

Broadcasting to the Empire

An Announcement was recently made that the B.B.C. had intentions immediately to proceed with a Short Wave Station for Empire B'casting

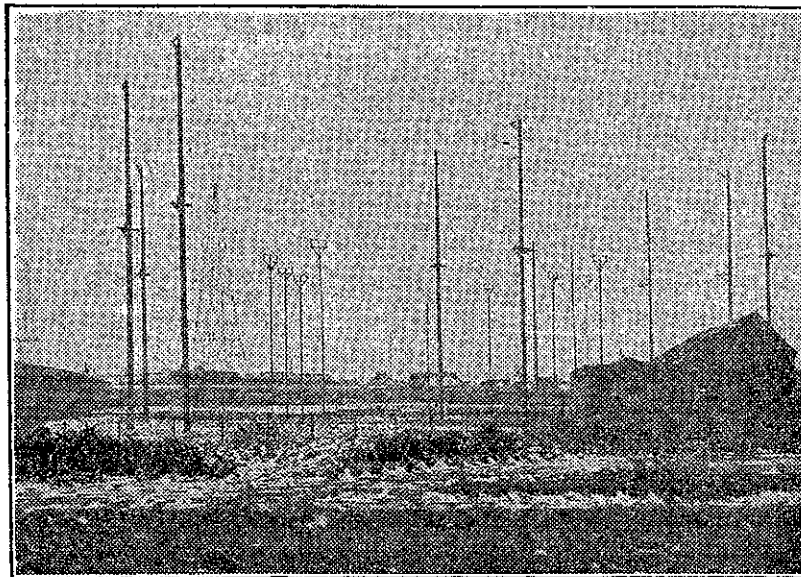
A LITTLE over a year ago —writes "World Radio," which is the official journal of the British Broadcasting Corporation—we gave an account of the position of the Empire broadcasting scheme as it existed at that time. A further stage has now been reached.

The public announcement, a fortnight ago, of the intention of the B.B.C. immediately to proceed with plans for establishing a short-wave station to be used for broadcasting to the various parts of the Empire has aroused a considerable degree of interest in this country. It may be expected that an equal measure of notice of the announcement will be taken by the Dominions and colonies. Indeed, the messages sent to this journal by their representatives in this country indicated clearly the satisfaction with which the Empire in general has received the news.

It is a matter of history that the B.B.C. arranged with the Marconi Company to establish an experimental short-wave transmitter at Chelmsford. This transmitter, G5SW, was capable of putting about 12 k.w. into the aerial, and was made up largely of existing apparatus. It transmitted on one wave only, viz., 24 metres, approximately, which was chosen as a compromise to give the best chance to most of the Empire to carry out reception experiments. The programme material used consisted generally of excerpts taken from the Daventry, 5XX, programme. Transmissions from this station started in November, 1927, under license from the Postmaster-General, which made clear the experimental nature of the station. (The transmission of news was forbidden, for instance.)

BY 1929 a considerable number of reports and data had been received by the B.B.C., from which several important conclusions resulted. Firstly, there was no doubt that a real listener, as apart from an amateur, interest existed and that there was a widespread hope that a service would be undertaken. Secondly, the interest was greatest in the colonies, while the Dominions were interested mainly in the occasional transmission of special events—for instance, the Armistice Day ceremony at the Cenotaph.

On the basis of these reports and a detailed examination of the data, the B.B.C. was able to submit a fairly precise scheme to the Colonial Office, via the Post Office, in November, 1929. This proposed scheme, together with two variants of it, were further considered



*What an Empire broadcasting short-wave station looks like.
The forest of aerials associated with PCJ, the Dutch Empire
Broadcasting Station.*

by the Imperial Conference, 1930, but, as we expected, this Conference gave them little support, passing the following resolution: "The Conference recognises the technical and financial difficulties of the scheme and feels that further information is required to determine whether they can be overcome. It recommends as a first step that his Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom should suggest to the British Broadcasting Corporation that that body should communicate particulars of the scheme to the broadcasting organisations or other appropriate authorities throughout the Empire, and should invite them to furnish their views (after any necessary consultation with their respective Governments) as to the value of such a service, and as to their readiness

to make a contribution toward its cost in return for the right to relay any part of the service which they may require.

AT the request of the Post Office, the B.B.C. acted on this resolution, by communicating particulars of the three schemes to broadcasters in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa; to the High Commissioners of Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia; to the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries, Montreal (for communication to Canadian broadcasters other than the Canadian National Railways); to the Indian State Broadcasting Service; and to the Broadcasting Department of the Department of Post and Telegraphs, Irish Free State.

The position was becoming unsatisfactory. The existing station is not entirely representative of modern technique—it can use but one wavelength, whereas several are essential—and restrictions on its use in any case deny the provision of a comprehensive short-wave "service" to the Empire. At the same time, its maintenance costs a considerable amount annually. It appeared that the time had come when a decision had to be made as to whether this experimental station should be definitely closed down or a new and adequate station provided.

Now, the need of an adequate Empire broadcasting service was not decreasing—quite otherwise, in fact. The B.B.C. decided, therefore, that in view of the urgency of the problem it must assume the necessary financial responsibility involved in going ahead with the scheme. Once it is in operation, it is hoped that the interest which it will undoubtedly arouse will result in some (Concluded on page 8.)