

Broadcasting in South Africa

(By A. Maule, 37T.)

SOUTH AFRICA recently celebrated its tenth anniversary of broadcasting. Few of the pioneers of broadcasting have had so many difficulties to overcome, and so many disappointments, as the South African Broadcasting Company. Until recently, broadcasting in the Union of South Africa was not a financial success, depending as it does upon a white population of something under two million. As in America, sponsored programmes were at one time the order of the day, but now very few, if any, sponsored items are broadcast. Generally, the programmes are good, considering the small and scattered population and the lack of suitable broadcasting talent.

South Africa's pioneer station, Johannesburg, using a power of 15 k.w., serves most of the Transvaal. It also supplies Pretoria and Bloemfontein with relayed programmes. Bloemfontein which is approximately 450 miles south of Johannesburg, in turn supplies the Orange Free State. Although the Johannesburg station is received with great clarity on the South African coast, 1000 miles away, it is not heard at all well in Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, only thirty miles away. It was found, while experimenting with portable receivers, that Johannesburg was received perfectly well in one street and faded completely in an adjacent one. This is because the city of Johannesburg is surrounded by what is known as the Reef, consisting of a chain of gold mines, which have a very bad screening effect.

Pretoria itself is built on alluvial soil and the mineral deposits completely absorb the transmissions from JB, as the Johannesburg station is called. To overcome this, the Broadcasting Company installed a 50 watt transmitter to relay the JB programmes, which are sent over by trunk telephone line. This relay station will, however, shortly be replaced by one slightly larger and probably using a power of 1 k.w.

Two 10 k.w. transmitters are in use at Capetown and Durban. Both have their own studios, and except for occasional relays from Johannesburg, transmit their own programmes. Situated as these stations are, so that they form a big triangle, a gap is left in the eastern province and two of the Union's largest towns, Port Elizabeth and East London, are dependent on Capetown and Durban for their programmes. It has therefore been decided to build a station approximately midway between these towns. Grahamstown, in the Eastern Province, was selected for the site, and this station will shortly be in operation with a 10 k.w. transmitter, relaying programmes from JB or Capetown. This will be the most modern of the South African stations, although in the near future Johannesburg will be re-built and another relay station erected at Pietermaritzburg, forty miles from Durban.

One of the most notable achievements of the African Broadcasting Company was the relay of the Livingstone Memorial at Victoria Falls. This was conducted over 2000 miles of landline.

Johannesburg is the only station transmitting shortwave programmes, which are broadcast on 49 metres simultaneously with the long-wave programmes. Durban is experimenting with a small portable transmitter using only 4 k.w., and although remarkably good results have been obtained in the Union it is completely dwarfed by JB's 15 k.w. transmitter.

South African programmes are easily recognised, as the programmes are broadcast both in English and African. The stations now operating in South Africa are:—

ZTC Capetown, 600 k.c., 10 k.w.
ZTJ, Johannesburg, 645 k.c., 15 k.w.
ZTD, Durban, 723 k.c., 1 k.w.
ZTM, Milnerton, 800 k.c., 10 k.w.
ZTE, Bloemfontein, 809 k.c., 1 k.w.
ZTP, Pretoria, 952 k.c., 50 w.

THE Italian station at Bari provides the only radio programme in Greek for the benefit of the Greeks, who have no service. The Italians are also considering programmes in Turkish and Arabic.

IN European countries, including Germany, and in some British Dominions the blind are exempt from listening fees. In Great Britain many of the sightless listeners are granted free receiving sets and are not asked to pay license fees. The National Institute for the Blind issues the weekly B.B.C. programmes printed in Braille.

FOUR Danish gramophone companies brought a case against the Danish broadcasting stations for an injunction prohibiting further record broadcasts until the broadcasters paid what the gramophone companies asked. The prohibition was made as from April 11; no further records to be played, but 2000 records bought before that date might be played. Now the Eastern Divisional Court holds up the section of the Act which says, "The person who transfers a work to mechanical devices shall have the same rights as an author," which means that the stations will have to pay a tax on each record they broadcast, but not on the 2000 they bought before April 11.

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