

Broadcasting a Hundred Years



HERE is no reason to suppose that any of the mediums of art, entertainment, or information which we know at present will cease to exist, any more than the arrival of films has killed the art of printing. One can contemplate a greater and greater multiplicity of means of expression and communication, all fulfilling their various functions side by side. It is a safe assumption that no innovation will kill anything which exists at the time of the new arrival, except those things which are attempting to fulfil the same function in a less satisfactory way.

When broadcasting began, it was said that among the many things that it would supersede were printing and the gramophone. It has, however, been found that, on the contrary, the only effect that broadcasting has had on these has been to encourage and increase them to a degree unparalleled by any previous stimulant.

There was a method by means of which performances at theatres and concert halls were taken through a microphone and delivered to the subscribers' homes over a telephone wire. This was a less satisfactory form of broadcasting, and so went by the board. The train killed the stage coach, but the telephone did not kill the letter. Therefore, we may conclude that in the year 2030 broadcasting will still be carried on. Its highly specialised technique will have been developed and developed until the many deficiencies which listeners put up with to-day will have disappeared. Deficiencies in reception and deficiencies in matter received.

When the tendency toward supplementing natural light and air with artificial light and air has been carried to its logical conclusion, life as we now know it, will be changed in its times and seasons. We shall not be so much affected by the time of day or the time of year. Having daylight and fresh air available all through the twenty-four hours in every city, large sections of the community will be about their business and pleasure at times when now all but a few stragglers are asleep. Therefore, the broadcasting service, like the electric light service, will be continuous. There will be no hour in the twenty-four when the needs of some section of the public in regard to news, music, drama, religion, education or discussion, will not be capable of instant satisfaction.

Hence

A Forecast of the Radio World in 2031

The maintenance of such a service will naturally entail not only an enormous reinforcement of the present station staffs, but also a certain amount of carefully-arranged repetition. It will be assumed that the listener who hears a play or talk at 4 a.m. will be asleep by 6 p.m., fourteen hours later. Therefore, the same items will be given again on the same wavelength. The players and talkers of the first occasion will in many cases be in bed on the second occasion. Their performances, having been recorded, and bottled, will be transmitted again without them.

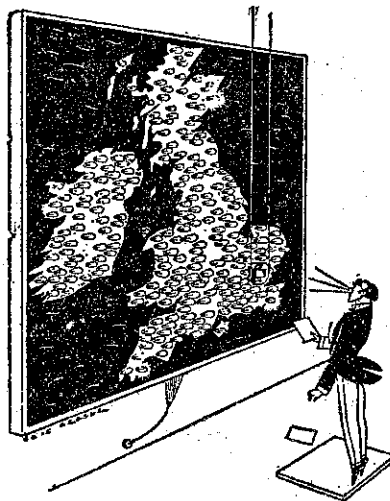
Internal Organisation.

THE internal organisation of the broadcasting service will probably have undergone enormous changes, the results of which the public will be aware of without knowing or caring how they have been brought about. Technical research having made it possible to devote more wavelengths to broadcasting, it follows that a great many more programmes will be going out simultaneously from any one headquarters. There may be ten national programmes in the British Isles alone, while abroad, all over the world, there will be proportionate increase over to-day. This will make for a far greater catholicity of choice in matter, and in manner of handling that matter at the transmitting end.

Certain wavelengths may be permanently devoted to certain things. It would seem likely that at least two wavelengths will be exclusively occupied with music all the twenty-four hours round; one with serious music and the other with flippant music. While obviously news would have a wavelength to itself, since news never

ceases to come in from all quarters of the globe.

Within the central administration there may be subsidiary administrations to some extent in competition with each other, in the same way as theatres and film manufacturers are in competition with each other. But this might not necessarily be regarded



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as "competition" in the commercial sense, but rather as a means of obviating the sameness of character inevitable in the limitation of to-day. There might be two or three entirely separate staffs responsible for music, drama, and talks, who would bring to their work an individuality which would stand out clearly before the public.

Listening Universal.

THE envisagement of such developments goes, of course, hand in hand with the presumption that everyone who has electric light will also have a wireless license. The present-day income from licenses is spent in service up to the limit, and that limit is a comparatively narrow one. But by the year 2030 it will be as rare to find a person who is not a listener in some form as it is to find a person who cannot read to-day.

Technical research, both by broadcasting authorities and wireless trading companies, will probably have conquered the interferences of oscillation, atmospheric, heterodyning, and fading, and perfect reception will be a matter of course all over the world. By that time, too, receiving sets will have become far cheaper, and the distortion and poor quality which many listeners put up with, under the impression that they are getting the best that can be got, will have disappeared for ever.

Broadcaster's Indicator.

HAVING now thoroughly got underway with intelligent anticipation, will venture on just one or two more prophecies and then stop.

At present those conducting a broadcast programme are quite unable to tell how their work is being received. Now it is extremely important to know this. Therefore, research will have to be carried out, and in course of time an indicator will be constructed. This will probably consist of a vast block of electric points, each one of which will begin to glow as soon as any listening set is tuned into the wavelength concerned. It will be arranged geographically, and from it the man in control will be able to tell at a glance what proportion of the public is listening, what part of the world they are in, whether they come in at the beginning, if they are late, if they stop listening before the end, and so on.

For instance, during an unimportant item only a point here and there would glow—a few listeners scattered about the world. But when a programme of first-class importance, interest, and popularity is on (having been well advertised beforehand), the indicator would be a great blaze of light.

Outside the stations the business of publishing books and newspapers, of conducting theatres, talking and silent film houses, and of selling gramophone or kindred records, will continue in whatever improved forms they may have assumed. While inside the business of conducting broadcasting programmes, silent television programmes, and audible television programmes, will be carried on by staffs who have by that time one hundred and eight years of experience to guide them.—L. de G.S. (in "Radio Times").

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