

LONDON NOTES.

Not Really a Hotbed of Intrigue

*Personal Ambitions at Broadcasting House Lead to False Impression—
Sir John Reith Would Not Make a Good Hitler—B.B.C. Charter
Renewal Discussion in Parliament.*

(By Air Mail from Our Own
Correspondent.)

London, August 10.

IN the past Broadcasting House has, undoubtedly, been a hotbed of intrigue, not of a serious character, but of the kind produced by personal ambitions. Inevitably a certain amount of unhappiness and unrest exists. All the talk about interference with the private lives of the staff arises from this source. The only examples of dismissals from the B.B.C. which could be cited as coming under the meaning of "interference with private lives" were of members of the staff who had been implicated in divorce suits. Sir John Reith's Puritanical tendencies are, of course, well known.

BUT in the House of Commons

Mr. George Lansbury, the veteran Labour Leader, said that Sir John would make a good Hitler. Mr. Lansbury was falling into a familiar error. Actually, Sir John deposes so much work and responsibility to his lieutenants, that I doubt whether he is the typical dictator. But his somewhat terrifying presence—the towering black shadow, he has been called—and his habit of making himself unapproachable, serve to perpetuate a legend. When somebody is daring enough to write the biography of Sir John Reith, he may be summed up as the shy man with a commanding presence, who was pitchforked into eminence by chance.

SINCE I wrote last in these columns,

the Government has revealed its intentions regarding renewal of the B.B.C. Charter. How does the Empire service fare? Beyond a general instruction to the B.B.C. to get on with the job and develop the service, the Empire service has attracted surprisingly little attention, either in the Government's proposals or in the debate in Parliament which followed them. Most surprising feature of all, the Government ignored the Ullswater committee's recommendation that foreign languages should be used in the shortwave broadcasts. I understand that the reason is that in the present critical state of world affairs the Government was unwilling to take any action which might aggravate the international situation. Consequently, the

B.B.C.'s plans to start with Spanish transmissions was dropped. Perhaps, in view of subsequent events in Spain, this was just as well, or serious misunderstandings might have arisen. The B.B.C. transmissions would, like those from Berlin and Rome in Spanish, have been intended for South America.

Only English.

DURING the House of Commons debate, Captain Sir Ian Fraser, the blind M.P., who is tipped as a possible new governor of the B.B.C., praised the corporation for using only English in its transmissions on the shortwaves. If, as expected, he is made a governor, it is evident that his weight will be thrown in the scales to keep the Empire programmes for the Empire. And, disregarding for the moment arguments concerned with national defence, it certainly seems that what may be the gain of German, Dutch, Spanish and Italian-speaking listeners would be the loss of the English-speaking population of the British Commonwealth. I hear disappointing news of the progress with the three new transmitters at Daventry. There is even some doubt whether they will be ready in time for the coronation, but the B.B.C. will make a big effort to avoid this disappointment.

Olympic Games.

GERMANY made the biggest effort in the history of broadcasting in connection with the Olympic Games. Never before have radio arrangements been made with such scope on such a scale. Before the Games it was calculated that during the 16 days the broadcasters of 37 nations would give more than 3000 reports from 25 different sports arenas. About 70 foreign commentators, engineers and organisers went to Berlin. Some of the events were to be televised, but I was surprised to notice that the system used only 180 lines a picture and presumably 25 pictures a second. When British television starts it should be definitely superior to German. On the face of it, the Germans seem to have made no progress with television since their last Radio Exhibition.

Stigma Removed.

RECENTLY the B.B.C. announced the important changes in its programme schedules which take effect in the autumn under arrangements

made by Mr. Cecil Graves, the programme controller, after a year's experience of office. The proposals seem to remove once and for all the stigma that the Empire programmes are second-rate and inferior to those of the home stations. Proposals for strengthening daytime broadcasting include provision of six variety features a week drawn from the Empire Department, the Regions and London. So Empire vaudeville programmes will be as good as, or better than, those from London. In the past the practice has been for the Empire to borrow where it could from the Home services; in future the converse process will operate as well.

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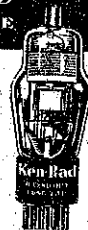
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