

My Impressions of the Greatest Broadcasting System in the World

...The B.B.C. ...

By DOUGLAS STARK

Mr. Douglas Stark, well known in musical circles in Wellington and to 2YA listeners, has recently returned from an eighteen-months' tour of England and the States. In this interview with the "Record" he throws some interesting light on the workings of that gigantic and efficient organisation, the B.B.C., of which he made a special study.



DOUGLAS STARK,
2YA Scottish Comedian.

THE B.B.C. with its vast resources and its highly-qualified and organised staff is, without question, one of the most solid organisations of the world. Imagine many hundreds of people engaged in the production and broadcasting of one or at the most two programmes a day and you have the B.B.C. They want a talk on "Russia" and they want it authentic and unconventional—they approach Bernard Shaw and ask his price—it might be £50 for 15 minutes, but they pay it without question. They get that talk long before it is broadcast—go through it, discuss points with its author if necessary, and finally pass it for broadcasting.

They are going to relay a concert from the Queen's Hall. Days ahead the orchestral score is submitted to headquarters where it is studied by the engineers and sound experts. The placing of the orchestra for effect and the microphones for balance is carefully worked out. The orchestra and engineers assemble long before the performance is to take place and rehearse the programme. Back at the transmitting station, the outputs of the many microphones are balanced up by musicians and engineers, and the final monitoring is performed by a musician who follows the music as he monitors.

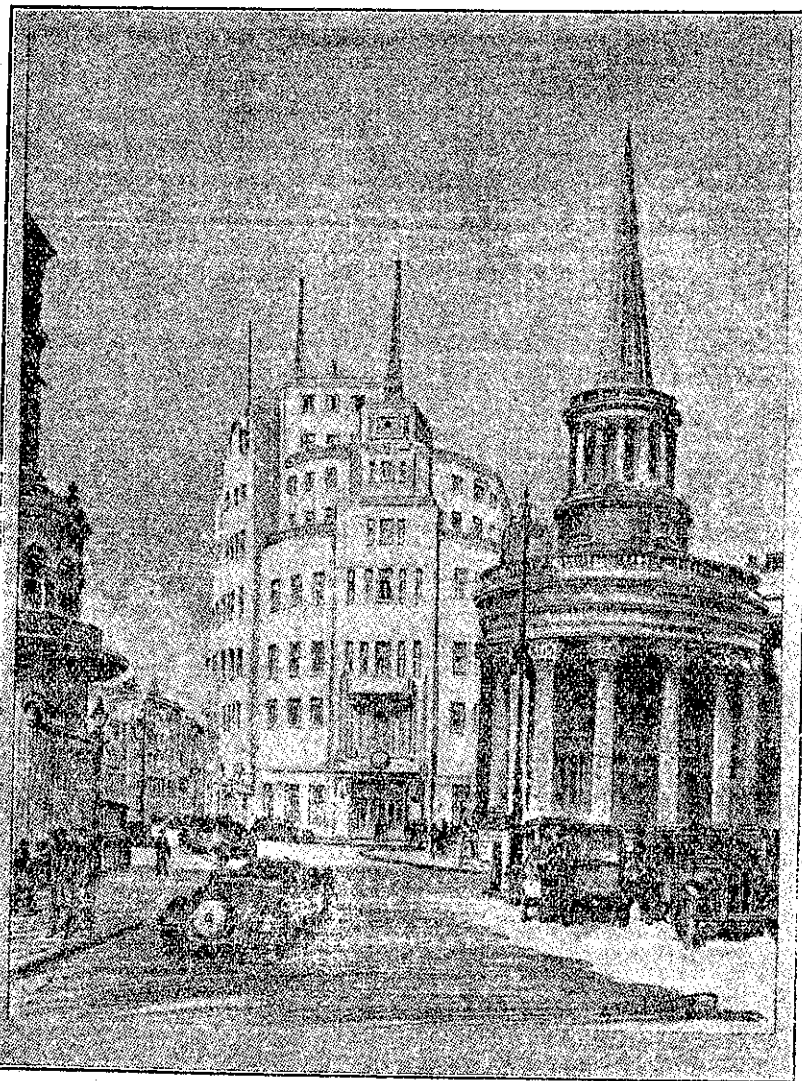
Then there is the elaborate organisation and huge staff engaged in the compilation of the programmes. There is not one person or two in this department but dozens. Each one has his particular field to cover. The chief organiser drafts his programme, indicating roughly the balance of, say, orchestral, vaudeville, talks and dance music. He then makes the request that each man in charge of these departments make up a programme. To advise them are the specialist committees, so you can see that there is not much left

to chance in the B.B.C.

It was my intention to visit America only when I left here, but owing to the set of my fortunes I worked my passage to England, there to become intimately associated with the B.B.C. They knew I was interested in broadcasting and did all they could to let me see how the organisation functioned. It was some months before I completely traversed all its ramifications. It was only when I arrived back in New Zealand that I realised that the knowledge I had gained may be of some practical value, for I did not know of the changes in administration.

Whilst in America I investigated the systems there, and did a little broadcasting over chain stations. They, too, are skilfully organised, but I believe feeling is veering over to the B.B.C. method. But from the commercial point of view I think the Americans are more advanced. England and America both started off even, and though now from the co-operative and financial point of view the Americans are really ahead, the British system is fundamentally more sound. The active co-operation evident in America is natural as broadcasting there is run on strictly business lines with profit as the sole incentive. The end of last year one American network system revealed a profit of over a million, as against the B.B.C.'s half-million.

It is difficult to compare the quality of the programmes in the two countries. The American is altogether different temperamentally, and curiously enough he seems to accept the sponsored advertising system without protest. This is probably due to two main reasons. First, he has known no other system; and, secondly, advertising is with him a national weakness. With all his astuteness the average American is very gullible. Tell him about a thing often enough and he will buy it. The people out here and in England are much (Concluded on page 2.)



Specially drawn for "The Wireless World" by H.D. Andrews.

"BROADCASTING HOUSE," the new home of the B.B.C. In this glimpse from the northern end of Regent Street the artist provides a study in contrasts, the new and strange dominating the old and familiar.