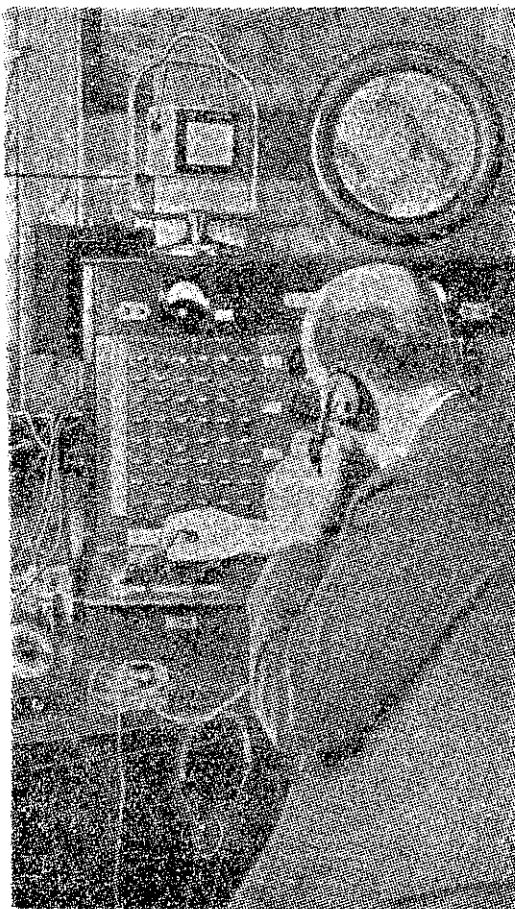


Broadcasting in Germany

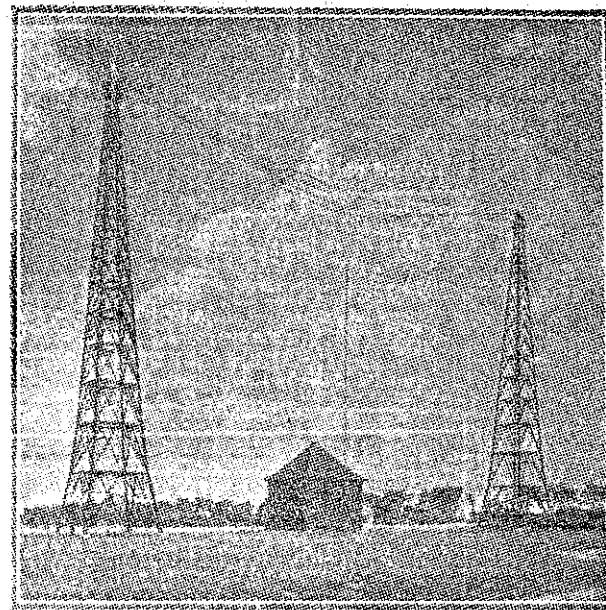
Curiously enough, England and Germany employ fundamentally different systems of broadcast control. In the former country complete control is vested in one body—the B.B.C.—but in the latter, chiefly because of the number and scattered disposition of the main cultural centres, a system of “de-centralisation” is employed, with control by separate companies. In the following article (from the 1932 B.B.C. Year Book), by Ministerialrat A. D. H. Giesecke, Director of the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft—the premier broadcasting company in Germany—are outlined the main features of Germany’s broadcast system.

THE English observer, comparing German broadcasting with his broadcasting at home, will be struck by one difference: the allotment of a separate organisation to different parts of the country. In Great Britain the central office in London undertakes the detailed organisation of the broadcasting system and supervises in principle the programmes of all stations; but in Germany each of ten separate companies bears complete responsibility for the programmes radiated within its own area. Is this apparent dismemberment deliberate or adventitious?

It may be recalled that the invention of wireless telephony did not, in Germany, lead at once to the introduction of broadcasting; the political and economic situation at the time pointed to the necessity of placing this new gift first of all—in the form of a system of wireless communication—at the service of trade and commerce. Only when the utilisation of wireless telephony for economic purposes had been sufficiently secured was it possible to liberate some wavelengths for broadcasting. Broadcasting thus began one year later in Germany (in the autumn of 1923) than in Great Britain, and at its inception English experience was already available. In spite of this, we did not follow the example of centralisation set by England, preferring, after



The chief engineer of the State Broadcasting Corporation at work. He keeps in close touch with all departments under his control, and personally watches every detail of their work.



The aerial system of the relay station at Flensburg, near the Danish border. This is typical of a number of low-powered relay stations which are dotted over Germany.

thorough weighing of the pros and cons, to found the individual companies. The decisive consideration was that of the disposition of artistic activity and talent, which in England are to a great extent concentrated in London, but in Germany are distributed among a number of different cultural centres, so that a rigid centralisation would make it extremely difficult to do sufficient justice to the racial peculiarities of the different provinces. Once this consideration was taken into account, it could only result in “decentralisation,” with the ultimate object of gradually linking the companies together later on to such an extent as future developments, the exact nature of which could not then be foreseen, would indicate.

The principle of the independence of the companies was always maintained, but as the service grew, a partial fusion of this kind did in fact develop in parallel with it and with the heightened technical requirements and the improvement, in telephone-circuits; for example, the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft was founded, technical operation was concentrated on this company, and a common programme committee, a central office for school broadcasting, and a Central Aid Station for listeners were established.

How, then, does our German organisation now function in practice? The transmitters are operated by our Post Office, but, with this exception, all business common to the companies, including questions of organisation, management, and engineering, is handled by the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft as “roof company”; it also supervises broadcasting finance in its entirety and represents the broadcasters in all common causes. The task of the regional companies is to create the programmes; each of them is assisted by a political supervisory committee and a cultural council.

PROBLEMS connected with programmes and presenting themselves to all companies alike are handled directly either by the programme committee or by the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft, according to their nature. School broadcasting is administered by a central office in co-operation with the companies. The ultimate responsibility for broadcasting as a whole is laid upon the Broadcasting Commissioner or the Postmaster-General.

German broadcasting is thus, in fact, much more unified than appears at the first view. Whether the present form is one to be indefinitely continued will depend upon future developments: at the moment, it seems capable of meeting any demands made on it, of whatever kind.

The problems that occupy German broadcasters are essentially the same as in England. There are, first, the many and various technical tasks, which, although in the first (Continued on page 13.)