CHAPTER VIII

THE BROADCASTING MONOPOLY

BROADCASTING—NATION BUILDER

The young giant of the air, broadcasting, has almost completed its eleventh year of life in the British environment. On May 4, 1922, the Postmaster-General announced in the House of Commons that it had been decided to authorize regular broadcasting in Great Britain, but operation was not officially commenced until November of that year. From the very outset the new service has been recognized as a public service undertaking, operating within the limits of the Post Office's monopoly of all forms of communication. The British Broadcasting Company, organized by agreement between the Postmaster-General and the principal radio manufacturers, began its official existence in December, 1922. The service has been carried on since January 1927 by the same staff, but under a new form of control. The successor to the company, the British Broadcasting Corporation, was formed by Royal Charter, and in organization and control is a public utility trust, in general character like, but with distinct differences in detail from, the Central Electricity Board.

The B.B.C. is one of the newest and most important of the national public service undertakings now in existence. Its possibilities in the framework of national development are seemingly limitless. Our first task must be to analyze the influence and potentialities of broadcasting and the various ways in which it has been developed throughout the world. After providing a setting for the British system we may deal in greater detail with the problems of control, organization, finance, management, policies, and public relations.

When broadcasting was commenced in the United States during 1920, the world paid very little attention to the popularity of the radio, and the few persons who stated that broadcasting's possibilities were comparable to the revolution brought about by the printing press were thought to be "balmy." The radio was merely a toy. The owner of a set usually spent most of his time attempting to get distance: the serious uses of broadcasting were to be discovered later. The radio mania did not seize the British as it did the Americans, which is undoubtedly one of the reasons accounting for the different emphasis in the two countries.

It would be superfluous to enter into a lengthy disquisition on the revolutionary character of broadcasting, because years of experience have clearly established its strategic and manifold uses in modern life. A word, however, concerning radio's possibilities should be said in passing, because even the intimate is frequently not fully assessed, and it is important that this should be done in the present case. The possibility of employing broadcasting for one or another of its possible emphases underlies the most important questions of policy and control.

The first point that should be observed is the universality of broadcasting's scope, and the intimate and subtle nature of its appeal. Newspapers and cinemas reach only limited audiences, but the radio can be made the possession of the masses—witness the largely fulfilled ambition of Russia. William Randolph Hearst, the American newspaper king, is reported to have said that of the three organs of opinion—newspapers, cinemas, and broadcasting—the last-mentioned will soon become the one of paramount importance. Its appeal is subtle, ingratiating, inescapable. No other instrument possesses greater possibilities of good or evil, of bondage or of emancipation.

The scope of broadcasting's influence is as broad as human interests, but the alternative emphases or uses to which the ether has been put may be divided conveniently

into commercial (i.e. advertising), political, and cultural. The last-named may be subdivided into intellectual, social, ethical, and religious. But where, it is asked, does entertainment come in? Is not this the principal desire of the public? Entertainment, in the broad sense, is what everyone desires. But if by entertainment is meant relaxation from humdrum duties, and mental and emotional stimulation, the term is broad enough to include all three of the emphases suggested above. The reason that commercial, political, and cultural uses have been taken as a convenient classification is that most of the broadcasting systems of the world manifest a predominance in one of the three respects. In several countries broadcasting serves two purposes, commercial and cultural, but in some, notably in Great Britain, the cultural objective (including entertainment) stands alone. A brief analysis of the international situation will explain the possible varieties of emphasis and control.

Since the United States was first to exploit the radio and since it is the principal example of the commercial incentive in broadcasting, the American system may be examined first. Prior to the creation of the Federal Radio Commission in 1927 there was virtually no control over radio development in the United States, with the result that broadcasting stations sprang up like mushrooms, the ether currents became overcrowded, and uninterrupted reception was virtually impossible. Broadcasting was and still is financed primarily by selling time to advertisers. No license of any kind is required of the owners of listening sets. Over half of the receiving sets in the world are found in the United States, but the absence of a licensing system and the nature of the broadcasting development do not necessarily have a great deal to do with the fact. Under the present control a commission of five members, appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate for terms of six years, has power to license stations, fix wave lengths and technical requirements, and under certain conditions put a station off

the air. There are still over 600 independent stations in the United States. However, two national chains, the National and the Columbia, have increased their influence and the quality of their programs very rapidly in recent years. Largely through the influence of the Department of Commerce, the amount of educational and cultural material entering into programs has been considerably increased. The most popular hours are still reserved to advertisers, however, and this must continue so long as this is the only means of financial support. In France and Canada broadcasting is still predominantly under private management and control, but for several years both of these countries have been considering a change to a system similar to the British.

In Europe organized systems under a unified control now exist in most countries, among which the most prominent are Austria, Germany, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and the Irish Free State.[1] Generally speaking, broadcasting has been considered a monopoly to be granted and controlled by the Post Office, and hence in most countries it becomes a source of government revenue. Licenses are required on receiving sets in most of the countries of the world.

Broadcasting is controlled for political and propaganda purposes in Russia, Italy, and Germany. It is interesting to note that the system in the Irish Free State is operated directly by the Post Office.

The B.B.C. is unlike any of the systems mentioned: it is neither a private company supported by advertising, nor a department of State, subject to the will of the Government in power. True, the public corporation was established under the aegis of the State, and it is ultimately subject to public control. In ordinary matters of policy and management,

[1] For further information regarding the varieties of control, see (1928) *B.B.C. Handbook*, 301; (1929) Ibid., 104; (1930) *Yearbook*, 125, 131; (1932) Ibid., 35; (1933) Ibid., 313, 318.

however, the B.B.C. is autonomous. Legally, the corporation consists of the Board of Governors, the members of which are appointed for fixed terms by the Crown. The undertaking is not organized for profit and hence attention can be entirely focussed on producing the best possible programs for listeners. With no stockholders and no government which must be served, the permanent staff, under the leadership of the Director-General, are actuated solely by their membership in the broadcasting profession, in which traditions of impartiality like those found in the Civil Service have had an opportunity to develop. The officials of the B.B.C. have been prominent in the Union Internationale de Radiophonie, the world organization which settles wave-length disputes and disseminates information of interest to the broadcasting profession.

Some writers have argued that the emphasis, subject-matter, and control of broadcasting in the several countries of the world is merely a reflection of national characteristics and desires. This view sounds plausible enough, but it is over-simplified in many cases. Broadcasting may be a means of raising the standard of what the average citizen would choose. It may be argued that high standards of broadcasting content produce higher demands from the hypothetical average man. This is clearly the cultural foundation of the British broadcasting system.

Under a type of control which is neither private nor governmental, the B.B.C. is enabled to concentrate upon the dissemination of culture, upon nation building. This has become a definite objective. It is an enormous responsibility, and those in control fully appreciate the fact. Positive policies of enlightenment and uplift have been followed, instead of catering to what might be thought a cross-section or a general level of individual desire and culture. "I do not know of any responsibility entrusted to any man or body of men more immense or more inspiring," an official of the B.B.C. has stated. "I know of none fraught with so many

dangers nor with so many potential benefits." The same writer has said, "Can democratic principle and democratic purpose best be served—can they, in the long run, be served at all—by democratic means as we understand them?" This is his answer. "The problems of today are not of subdivision but of integration. We are concerned with the unity of the nervous system of the body politic. That it is imperfect few will deny. I suggest that broadcasting is the integrating element, and that rightly understood and applied a national broadcasting service will supply the integrator for democracy."

Sir John Reith, Director-General of the B.B.C., whose views have been quoted, has been at the helm since organized broadcasting started in Great Britain. His philosophy has largely moulded the B.B.C. Concerning the principles of national broadcasting development he has written that (1) broadcasting should be conducted as a public service and nothing else; (2) there should be a central unified control; (3) the service should be established under the auspices of the State but certainly not be conducted by the State; (4) there must be adequate finance, because "the ether should not be put at the power of money"; (5) there should be a conscious social purpose in its development; (6) the stewardship should be interpreted as carrying the responsibility of contributing constantly and cumulatively to the intellectual and moral well-being of the community; and (7) the officials must not be afraid to postulate "a policy in which idealism plays a part, perhaps a determining part."

"Institutions in themselves," it has been truly observed, "are little apart from the personalities who control and operate them."

CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS AND PUBLIC CONTROL

The public utility status of the B.B.C. may be more clearly understood by considering briefly the growth of broad-

casting prior to 1927, the year in which the present form of control came into existence.[1] In 1922 negotiations were completed between the Postmaster-General (having authority over all forms of communication) and a committee representative of radio manufacturers, as a result of which the British Broadcasting Company was created. The company was constituted with a capital of £100,000, of which £60,000 was contributed in equal parts by six great wireless firms, all of which were represented on the board. The remaining manufacturers were given a very small proportion of the control. From the very first it was held that broadcasting should be a limited monopoly under unified control, and that competition would be impracticable and unwise. The company's public service character was signalized by the limitation of profits to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and by the prohibition of radio advertising except by consent of the Postmaster-General. The license system, which had been introduced in the early days with the wireless experimenter's license, was extended. By the time the company had been in existence a year eight main stations had been opened, these being located in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Bournemouth. At the end of 1923 over half a million licenses were in force.

Before the company was a year old difficulties had arisen which resulted in the creation of a Parliamentary Committee of inquiry, the Sykes Committee. The principal criticism arose because of the alleged monopolistic control of the "big six." No receivers could be made without the consent of the Marconi Company. Certain newspapers accused the broadcasting monopoly of being a "ramp." Furthermore, a royalty was charged on all sets manufactured outside of the country. This mode of raising revenue proved unworkable and undesirable, and the company therefore decided to abolish the royalty system voluntarily. The principal con-

[1] J. C. W. Reith, "Business management of the public services," (1930) 8 *Pub. Admin.*, 16; (1928) *B.B.C. Handbook*, 37; (1933) *B.B.C. Yearbook*, 9.

clusions of the Sykes Committee were that (1) the company should become less dependent upon the wireless trade for revenue, and reliance should entirely cease at a given date; (2) the company's share of the listeners' license fees should be 75 per cent instead of 50 per cent; (3) a uniform fee should be established, and restrictions as to the origin and nature of the receiving set should be abolished. There were other recommendations, but they did not prove particularly important in the evolution of broadcasting's constitutional position.[1] The acceptance of the report made it possible to adopt "a complete national system accessible to the owner of the cheapest form of set, wherever he might happen to live."

By the time of the second Parliamentary inquiry, in 1925–26, it was almost a foregone conclusion that the last vestiges of the wireless trade's influence would be removed. This was accomplished as a result of the acceptance of the Crawford Committee Report.[2] When on January 1, 1927, the "Corporation" replaced the "Company," the change did not greatly affect the undertaking, because it meant taking over the staff, system, and plant as a going concern. The shareholders were eliminated by being repaid at par. The assets of the company were transferred to the Postmaster-General and by him to the new B.B.C.

From this point onwards we may disregard chronological factors and confine ourselves to the powers and limitations of the B.B.C. as at present constituted. The Corporation was created under Royal Charter,[3] as from January 1, 1927, for a period of ten years. This means that an opportunity to reconsider the question of control will be presented in 1936. Although in early years there had been sporadic criticisms of the monopolistic character of broadcasting, the results obtained from four years of experience had convinced most

[1] *Sykes Committee Report*, Cmd. 1951, Stationery Office, 1923.
[2] Cmd. 2599, Stationery Office, 1926.
[3] Cmd. 2756, Stationery Office, 1926.

critics that unified control was desirable, and hence the possibility of creating several competing companies was not even considered.

The public corporation consists of a Board of Governors, five in number, the members of which are appointed by the Crown. Actually the appointments are made on the joint recommendation of the Prime Minister and the Postmaster-General. The first Governors were appointed for terms of five years, but subsequent appointees will remain in office as directed by the Postmaster-General, in no case exceeding five years. If a Governor should disqualify himself, the vacancy will be filled by the Government. The personnel of the Board has been composed of public-spirited citizens, chosen because of their broad interests and abilities. The three major parties have been represented at all times. The present Chairman was formerly Speaker of the House of Commons—a position requiring impartiality and tact. The Governors may retain as their annual remuneration sums not exceeding £3,000 for Chairman, £1,000 for Vice-Chairman, and £700 for other Governors. No other sums may be divided by way of profit or otherwise among the Governors of the Corporation. The Board appoints all officers and staff and may remove any officer (other than a Governor) however appointed. The Corporation also fixes rates of remuneration. Sir John Reith was designated in the Charter as first Director-General.

Under the new organization the licensing system has been continued, and the percentage allotted to the B.B.C. was increased. The Corporation was prohibited from earning distributable profits by the stipulation that all surpluses from licenses must flow into the Treasury. Borrowing powers were limited to £500,000 at any one time. However, profits derived from the Corporation's publishing business may be used as capital assets.

The duties of the B.B.C., as provided in the Charter, help to explain its constitutional position and the control exer-

cised over it as a public service undertaking. It is granted in order that the broadcasting service should be conducted "by a public corporation acting as trustees for the national interest." In view of the "widespread interest" taken in, and the "great value" of, the service "as a means of education and entertainment," it is "deemed desirable that the service should be developed and exploited to the best advantage and in the national interest." The Corporation is therefore given the power to "do all matters and things incidental or pertaining to a body corporate, but the Corporation shall apply the whole of its surplus revenue (if any) and other income solely in promoting its objects."

The responsibility of the Corporation is to "carry on a broadcasting service" for Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, "as a public utility service," and for that purpose it (*a*) is licensed by the Postmaster-General to operate stations under conditions presented by him, (*b*) may make agreements with governments (subject to Post Office consent) or municipal authorities, (*c*) may develop and exploit its service in any other direction and by means other than wireless telephony, if the Postmaster-General permits, (*d*) may broadcast any matter which for the time being may be permitted by or be within the scope or ambit of the Postmaster-General's "license," (*e*) may itself collect news or subscribe to news agencies, (*f*) is empowered to receive and employ the funds "annually or otherwise granted by the legislature" and, further, may raise money by way of loan, (*g*) may publish books, journals, etc. In addition it has the necessary power to develop and sell its property, to acquire and hold copyrights and patents, to establish pension funds and so forth. In other words, in its management, business dealings, and policy formulation the B.B.C. enjoys almost complete autonomy. On the other hand, several important provisions have been made for the supervision and control.

There is general agreement that an undertaking which

exercises such enormous responsibilities as those possessed by the B.B.C. should be subject to public safeguards. These are provided in the license and are exercised by the Postmaster-General, who stands in a general supervisory capacity to the B.B.C. For example, Members of Parliament may and have addressed questions to the Postmaster-General relating to some policy or action of the B.B.C. However, it is important to note that if the clerk at the table or the Postmaster-General considers that the question is petty or that it goes beyond the latter's responsibility in connection with the B.B.C., a refusal to print the question in the Orders of the Day is the course taken. The clerk has rejected a great many questions, and some which he has let through the Postmaster-General has rejected.

The license accompanying the Charter contains many technical requirements relating to non-interference with existing communication services, but these provisions are not particularly interesting. Public control is exercised through the Postmaster-General, who acts as Parliament's agent. The most important of the Postmaster-General's powers of control are those which relate to subject-matter, service, dissolution, and finance. These should be examined rather carefully.

The provision in the B.B.C.'s license which has given rise to most speculation and remark is the one providing that the Postmaster-General may, by giving notice, require the Corporation to refrain from broadcasting any matter, either particular or general. This safeguard was probably included because of the possibility of the Corporation's involving the Government in a misunderstanding with a foreign Power. On the other hand, the Government does not and has no reason to assume responsibility for any statement made over the radio, except where announcements are officially supplied. In any case, the stipulation is important solely because of what it suggests or authorizes. The power has not been used to date. Another provision, really the reverse of the one just mentioned, states that the B.B.C. is to broadcast, at its own

expense, anything which any government department may require. Concerning this clause Sir John Reith has written, "no improper advantage has been taken of this clause, and I imagine the Corporation would not be forced to broadcast contentious matter against its own judgment." Government departments do not apply to the Postmaster-General to have material broadcast; they go directly to the B.B.C. The Corporation encourages them to do so, but has indicated that it will use discriminatory power if necessary.

Amongst the numerous provisions governing actual broadcasting is one to the effect that the B.B.C. is to broadcast every day including Sunday during the hours specified from time to time by the Postmaster-General, but he has never felt called upon to regulate hours. Another proviso relating to service stipulates that if interference takes place with any other form of signalling, the B.B.C. may be required to close down the station responsible.

The most drastic reserved powers are those relating to expropriation in case of emergency or for breach of agreements. In the first case (an emergency resulting from war, let us say), the Government has reserved the right to occupy and use all stations without being liable to any claim of compensation except as provided in the license. Furthermore, if it appears to the Postmaster-General that the provisions of the Charter are not being carried out, and if the Corporation fails to comply within a specified period, he may certify this to the Crown and the Charter may be revoked. In case of voluntary or compulsory dissolution, the property and assets of the Corporation are to be applied in satisfaction of the liabilities, and thereafter as the Postmaster-General may direct.

The financial control also provides public safeguards of great practical and potential significance. The general provision to the effect that the Corporation shall give the Postmaster-General an annual general report and statement of accounts duly audited and certified, and that he is entitled

to have the accounts examined, is merely the usual requirement imposed upon a public undertaking. The Postmaster-General also has the right to have his Comptroller and Accountant-General audit the accounts. This has not been done for several years. With reference to the powers of control which are held in reserve, Sir John Reith has written,

"There are provisions, the exercise of which would be not only unfair but even incredible. The Postmaster-General may, if he choose, decline to take action to enforce the licensing regulations, and can abolish or reduce the listener's license fee. In some respects the Corporation's license from the Postmaster-General is distinctly a one-way document. This is the natural outcome, on paper, of the statutory principle that the right to transmit wireless signals is a State prerogative, and is only exercised by other parties in the capacity of concessionaires. . . . In practice relations with the Post Office have been very satisfactory, and both Company and Corporation have met with sympathy, encouragement, and support."

So far our discussion of the control over broadcasting has been confined to the variety of duties and restrictions placed upon the Corporation by Parliament. This is undoubtedly what is meant by public control. But an analysis of the subject would be incomplete if we did not refer to the importance of inner control, i.e. the determination of policy and the selection of materials to be broadcast. After all is said and done, this is the aspect of control that really matters most: those who determine what shall go over the ether have the power to influence public policy, national tastes, and the outlook of the younger generation. Consideration of the actual determination of policy may best be deferred until we have discussed the finances and the organization of the B.B.C., but one aspect of what may be called "selective" control should be emphasized before proceeding further. In the words of the Director-General of the B.B.C., "Broadcasting is an integral: no part of its service is wholly distinct from the rest. This singular, and hitherto unparalleled unity has led some over-hasty thinkers to regard it as no more than the technical engine for collecting and distributing the output of many fields of culture, themselves separate. So it is, but it

is more. Integration is a process not of gross summation, but of ordering and valuation. And broadcasting is, and in its nature must be, not only the collector but the selector of material. And therein lies the supreme responsibility."

FINANCE OF BROADCASTING

In the managerial aspects of its operation the B.B.C. enjoys a considerable degree of autonomy. This, however, is not as true with respect to finance as in many other ways. When the Crawford Committee reported in 1926 several financial principles were laid down which have gone a long way to assure the independence and elasticity of administration which are necessary to an undertaking of this nature. The committee concluded that the B.B.C. should be guaranteed ample funds to provide a first-class service; secondly, that under no circumstances should broadcasting be supported from public funds; and finally, that the receipts from broadcasting should not be regarded by the Treasury as a source of general revenue. On the other hand, it was impliedly recognized that the B.B.C. was not entitled to the total receipts of the 10s. license fee levied on receiving sets. Although the reduction of the license fee was considered at the time, it was not thought advisable to do so.

The arrangement which was finally made between the Post Office and the B.B.C. relative to the division of the revenue from listeners' licenses was that the former should take 12½ per cent (now 10 per cent) for administering the licensing system. Of the balance, 10 per cent on the first million licenses, 20 per cent on the second, 30 per cent on the third, and 40 per cent on the fourth million are retained by the Treasury. This graduated system is based upon the assumption that costs do not increase in direct proportion to the revenue. Hence, although the B.B.C. does not receive the entire revenue, at least its income is definitely fixed in advance and is subject to increase as the service becomes

more popular. Furthermore, once the receipts are turned over to the B.B.C. the spending of these sums is free from outside interference.

The division of revenue has been criticized as unsound in principle. It was revealed in 1932, for example, that of the 10s. subscribed by the listener, only 5s. is used for the purpose he has in mind, since that amount is all that reaches the B.B.C. On the other hand, it has been replied that so long as the Corporation has sufficient resources with which to produce good programs, the best plan is either to reduce the license fee (a plan which meets with enthusiastic approval from the public), or to assist the hard-pressed Exchequer as at present. Although the existing plan does not leave a relatively large surplus from licenses for capital reserve and development, the Corporation's borrowing has been arranged without difficulty and the receipts from publishing activities provide a handsome revenue with which to defray sinking fund obligations. In 1931, for instance, publications produced a net revenue of more than a quarter of a million pounds. In the same year the Treasury's portion of broadcasting receipts was over a million pounds. The B.B.C. has nearly completed capital schemes of over £2,000,000 with only half a million borrowed, and in the balance sheet at December 1932 there were reserves in the bank to clear off the whole of this debt. The B.B.C. is giving a voluntary contribution to the Treasury of £250,000 in 1933–34, and gave £150,000 in the financial year 1932–33.

The popularity of broadcasting has increased so rapidly that the B.B.C. would not seem to have any ground for financial concern.

Growth in Number of Licensed Listeners

1923[1]	580,380	1928	2,628,392
1924	1,140,119	1929	2,956,736
1925	1,645,207	1930	3,411,910
1926	2,178,447	1931	4,330,735
1927	2,395,174	1932	5,262,953

[1] Figures for December 31st in each year.

Moreover, licenses have increased with greater rapidity in recent months than ever before. Relative to the significance of this expansion we read in the 1933 *B.B.C. Yearbook* that,

"Only one country employing a license system can show a higher percentage of listeners to population—namely, Denmark, and there the problems are simpler. Even in America, though broadcast listening is 'free' there, the census of sets disclosed a percentage not much greater than the British. It would not be claimed that this numerical prosperity alone and by itself proves the success of the service, . . . but at least it proves the acceptableness of the service."

Provision has been made to reconsider the income terms of the 1927 agreement at any time after the initial period of two years. Several financial issues still appear to be open questions. The first one is whether the 10s. licensing fee should not be reduced as expeditiously as possible. Is it not only fair that the benefit resulting from doubling the number of licenses since 1927 should be passed on to the present and potential subscribers? Another problem is whether the B.B.C.'s proportion of the license should not be increased and whether it should not have greater control over license income generally. The principal objection to the existing arrangement is said to arise in connection with funds from licenses representing the unexpired period of the year. The Corporation's income for any year to March is based on the number of licenses issued at the end of the previous year, and even so is only handed over monthly. Had the B.B.C. been empowered to receive and administer the net license income after deducting Post Office costs, additional reserves by the end of 1928 would have totalled over £1,000,000.

Although the spirit of the Crawford Committee's principles relative to broadcasting finance has been carried out, the payment of over £1,000,000 to the Treasury appears to vitiate a strict interpretation of the doctrine relative to the undesirability of using broadcasting receipts for general governmental purposes. The future of that issue still appears to be in the balance. Broadcasting licenses have increased far more rapidly than anyone thought they would. A general

opinion exists that the B.B.C. is financially one of the most favorably situated institutions in the country. But unless the balancing of the national budget becomes less arduous, it will probably take more than a pious hope to bring about either a reduction in license fees or an increased proportion of the revenue to the B.B.C.

MANAGEMENT OF THE B.B.C.

Formal constitutional provisions are merely a general framework within which the machinery and the spirit of an organization develop; and it will usually be found that the objectives and the personalities of the management are the ultimate forces creating policy and practice. This will be found to be true to a special degree of broadcasting generally, and of the B.B.C. in particular. The management of the B.B.C. has possessed two notable advantages—that of continuity of purpose and practical continuity of constitution, and that of continuity of direction in the person of the Director-General. His immediate subordinates too, with few exeptions, have had from seven to nine years' experience in the organization.

The evolution of the B.B.C.'s leadership may be compared to the relationship which has come to exist between the political head and the permanent officials of government departments. Constitutionally the Board of Governors is the Corporation; practically the full-time officials, with a modicum of suggestions, run the show. This division of responsibility—not in the least paradoxical but perfectly natural—has caused Herbert Morrison to state in his recent book that "It is a matter of some doubt as to who is the more powerful, the Board of Governors or the strong-willed Director-General ——." Personality is the final arbiter of questions of this nature. The relations between the lay and the professional officials of any organization depend upon the personalities of the several parties at any particular time. Directors

with so-called "strong" personalities usually concern themselves more with policies and problems than do other members. So it is in the conduct of the B.B.C. However, it may be said with greater definiteness that the Chairman of the Board of Governors is the individual who naturally assumes a more active oversight of the affairs of the Corporation. He is paid three times as much as any other member. The Chairman has an office at Headquarters and comes in whenever his presence is required, actually an hour or so three or four mornings a week.

The general responsibility of the Board of Governors is primarily over policy and results, not over the actual carrying out of that policy. At the fortnightly meetings of the Governors, comments are usually made on some aspects of the past programs, but the sanction of forthcoming programs is not required. At times future events are discussed, when the particular broadcast involves some new or controversial features. The list of forthcoming talks is usually presented. The Governors naturally reflect public views and criticisms, but this is not the main object of the Board. Its rôle is to assume responsibility to Parliament and to the public for what takes place; and hence to keep a general oversight and to make suggestions. The initiative in matters of policy, program, and administration comes from the officials. Governors sometimes make program suggestions. The exact relationship between the Governors and the Director-General has never been precisely defined, and it will not need to be, so long as they work together harmoniously.

The evolution of the formal organization—the "genealogical tree" need not detain us. We are more interested in seeing how the machinery works than in the details of its construction. Moreover, the administrative organization is in the process of adjustment so that existing details might not apply in every case. However, the fundamental principles remain unchanged.

The chief executive of the B.B.C. is the Director-General,

who controls and directs all aspects of the management, in addition to being the liaison official between the Board of Governors, the Postmaster-General, and the public. His deputy is the Controller, who is concerned with the two major divisions of the work, administration and programs. In other words, the administration of the B.B.C. consists of developing programs and of then seeing that they are performed. These two stages, or functions, have been increasingly distinguished. They are not placed in watertight compartments, however, because the underlying theory of B.B.C. management is functional; in actual working the system depends on "horizontal" liaisons almost as much as on "vertical." When present plans are fully carried out there will be two Controllers, one in charge of administration and another in charge of program output. Instead of there being eight branch chiefs reporting to the Director-General and the Controller, there will be four to each Controller.

The practical or detailed stage at which policy formulation occurs is in the Control Board, which has met weekly since the earliest days of the B.B.C. This important body is composed of the heads of the six principal branches—Administration, Engineering, Information, Programs, Finance, and Talks, in addition to the Controller and the Director-General. It may be compared to the Bridgeman Committee's proposed functional board in the Post Office. The principal difference is that the B.B.C. functional board consists entirely of administrative officials.

Most of the divisions of the B.B.C. organization are self-explanatory, but a brief analysis may make certain functions better understood in relation to the whole.

The department of the Assistant Controller, which deals with administrative work, is concerned with formal and official relationships with outside organizations, with staff, premises, office matters, and "particularly with the review of organization in the light of rapidly changing needs." The total personnel of the B.B.C., exclusive of artists, exceeds

1,700, of whom over 1,000 are located in London. The remaining employees are engaged primarily in the four regional offices, but the B.B.C. maintains almost fifty premises altogether.

The engineering branch has undergone very little change in comparison with other departments. Its main functions may be classified under the heading of "Maintenance" (i.e. the day-to-day running of the technical service), "Research" or "Development," "Stores," and "Buildings." One of the most interesting aspects of the Chief Engineer's department is the research station which is conducted outside of London. Here the research engineer works on new ideas, new applications of old ideas, and improvement of material. The principal emphasis is laid on acoustics in connection with studios and microphones. Outside London there is also a central receiving station for foreign relays and for checking purposes.

The departments dealing with programs and talks are naturally the largest units in the Head Office organization. Originally the two branches were one, but by 1932 the work of the original "Programme" division became so heavy that "Talks" was made a separate branch. Under the existing arrangement the old program branch deals with music, drama, entertainment, and the common service relating to the building-up, fitting-in, and execution of the programs considered as a whole. The "Talks" division has responsibility for the spoken word—news, education, lectures, and so forth.

The information department is more than its name suggests: it deals with publications and with public relations, other than those of a business nature, as well. The publishing activities of the B.B.C. have grown to immense proportions. *The Radio Times*, which was founded in 1923, reaches one in every two listeners. *World-Radio* and *The Listener* have also developed rapidly. In addition to the *B.B.C. Yearbook*, the Corporation publishes a large number of pamphlets and reprints connected with broadcasts, giving it a virtual monopoly over printed matter dealing with broadcasting.

The same officials are responsible for relations with the press and for public contacts and publicity generally. In order to keep in touch with all sections of the country and with the principal interests affected "a fairly complete but quite fluid and personal system of relationships" has been developed by the headquarters and the regional officials. Advisory committees dealing with music and religion have been set up in local, regional, and national areas. The most important advisory committees are those employed at Head Office in connection with adult education and school broadcasts. So far the activities of the public relations branch appear to have been directed primarily at interpreting public opinion rather than at controlling it. The B.B.C. never advertises, but an immense number of communications go on between the publicity people and the newspaper men.

We shall return to certain problems connected with personnel administration, program management, and public relations, growing out of the framework of organization described above. Consideration of the structure and general features of management will be completed by reference to the regional stations of the B.B.C.

During 1924 the system of relay stations was brought into effect, but for several years it was the London station that provided the bulk of the output of these stations. In 1925 Daventry, with its long wave, assumed a national rôle, and the idea gradually emerged of presenting listeners with a choice of "national" or "regional" programs. The present organization of regional stations is built around the Regional Director in each of the five regions. Hence the complete B.B.C. network consists of Head Office (London), Midland Region, North Region, Scottish Region, Welsh and Western, and Belfast. Besides the main studios and offices in each region, certain studios formerly served by local stations have been retained. In a few cases where technical considerations make it difficult to give the standard service from the regional

transmitters, local stations have been maintained as such. These local stations have certain program powers of their own. They are, nevertheless, within the control of the Regional Directors. Although each station as a unit is in the charge of the Station Director, the Engineer-in-Charge of each station is independent within his technical sphere. He conforms to the Station Director's policy, but performs his work under the direct control of the Superintendent Engineer. It will be recalled that a corresponding feature of organization was objected to by the Bridgeman Committee in the case of the Post Office.

Centralization has frankly been the policy of the B.B.C. management. The Regional Director, who controls the regional programs, is the agent of the Corporation in his area for most purposes, but is responsible to the Director-General, through whom most of his business is conducted with officials at the Head Office. The progress of centralization has naturally been attended by controversy between those in favor of unity and those who advocate a greater degree of regional autonomy. One result appears indisputable: the general consensus of opinion throughout the country approves of the opportunity to choose between the national and the regional programs.

In the latter part of 1931, although financial arrangements had not been fully completed, the B.B.C. decided to develop an Empire broadcasting service. A permanent short-wave station has been built at Daventry, and the service is in successful operation. The saving resulting from the use of directional aerials is such that the transmitter is able to work on a sixteenth of the power that would be required for omnidirectional broadcasting. The new service is under the supervision of the Empire and Foreign branch of the B.B.C.

Having analyzed the principal outlines of the organization, the remainder of the discussion relating to management may be considered under the general heading of personnel. It

should be said in the first place that the staff of the B.B.C. would be much larger than 1,700 persons if the artists under contract were included. The figure mentioned takes account only of the permanent staff of the B.B.C., including of course a large number who manufacture and supervise the actual programs. The program branch is responsible for dealing with the detailed program communications to all stations, the heaviest expenditures of the entire organization, the settlement of copyright claims, and the program correspondence with thousands of listeners. However, most features that are sent over the air are supplied by persons or by organizations under contracts of varying length, rather than by permanent employees of the B.B.C. Large-scale negotiations with variety managers, the legitimate stage, concert promoters, lecture organizers, and news editors supply the foundation of the B.B.C.'s extra-mural talent. However, the B.B.C. has to adapt many of these programs to the form required by a new medium and subject to the interests of a cosmopolitan audience. Adaptation is therefore one of the principal staff duties.

The permanent employees of the B.B.C., unlike those of the other public service undertakings we have considered, are unorganized. Their status does not differ materially from that of persons employed by an ordinary private business. The reasons for non-organization are probably explained by the wide variety of duties involved in the work of the B.B.C. Moreover, the staff policies of the management have been so progressive that no strong incentive to unionize has arisen. For example, the Corporation has voluntarily adopted a retirement system for its employees. Salaries and wages compare favorably with those of other professional, technical, and clerical workers. The Corporation has expanded so rapidly that initiative and ability have been able to find their reward in promotions. This is not meant to suggest that personnel administration has reached the acme of perfection. However, it is true that the *esprit de corps* and the

initiative of the B.B.C. staff are immediately discernible by those who have dealings with the organization.

The only serious personnel difficulties have arisen in connection with the professional unions of entertainers. In these disputes the B.B.C. has sometimes refused to accept the conditions specified by the organized actors and the variety amalgamations, and has announced that it would, if necessary, build up an independent galaxy of its own stars. The present relationship existing between the B.B.C. and the organized artists may best be described as a truce. The issue involved is an important one affecting public policy, and it does not appear to be permanently settled at the present time.

It may be said that structurally the B.B.C. has not settled down into hard and fast lines. After ten years it is still experimenting and evolving. This is perfectly natural and entirely desirable. By the avoidance of water-tight compartments and the incorporation of the functional principle, a large degree of interaction and collaboration has been secured in the going concern. These factors, combined with an experienced and progressive leadership, have made it possible for the B.B.C. to expand in consonance with the requirements imposed by a rapidly growing business.

Centralization relative to personnel and policy is an outstanding characteristic of the undertaking. Regionalism and devolution, two of the principal desiderata advocated in Parliament by proponents of "business management of the public services," are lacking in this enterprise. Responsibility has been concentrated as in the Post Office, and for much the same reason: someone must be accountable to Parliament or to the public when the policies or the activities of the management are questioned. There is also the "strong-willed" leadership which has been referred to above. The result is that the B.B.C. has evoked considerably more accusations of "dictatorship" in recent years than has the Post Office. Should centralization be regarded as an accusa-

tory matter? The question is usually treated emotionally rather than rationally. Can management be divorced from policy? Is this possible in the case of the B.B.C. at any rate? It may be said that policy and management are more inseparable in broadcasting than in any other public service. If the centralization of responsibility for policy and management is considered objectionable, what practicable alternative is there?

PROGRAM POLICY

The primary purpose of British broadcasting, as we have already stated, is cultural. There has been "a conscious social purpose in its development, but not to the prejudice of wholesome and satisfying entertainment." The foundation of broadcasting policy, Sir John Reith has written, "should be the endeavor of the broadcasting authority to bring into the maximum possible number of homes in the country an appreciation of all that is best in every sphere of human endeavor and achievement." At the same time he reminds us that in a business which covers so many different lines of activity it is impossible to enunciate one comprehensive policy. There may be, in fact, as many policies as there are lines of activity, and with every policy subsidiary and derivative ones as well. It is important that the difficulties of studying program policy should be completely recognized at the outset. All we can hope to do is to explain the relative emphasis given to various types and classes of subject-matter and attempt to supply the materials for an objective appraisal of the general policy. These matters will be approached from another angle in the following section, which deals with criticisms of the B.B.C. and its policies.

An analysis of the 1932 program of the B.B.C. reveals that in the national service, originating from Daventry National and London Regional, the greatest amount of time was

given to light music, which occupied approximately 22 per cent, while serious music accounted for 19 per cent of the total time. The balance was made up principally as follows: news and running commentaries, 10 per cent; school and adult education, 8 per cent; talks, 8 per cent; children's hour, 6 per cent; and religious services $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The percentages from regional broadcasts gave a slightly different result. Light music occupied almost 40 per cent of the time, serious music 16 per cent, news and running commentaries 8 per cent, religious services 4 per cent, variety 3 per cent, and talks and educational features about 4 per cent.

Concerning program policy as a whole the B.B.C. has stated officially that "Program-building is still (perhaps always will be) far more of an art than an exact science." Experience has, nevertheless, declared some fixed points and these may be briefly set forth here:

> "(1) There is no such thing as the 'mean listener'; the public falls into many different groups, each consisting at any given moment of persons of like taste and mood. Therefore (*a*) the day's program should contain 'something for everyone,' and (*b*) in the scheme for a week or longer each genre should be represented proportionately to its intrinsic importance and the strength of its following.
>
> "(2) Alternatives imply, hour for hour, contrasted matter. But this idea of contrast has itself evolved with experience. Extremes do not contrast well; an extreme should be balanced by a mean."

In the actual presentation of the broadcast the B.B.C. has adopted the impersonal type of announcing. The American "master of ceremonies," with his expansive personality, is unknown to British broadcasting. However, the announcing personnel is not all of one type, and persons other than announcers (for example, drama directors) may, and do in varying degree, participate directly in the presentation. The British method of impersonal presentation is necessarily more formal than that in certain other countries, notably the United States.

Not long ago, during a debate in the House of Commons, the Postmaster-General stated that probably every listener

has his own idea about what is desirable in wireless broadcasts. Some people, he said, want the B.B.C. "to be gay"; others say "Too much uplift." As a matter of fact it is almost impossible to discover exactly what listeners want, but the B.B.C. attempts to tap diverse channels of opinion as best it can by inviting suggestions and by sending out inquiries. However, a policy of not offering as much frivolity as the average person might desire has been consciously adopted. The B.B.C. has agreed to develop the nation's appreciation of good music and of education. Sir John Reith has stated candidly that "The best way to give the public what it wants is to reject the express policy of giving the public what it wants. Or simpler still, if you set out to give the public what it wants, you won't do it." This policy is not meant to be "autocratic or arbitrary in attitude or procedure," the Director-General has emphasized, but it is based on the experience that "a supply of good things creates a demand." Although the utterance caused criticism from the press at the time, Sir John Reith has reiterated his belief that

> "to set out to 'give the public what it wants' is a dangerous and fallacious policy, involving almost always an underestimate of the public's intelligence and continual lowering of standard. Thus, paradoxically, it turns out to be not the monopoly system that is obliged to play for safety. On the contrary, it is not insistent autocracy but wisdom that suggests the policy of prosecuting carefully and persistently a basis of giving people what you believe they should like and will come to like, granting, of course, discretion and human understanding on the part of those who carry out the policy—and resolution."

The B.B.C.'s policy regarding educational broadcasts deserves special consideration, because it is at one and the same time so important and yet fraught with so many difficulties. A Member of Parliament recently referred to the B.B.C. as "the university of the common man," and Mr. Lloyd George concluded that because of the changes which have taken place in the journalistic world, he knew of no other agency which could "present the vast issues upon which the life of the country depended except the British

Broadcasting Corporation." In the same debate, however, the Member representing London University pointed out that "it was forgotten that the Charter of the B.B.C. was granted on the specific promise that there should be a widely spread education broadcast." The speaker stated that out of 300 or 400 broadcasts in ten months, "only four of those contributions could, in any sense, be described as promoting education in a wide and liberal sense." He therefore pleaded for a wider use of educational opportunities in the programs. On the other hand, many people may be found who state that the B.B.C. devotes too much time to "uplift."

The B.B.C. management appears to be aware of the difficulties accompanying the use of the wireless as an educational medium. For example, the Director-General of the B.B.C. stated to a group of educators in New York City that "The attachment of the adjective 'educational' to any matter is apt to weigh heavily against its acceptance. People object to any open proposal to educate them. A pontifical attitude, or still more the suspicion in ordinary people's minds that it exists, is perhaps the greatest danger that Radio Education has to face. It is not normal indifference that has to be overcome, but definite aversion in those very educable elements that you wish to reach."

The broadcasting of religion is one of the outstanding policies of the B.B.C., and one that creates controversy and criticism. This is to be expected. The emphasis placed on religious subject-matter may be measured by the fact that it receives four-fifths as much time as talks. Some critics state that religion is given altogether too much time, others object to the necessity of turning to Continental stations for diversity on Sundays, and others find the broadcasts either too fundamental or too liberal. Needless to say, many people consider them just right.

The B.B.C.'s policy regarding religious broadcasting was explained in the 1933 *Yearbook*. The policy began in the

first months of the Company's existence. The evolution has been described as follows:

"The simple religious address of those first days soon developed into the Studio Service; this again was supplemented by the outside broadcasts of services from churches. To these were added in the course of time, first a mid-week service and then a short daily morning service; other services and religious programs, occasional or regular, find their places in the schedule; and lastly, there is the Epilogue, a form rather of meditation than of service, by which the Sunday evening's program is closed on a note in harmony with the day."

Concerning the control of religious broadcasting, it has been stated, "Each of the Christian churches (subject of course to the condition that it possesses a large membership) now has, and welcomes, its opportunities of conducting services and preaching to the nation—and the Religious Advisory Committees have reached a considerable measure of practical agreement as to what constitutes non-sectarian Christianity that can be preached to a Christian country of many confessions." Because of the regional nature of the B.B.C. network) allowance has been made for religious solidarities existing in certain sections of the country, particularly in Scotland.

The basis of the "Sunday policy" of the B.B.C. has been officially explained as follows: (*a*) dedication of certain Sunday hours to religious broadcasts, (*b*) abstention from broadcasting, religious or other, during normal church hours, and (*c*) the preservation of the character of the "British Sunday," so far as broadcasting can operate to preserve it. Concerning the place of religion in broadcasting and the general results of the policy, Sir John Reith stated in 1930,

"Religion is certainly a controversial subject, at any rate as the term is commonly understood. On analysis, however, one finds that there are large numbers of people who, while owning no allegiance to any recognizable church or sect, regard themselves, and often with every justification, as religious people. One is well aware that the alienation of great numbers from the church can be mistaken for an alienation from religion, whereas in fact it is nothing of the sort. The popularity of the Sunday services, the Bible readings, the daily morning service,

and the Epilogue, would be astonishing had it not been anticipated. It leads to the conclusion that there is still a place of priority for religion in this country, a response to it and a need for it, that the country is religious at heart, or capable of being so, and this in spite of seeming indifference, diminishing attendance at church, and the growth of materialism and irresponsibility."

On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that British advertisers find that Sunday is the best time to advertise in English from Continental stations.

When policies are based upon convictions it is inevitable that strong objections and strong approval should be found in opposition. It is a short step from the consideration of B.B.C. policies to the criticisms that are levelled at the organization from various and sundry quarters.

THE B.B.C. AND ITS CRITICS

The life of a broadcasting official is not designed to increase his popularity. Even a seemingly innocent field like music arouses sharp differences of opinion. All broadcasting involves either taste or opinion, and hence no one may be expected to be pleased all of the time. It is quite natural, therefore, that at one time or another the B.B.C. should have many critics. Vested interests become alarmed, minorities and reactionaries protest, Liberals demand more controversy, indiscretions are bound to occur, and the management's power is inevitably regarded with suspicion if not with dislike. Despite these circumstances, the Postmaster-General stated recently that there are "10,000 satisfied but silent listeners" for every critic. So far as the future of the B.B.C. is concerned it is only the final judgment of the individual and the general effect of all criticisms that really count; but each of these factors is influenced by the various sorts of criticism levelled at the B.B.C.

The most persistent and powerful critics of the B.B.C. are those whose interests are—or are thought to be—adversely affected by the development of broadcasting. Other old-

established interests and operations have feared that broadcasting would "queer the pitch" for them in one way or another. These fears were particularly strong and actively expressed in the early years of the wireless. The newspaper interests formed a solid phalanx of opposition, apprehensive lest their circulation might be adversely affected. Attempts were made to charge for newspaper space occupied by program announcements. News broadcasts were openly opposed and in early years satisfactory arrangements were difficult to make. Moreover, the publishing activities of the B.B.C. have always been regarded with disapproval by the newspaper fraternity. Suspicion and enmity have by no means disappeared, but relations have become increasingly more satisfactory. In the 1930 *Yearbook* of the B.B.C. the attitude of the press toward broadcasting was characterized thus, "It cannot be described as ever having been cordial, although it has fluctuated between definite hostility and mere watchfulness." In recent months the attitude of the newspaper interests has tended to change from "hostility on its own behalf to active, but by no means invariably informed and responsible, criticism on behalf of the listener's interests as it sees them."

Many of the fears held by vested interests in the early years of broadcasting have tended to disappear. Concert promoters and theatrical managers no longer regard the radio as destructive, although the full result of the competition may not yet have appeared. Owners of musical and literary copyrights have discovered that the value of their property has not been depreciated; in fact, the reverse is usually the case. The churches, which were said in some cases to be disturbed about religious broadcasting, now in most cases regard it as a valuable ally.

The principal criticisms of the B.B.C. arise from minorities who contend that they are not given a fair opportunity to use the facilities of broadcasting. This is the point at which unified control pinches tightly. In a House of Commons debate centering around this point, the Postmaster-General

stated that there is no foundation to the criticism, because it comes from the right as well as from the left, and hence the criticisms "cancel each other out." This is not a satisfactory answer. It has a bearing upon the question of alleged bias on the part of the B.B.C., but it does not afford a satisfactory reply to the charge that minorities are denied a fair opportunity to be heard. It might as well be admitted that the problem could probably never be solved in a way that would satisfy everyone. Interests which complain that they are not fairly treated at present might not gain a great deal under a system of competition in broadcasting. This does not mean that the present situation is incapable of improvement. Sir John Reith has stated that the only wise policy open to the B.B.C. is not to be too far behind public opinion and not too far ahead of it. Needless to say, this principle entails a high degree of judgment and discretion.

A striking illustration of the dissatisfaction arising from the unequal treatment of various economic and political interests was presented in the recent conference of the Cooperative party. Mr. A. V. Alexander, who was the First Lord of the Admiralty in the Labor Government, stated that the B.B.C.'s denial of the right to disseminate the Cooperative party's philosophy, ideals, and political outlook was "little short of a scandal." "If it is possible for the B.B.C. to give the right to a—[person] like Sir Oswald Mosley," he said—"then it is high time that our six million cooperators should have equal access to the ether as that given to Mosley." The Cooperative party has not been denied all access to the microphone, but has been refused permission to participate in particular series. In the common law, public utilities were supposed to give equal treatment to consumers desiring to use the service. Is it possible or desirable to apply this principle to the broadcasting monopoly?

The amount of controversy that has been sent over the air has increased in recent years, but as has been said, considerable dissatisfaction with the present amount still exists. In

the early months of its existence the B.B.C. was forbidden to broadcast any controversial subject-matter. In January 1927 the Postmaster-General informed the Corporation that it must refrain from broadcasting any statement expressing the opinion of the Corporation on matters of public policy, and secondly, prohibited speeches or lectures containing statements on topics of political, religious, or industrial controversy. The ban on controversial broadcasts was not withdrawn until March 1928. Since that time the B.B.C.'s policies relative to the presentation of controversial subjects have developed along fairly definite lines. Discussions usually take the form of a debate, or of a question and answer conversation. Rarely is only one side of a question presented, and in such cases a speaker with opposing views is usually scheduled for a later occasion. In all of these broadcasts the platform manner is discouraged and the fireside demeanor is encouraged. If the program is broadcast from the studio the speaker is expected to submit his manuscript in advance and to adhere to it in delivery.

Criticisms of unfairness have arisen when educational talks have been used by politicians to influence opinion on current controversies, and when the opposition has not been presented with an immediate opportunity to answer political speeches. In a debate on B.B.C. policies, which occurred in the House of Commons on February 22, 1933, Sir Stafford Cripps stated that the theory of factual and non-controversial Ministerial talks had been gradually extended to cover some of the most controversial matter. There were, for instance, the four broadcasts on the Ottawa resignations; all of those who spoke took the opportunity to attack the Opposition. There was the broadcast by the Secretary of State for India, and there was the Prime Minister's broadcast on unemployment. In all of these cases, he said, the Opposition was denied any facility whatever to reply. In the same debate Mr. Churchill, who had complained several times because he had been denied the privilege of broadcast-

ing on the India question, characterized the political talks arranged by the B.B.C. as "the copious stream of pontifical anonymous mugwumpery with which we have been dosed so long." Recognizing that the B.B.C. has had "an immensely difficult task in dealing with the question of political broadcasts, and since no one could blame them if they had committed errors of judgment or of practice (because there was no adequate machinery to assist them in carrying out the function properly)," it was suggested that an advisory committee on political broadcasts should be created. So far the proposal has not materialized satisfactorily.

Part of the B.B.C.'s difficulties appear to have been due to an unrealistic interpretation of what is comprehended by "political" and "non-political." In an effort to get away from party alignments the management has sometimes scheduled "non-political" talks on current public issues. In the average person's mind a discussion is not made non-political simply by labelling it as such, or by disclaiming any party preference. So long as modern government is concerned with almost every social issue, any discussion is bound to be political—that is, it must deal with policy. In an effort to escape from party responsibility the B.B.C. runs the risk of being accused of unfair tactics and institutional bias.

The problem of political broadcasts reaches its most acute stage at the time of general elections. Serious dissatisfaction has arisen over election broadcasts, and reform has been suggested. It has been proposed that all political broadcasting should be discontinued a week or more in advance of the general election. Herbert Morrison expressed a widely held view in these words,

> "If I, personally, had had a decisive voice in the Labor party about broadcasting arrangements in connection with the 1931 general election, I should have been inclined to insist upon Labor having a bigger show or refused to have the Labor case put at all. In the latter case I would have denounced in public the proposed arrangements which gave the Coalition such superior treatment, and put the onus on the B.B.C., and/or the Government to withdraw the whole thing or to outrage

public feeling by allowing the parties to the Coalition Government to put their case without the Labor case being heard. Electioneering by wireless is, however, so difficult to be fair about that there is something to be said for stopping it for a week before polling day or even altogether."

The policy in the past has been to give equal opportunity to the Government and to the Opposition. This has meant that, because of the three-party system, the Government actually received twice as much time as any other party. Now that parties have split, and that a National Government has been formed, the allotment of the opposition parties is even more unpopular. Among those who favor the continuance of election broadcasts the proposal has been originated that the parties not in power should invariably be given more broadcasting time than the party in power.

Some of the most severe criticisms of the B.B.C. have arisen because of its alleged "indiscretions." The debate on the B.B.C. which occurred in February 1933—the first one of any importance in six years—was the direct consequence of the most notable of these incidents: a broadcast on New Year's Eve which evoked a protest from the Polish Government. The difficulty arose primarily because the views expressed were not those of a responsible leader, but were an impersonal utterance. In the House of Commons it was said that the incident was not caused by the B.B.C.'s lack of independence, but solely because it was "perplexed and baffled." It might more accurately be described as a "blunder." There have been surprisingly few occurrences of this kind—far fewer, it is believed, than if broadcasting were operated as an official organ of the Government. It is human to err; and it is hard to imagine a system in which controversy is permitted which would be free from occasional indiscretions. "Censorship" is not infallible.

The encouragement of controversial broadcasts has been called "a bold experiment"; but there is rather general agreement that it has proved a successful one. There appears to be a growing conviction in Parliament that education on

economic and political issues should be extended rather than diminished. For example, the Member representing the Scottish universities stated in the House of Commons that, "opinion, however dangerous, was far safer in the open air than underground." At one time the B.B.C. argued that unorthodox broadcasts should be prevented because the listener cannot protect himself, and hence must be safeguarded by rigid selectivity at Broadcasting House. This is particularly true, it has been said, in the case of subjects not suitable for broadcasting. This reasoning is not very convincing. If the listener objects he can turn off his radio, just as the reader can burn his paper. Mr. Winston Churchill said he believed he expressed the general feeling in the House in holding that there should be "a new, wider, and freer use of this great instrument, which could bring, if it was opened to the political life of the nation, enhancement of the strength of the State" and the establishment "on a more permanent basis of the great institutions which this island has evolved."

CONCLUSION

The British broadcasting system is essentially a compromise between the commercially actuated and privately managed type of control and the political broadcasting regime operated as an instrument of the governing party. This being a realistic world, it is influenced by the social and political assumptions underlying British institutions generally. However, its underlying theories probably come as close to obtaining independence and impartiality as any form of control which could be devised. The broadcasting official is free to concentrate on his art, on public service, on programs that will increase the appreciation and the knowledge of all classes.

The B.B.C. is subject to public control in all important respects, and yet its program policies are not subject to the dictation of the party in power. Provisions in the Corporation's license which might provide this loop-hole have never been

used and are not likely to be so long as present relationships continue. (However, the activity of the B.B.C. during the general strike of 1926 is held in some quarters to be undistinguishable from direct government intervention.) Hence the policies and the actions of the Corporation, in a positive sense, are the sole responsibility of the Board of Governors and of the permanent officials.

Six years of experience under the public utility trust form of organization have shown that the B.B.C.'s management is adaptable, progressive, and responsive to new opportunities and demands. This has hardly been a long enough period in which to formulate a final judgment regarding the ultimate worth of the present form, because its business has expanded so rapidly that the Corporation has not been confronted with the usual problems which arise when expansion becomes slower and the enthusiasm of youth wears off.

The framework of the B.B.C. organization affords only a partial understanding of the institution. Personality—particularly that of the Director-General—is the indispensable, the dominant consideration. The B.B.C. has "atmosphere," because the ideas and the ideals of a man have controlled its development. Everything about the organization is positive and purposeful. "I realize how important is the personal factor in an organization of the B.B.C.'s type," its Director-General has said. The object of the B.B.C. is to provide the "best" in every field of activity. But no way has yet been discovered of getting everyone to agree what is "best." This is obviously more difficult in the field of opinion than in the realm of taste. Herbert Morrison has therefore written that "it is a matter for argument as to whether the Director-General of the B.B.C. should or should not be a strong personality, if we remember the balancing of views, prejudices, and tastes which are big factors in the programme-making of the B.B.C." The assertion that the B.B.C. is a "benevolent autocracy" is the only ground on which continuing differences of viewpoint are found.

The status of the B.B.C. will normally be reconsidered in 1936. At the present time there appears to be no serious question that the constitutional position of broadcasting will remain as it is. The monopolistic nature of broadcasting also seems to be unassailable. Within the framework of the organization, however, the issue is that of greater Democracy in the popular sense of the term. Judging from indications, the specific questions around which support and opposition may be expected to rally are these: greater or less accountability to Parliament; centralization or more regional autonomy; more active participation of the Board of Governors in the guidance of the Corporation; and the desirability of increasing the influence of advisory committees. These problems deserve a great deal of careful thought.

Speakers in the House of Commons frequently remind the country that the British broadcasting system is the best in the world. Imitation is undoubtedly the highest form of flattery—and the world has imitated. But it must be remembered that society not only moulds institutions; society is itself remade by institutions—particularly if they be monopolies. Broadcasting is the strategic field in which all of the country's intelligence and cooperative ability must be pooled if the stewardship granted to the B.B.C. is to be wisely used in the guidance of national development.