

# A Decade of Radio

Ten years ago trade was in the throes of a serious depression, but radio came and brought prosperous times. And now all eyes are focussed on Radio and its sister, Television. Do they hold the solution?

**F**AMILIARITY with the accustomed operation of the radio can never entirely dull for us its wonder, its romance, and its mystery. Yet it is not the fascinating phases of it which I intend to dwell on, but rather the hardly less important growth of its newer business aspects. Let me get rid of some figures first—to get an idea of the surprising dimension of this still youthful prodigy of modern industry.

My friend Martin Codel, whose recent book, "Radio and its Future," has become a standard text in the field, "estimates that the American radio industry has retailed more than £600,000,000 worth of receiving sets, valves and parts during the first decade of radio broadcasting." That is just the same as the amount invested in the much more venerable, widespread soft coal mining industry; and it also equals that invested in national shipping and canals.

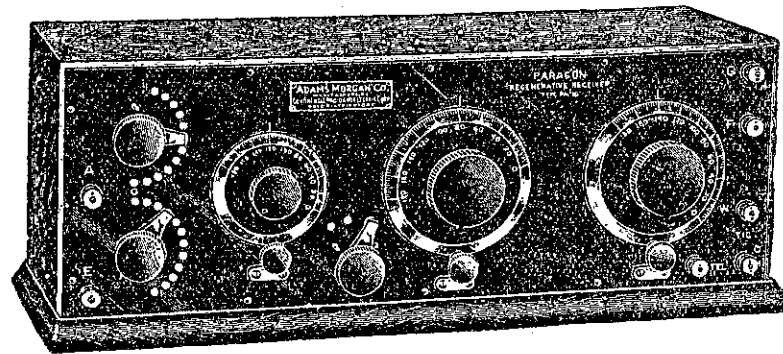
So this ten-year-old youngster is, to say the least, an amazingly husky lad with lots of promise. That was a decade of fantastic confusion, bewilderingly swift advances of radio technology, millions made and lost overnight, hectic promotion schemes—but with it all, a net gain scarcely to be matched by any other industry in a similar brief span of years.

In fact, it is probable that, as an industry, radio has only half grown, if that. Just at this time the possibility of its expansion has a lot to do with the recovery of business. Here is the reason: after each serious business depression of modern times, the opening and development of some new industry has contributed markedly to the restoration of prosperity. After the collapse of the 1870's, it was the rapid growth of our railway network which supplied the stimulus for speeding recovery. In the early 90's came the expansion of the bicycle industry. After the 1907

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being the subject matter of a talk, delivered recently  
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System.



*In 1921 trade was stagnated by the post-War trade depression, yet this thing—we would not now call it a set—sold for £50. And batteries and speaker had to be bought as well.*

slump, and particularly after that of 1921, it was that amazing young giant, the automobile business, which helped take up the business slack. To-day, clambering as we are up from the 1930-31 chasm in the business curve, it would not be at all unlikely that new household electrical specialties like the radio may supply the extra spark-plugs to accelerate the industrial machine for the upward climb.

I said we could label this industry as only half-grown; let me offer you some data to prove it. The Census Bureau is just finishing up the first national count of radio sets in use in the U.S.A. Preliminary figures show that about 10,000,000 homes, only one-third of all those in the country, have been equipped for radio reception. So we have a long way to go before that far-off point of saturation is reached,

though I grant that in walking down the streets these warm summer evenings, you get the impression of a 100 per cent. saturation of the ether waves; you are tempted to believe that every single house has not only its quota of one set, but a whole flock or litter or swarm or whatever it is that radio sets come in.

Here is an interesting fact brought out by these new figures—the radio sets are most irregularly distributed. Little Rhode Island has 57 per cent. of its homes equipped, and her neighbour, Connecticut, almost the same. In Wisconsin and

Michigan, sets are found in about 51 per cent. of all homes, while in Iowa the figure runs above 48, in South Dakota 44, and in Nebraska 47 per cent. But in some of our other States homes with radio service number as little as 5 or 6 per cent. of the total. Perhaps their people are waiting till the sets get better, or the programmes improve, or some of the present radio speakers and announcers (Continued on page 11.)

## Facts Revealed In Figures

*This chart tells a story. Look what happened ten years ago. Right at that "low bottom" the radio boom began. Then make a quick jump to 1931—look at that curve . . . the depression of to-day. A new era in radio is beginning—*  
**TELEVISION.**

