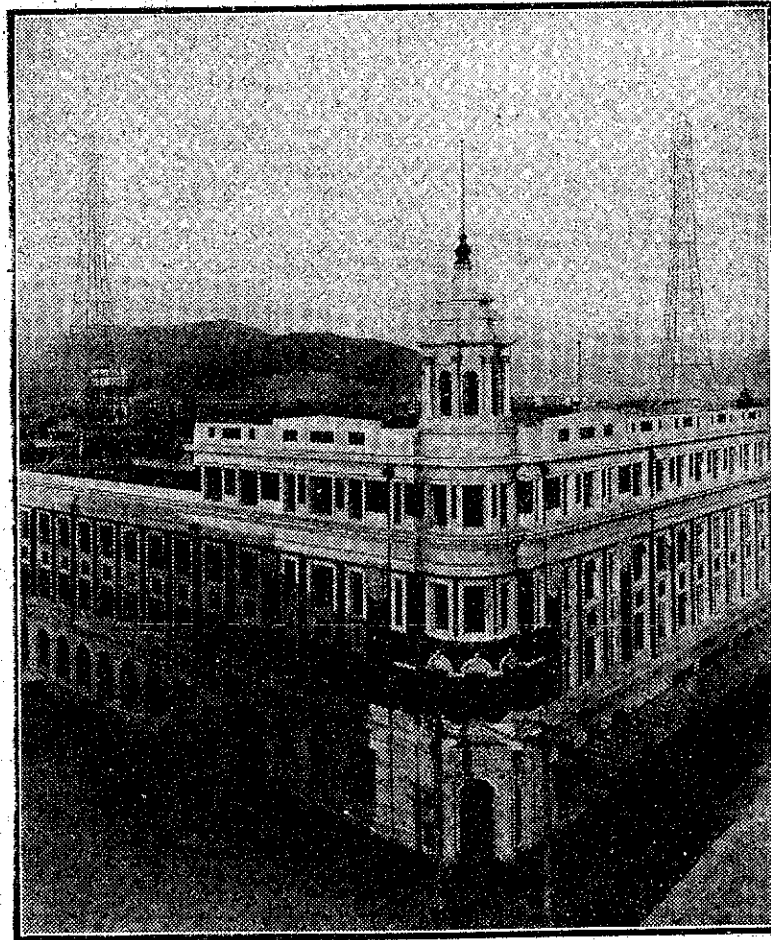
All experience shows, however, that when a new line of invention has been opened by the discovery of some principle or fact, its development is only a matter of time and money. No obstruction can stop the progress of an invention if it provides for a real demand by a really new means.

As an example, let us take the development of wireless. In the first experimental stages of its discovery, when Marconi eventually succeeded in effecting wireless telegraphy across the English Channel, even eminent scientific men declared it to be useless for any serious purpose. It is well-known how these predictions have been falsified by history. There is one thing

that hindrance in any form can do, and that is to place the country concerned at the tail instead of at the head of the march of progress, and to force her ultimately to have to buy from other nations that which, in more favourable circumstances, she would have been able to sell to them.

The ultimate universal adoption of radio-vision is inevitable, and the B.B.C.'s attitude of reluctance to do

The British Broadcasting Corporation in the parable mentioned before are in the position of the management of an enormous music-hall for the blind. All who pay their annual license fee can enter this hall and hear all that is going on, but they can see nothing. Then along comes a troublesome inventor, Mr. Baird, and shows the management a kind of opera glass which will enable the blind members



The home of the new 4YA station. This is situated in the "Evening Star" Company's Building, Stuart Street, Dunedin.

anything in the matter will only retard English developments in this direction.

Another important argument in the favour of the immediate fostering of radiovision is the consequent development of a new industry, thus alleviating the serious conditions of unemployment at present existing in England. Unemployment cannot be permanently cured by doles or artificial and temporary expedients such as road-making, but every new practical technical invention is a basis for fresh employment. The public themselves, and no official body, are the final court of appeal to decide whether a new appliance will prove universally popular, and if no fair opportunity is provided for them to do this, matters are at a deadlock.

of this audience to see the performers, at first perhaps only one at a time. The management, however, would probably reply that they have always done their best to amuse and instruct their audiences by ear, and they do not want to encourage them to ask to "see" as well.

Suppose, they continue, we did do it. Then in all probability they would one day have to equip radiovision studios so that singers and lecturers might be seen as well as heard, and all this would mean outlay and more elaboration. Moreover, the performers might not like it, and it would lead to the same kind of difficulty as encountered in the "talkies." There, formerly, ability to act and good looks were the sole requirements. Now a good voice is re-

quired as well. The management would probably add that they would have to meet a demand for handsome announcers and pretty singers.

Probably something of this nature is floating vaguely through the minds of the B.B.C. management, and inducing them to oppose the introduction of radiovision into their programmes. Radiovision is not yet perfect by a long way, but the problem is sufficiently attractive to attract the attentions of some of the leading research workers in the world, and the ultimate success of their efforts is practically assured. Is an initial and fundamental invention made in Great Britain, to be left for more progressive countries to exploit and obtain the resulting benefit?

The chief objection is that the official mind is very slow in taking in new ideas, and very reluctant to take risks or launch out on new departures. Hence, nationalisation acts as a brake on inventive progress, because no inventor can obtain a proper trial of his invention unless he can break through the adamant wall of official prejudice or lethargy. The only power which will do this is Public Opinion, and it is the public who must demand a fair trial for this new art.

It is not likely that people will purchase radiovision receivers unless there is a fair prospect of being able to receive something. The only result of blocking the way for the development of television in Great Britain will be to foster it elsewhere, and it is impossible to say at present what the ultimate result of such a policy would be.

Someone once said that it requires a surgical operation to make a Scotchman see a joke. This is certainly not true, but it seems as if something of the kind is required to make any public utility corporation, which has settled down to a certain line of work, deviate from it and develop new ground.

Revolutionary Broadcasts

THE French police lately discovered, not far from the Italian frontier, an unauthorised wireless station for which they had been searching for some time. The station was located in an uninhabited cottage near Cannes. The police kept watch late at night and ultimately arrested an Italian and a prominent anti-Fascist, who has already been convicted several times of political offences. It appears that anti-Fascist broadcasts have been made from this station, and the authorities attach much importance to its discovery. The transmitter employed was a powerful one, and its nightly broadcast of revolutionary propaganda was having an increasingly seditious influence on listeners throughout Italy.

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