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British Radio Broadcasting and its Audience 1918-1939.

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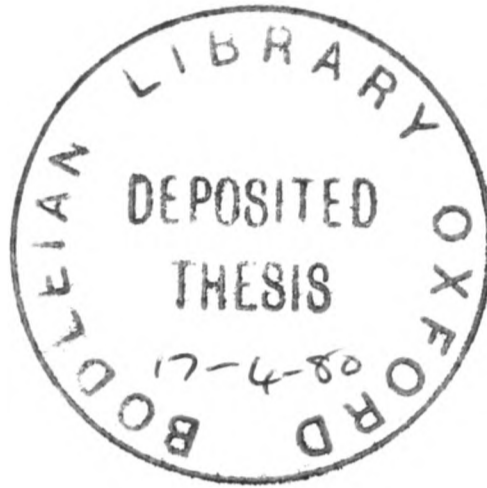
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After 1918, radio broadcasting was an important example of the wide range of technological developments which greatly influenced British society. Previously, very little detailed attention has been devoted to the social consequences of the enormous increase in listening to broadcast programmes which occurred before 1939.

This analysis commences with an investigation of the growth, distribution and structure of the radio audience. It also establishes the main economic and technical influences on the pattern of transmission and reception. The response of the audience to the medium is displayed by reference to the comments and activities of listeners' pressure groups, whilst the views of a rival medium - the national press - are collected by means of a content analysis. The work of inter-war social surveyors is used to place broadcasting in the context of other important social changes which were occurring. The reaction of the BBC is analysed to discover the evolution in the relationship between the two sides of the microphone, whilst an examination of BBC listener research material provides detailed evidence on audience tastes and habits. Finally, three localities are examined to expose the important facets of grassroots behaviour and verify other findings.

Throughout the period, the dominance of economic and technological influences on broadcasters and listeners alike is very clear, particularly in the context of an emerging consumer society. Some of the changes in social behaviour attributable to broadcasting were predictable, some unexpected: others depended on the circumstances of listeners and there were many variations in the rate and extent of these changes. Some themes stand out: broadcasting brought immediacy to the reporting of national issues, creating a greater sense of national identity and involvement. Listening also changed the pattern of leisure activity, modified the structure of the family and helped to create a more knowledgeable population.



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Abstract

After 1918, British Society was enormously influenced by the application of several technological innovations: the internal combustion engine was utilised extensively in the motor vehicle, electricity was supplied throughout the country by a national grid system and radio was developed to form the public broadcasting system. All of these innovations were applied extremely rapidly and within twenty years radio broadcasting was elevated from experimental obscurity to the commonplace of everyday existence.

Each of these powerful and influential innovations pervaded most aspects of British life. The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the social and cultural consequences of radio broadcasting in the context of a rapidly developing technological influence on society. The technological development has been viewed in relation to the economic fortunes of inter-war Britain and the social consequences have been seen in terms of the changing pattern of leisure and recreation before the outbreak of war in September 1939.

The main problem faced in this undertaking has been to confine attention to the salient themes in social changes attributable to broadcasting. Broadcasting had a part to play in so many social, cultural and political activities that it is difficult to concentrate on certain important questions and avoid straying generally over the whole range of social activity. Certainly few of the possible objects of attention have received any previous treatment by historians. Apart from a few, largely institutional works on the BBC and some biographical or auto-biographical books by broadcasters, there are comparatively few examples of research into the social, cultural or economic consequences of broadcasting. Indeed this is quite typical of the regrettable dearth of any social historical research on the period since 1918. The absence of any other research is one justification for this thesis and it has left a very wide scope for this analysis.

To concentrate attention, many aspects of social change have had to be neglected or passed over altogether and the intention has been to concentrate on major changes, leaving signposts for the multitude of other activities which would merit substantial research in their own right.

A further difficulty which has probably discouraged research is the problem of gathering widely scattered source material and of attributing social changes to the influence of broadcasting. The role of other media and a wide range of economic and technological influences must always be considered in association with broadcasting.

The broad distribution and scarcity of sources demands a series of different approaches. The inquiry begins by establishing the available information about the growth, distribution and structure of the audience. Unfortunately the licence returns are the major source and the detailed returns have been destroyed by the GPO. However, the BBC has retained some summaries of the information and, in combination with the census returns, it is possible to build up a fairly reliable impression of the emerging audience.

This pattern of development has received further examination to assess the extent of economic and technological influences on the transmission and reception of broadcast programmes.

With a clearer impression of the subject it is then possible to move on to an analysis of audience responses to the medium. In this respect audience opinions are judged by examining the views of leading wireless organisation, operating on the premise that such pressure groups led audience opinion on many questions of programme criticism and broadcasting policy. The press is also examined for its views - partly as a reflection of audience opinion but also as an example of opinion leadership. The pressure group is atypical of audience opinion because it is more committed and certainly better informed than the average listener but the representative nature of the opinions must be accepted - leading opinion if not necessarily reflecting their conviction. The variety of press opinion must be studied systematically and the papers were chosen for analysis according to circulation and political persuasion. A content analysis was used to build a solid impression of the direction and flow of comment. This part of the research is completed by the use of inter-war social surveys. Their commentary on the audience is limited but it is possible to use some of the observations on changes in social behaviour and to go some way towards placing the audience in the context of leisure and recreation.

Although the emphasis of this investigation has been placed on the audience, the development of listening was also a function of the relationship between the audience, the broadcasters and the broadcasting institutions. Furthermore, the BBC Listener Research Section is a major source of evidence on audience behaviour. Thus the reaction of the BBC to the emerging audience is examined, stressing the assumptions which were made about the control of the medium and the structure of its output.

The final part of the research switches the emphasis to the grassroots. Three localities, selected for their contrasting conditions, are studied to judge the place of broadcasting in the community. The scatter of evidence makes this a particularly challenging prospect.

Many hitherto unrevealed aspects of the influence of broadcasting on society have been successfully exposed in the course of this inquiry. It is immediately apparent that the growth of listening was not evenly distributed by region or by social class. Economic, technological and, to a certain extent, physical constraints on listening were dominant before 1939. Technical barriers restricted the spread of listening to the peripheries of the country: the North and the West were particularly badly affected. Many other factors of technical interest have also arisen. The contribution of the BBC's Regional Scheme and the expansion of relay exchanges changed the pattern of reception and increased the range of contact with the audience. The rapid improvements in the efficiency, flexibility and design of receivers have also emerged as important encouragements to the expanding audience. The gradually falling price of sets and changes in the standard of living heavily influenced the pattern of growth in licence holding and diminished the working class membership of the audience. Economic influences also contributed to the controls in the regional pattern of listening.

The audience response to the new medium was varied and much of the material has cast new light on the development of attitudes. The role of pressure groups in the foundation of the BBC and its early advance is shown to have been much more important than had been considered previously. They provided the personnel to man

the expanding service and the listening justification for further progress when they formed the entire audience from 1918 - 1922. Furthermore, they contributed to the final decisions on the structure of the licencing system and, to a lesser extent, on the form of the public broadcasting system which was adopted in 1927. They were less successful in influencing the internal decision making process of the BBC and faded badly from sight during the thirties. Their role was largely formative - stimulating the audience but then being cast aside by the sheer numbers of non-specialist listeners and the policies of the broadcasting controllers.

The analysis of the press is largely successful in exposing the issues which arose in broadcasting throughout the period. The press raised questions which it expected would either influence or represent and reflect the views of its readers. The press emerged as a strong influence on audience attitudes, often building impressions and criticisms rather than reflecting them. Newspaper advertising of radio sets was the most considerable means of attracting potential listeners but the press was also very interested in the control of broadcasting, the political output, the style of music and the provision of entertainment. The content analysis has effectively demonstrated the priorities in criticism and the seasonal pattern of comment and advertising also has emerged very well.

The use of social survey material has been less successful. The poor quality and quantity of the available work reflects the limitations of this contemporary audience research. Some conclusions from other sources have been confirmed but the main contribution has concerned the context of broadcasting in inter-war leisure.

The BBC reaction to its audience was increasingly sympathetic. Gradually interest in the tastes and habits of the audience developed and the concession of organised listener research suggested, implicitly, that the views of the audience would eventually have some bearing on the programme structure and content. However, the original approach towards the audience - a self-determined policy of broadcasting standards and editorial control - was extremely resilient and the mood for obtaining a clearer impression of the audience changed almost imperceptibly. Nonetheless once the principle of listener research was conceded, the work proceeded extremely

quickly. The material produced was officially experimental but it was of good quality and, despite being confined to the late nineteen-thirties, has much retrospective value. Most of the information has never been published before. The habits of listeners were exposed most strongly and their tastes for programmes were increasingly the subject of research before 1939. The main surprise which emerged was that the contrasts by sex, age and region were much less pronounced than expected.

In the study of the localities, many of the earlier conclusions are supported and many more previously unperceived facets of audience behaviour are exposed. The activities of the press and wireless organisations were mirrored at local level with some minor but interesting variations. The economic and physical conditions of the selected areas also show varied influences on the listening pattern. Some entirely new areas are opened up. In local politics, the retail trade and local authority activities - such as the control of broadcast education, legal constraints on relay exchanges or aerials and the library service - broadcasting produced some novel changes in behaviour. In many cases, the influence of broadcasting on the audience in each locality is seen much more clearly. For instance, some events, such as political occasions, were severely diminished by broadcasting; others, such as reading, were selectively affected and some, such as the celebration of royal occasions, were decidedly heightened. In fact the change in the relationship of the population with national activities can only be seen to good effect in the localities.

The final assessment reviews the main themes which run through the whole inquiry. The social consequences of economic and technological influences are re-emphasised in the context of the changing pattern of leisure and the emerging consumer society. The quality of immediacy which radio brought to the supply of news and entertainment is placed in its context of a more cohesive national community. Radio also contributed to a more informed population - expanding the range of interests and experiences which each listener could normally expect. Inevitably many aspects of the relationship between broadcasting and society have escaped really detailed analysis and brief directions have been given for the possible course of future research. Finally, despite all the social influence of

broadcasting, some aspects remained unchanged and comment has been passed on the lack of social recognition between broadcasters and many listeners which still existed in 1939.

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Preface

I would like to thank those who have helped me in one way or another with the preparation of my thesis. Many individuals and institutions have provided assistance and facilities in the course of my work and I owe them my gratitude. I must make a special mention of Asa Briggs and Chelly Halsey, who offered some extremely valuable ideas and corrected errors of fact, but my greatest debt is to Brian Harrison. His contribution has been greater than I can express. He set me on course at the very beginning and has tirelessly provided helpful criticisms and encouragement at every stage of my writing and research. Finally I must acknowledge the considerable support of my parents and of Jane Sutton with whom I discussed most of the problems which arose in writing the thesis. She has spent many hours scrutinising the final draft for inconsistencies of presentation and has efficiently weeded out the more wayward spellings.

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List of Abbreviations

- BBC - British Broadcasting Company (1922-1927)
British Broadcasting Corporation (1927 -)
- BIPO - British Institute of Public Opinion
- CCBAE - Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education
- GPO - General Post Office
- IBC - International Broadcasting Company
- NFWI - National Federation of Women's Institutes
- PCS - Programme Correspondence Section
- RMA - Radio Manufacturers' Association
- RSAGB - Relay Services Association of Great Britain
- RSGB - Radio Society of Great Britain
- WEA - Workers' Educational Association
- WSL - Wireless Society of London

PART 1

THE AUDIENCE

Chapter 1

Introduction.

Technological development and its concomitant social change is a fundamental theme in human development; a theme which has spread wider and continually intensified since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. In the case of radio, the development and use of the invention was extremely rapid. As the basis for a regular broadcasting system, established in 1922, radio quickly consolidated its position in British society to the point where its influence was unquestioned. By 1935, 98% of the British population could hear broadcast programmes if they possessed a receiver.¹ The audience consisted of some thirty million people.² The power of radio as a medium of instant communication and entertainment brought almost everyone within its reach. Such a persuasive and persistent influence was capable of generating considerable social changes but unfortunately the manner and extent of these changes has so far remained a matter for speculation because the crucial and formative stages in the development of broadcasting have rarely been the subject of detailed and critical investigation. Contemporary commentators and social surveyors paid little attention to the advance of the phenomenon and, subsequently, few social scientists or historians have undertaken research into the social influences of broadcasting.

A fascinating challenge is thrown open by this neglect and the purpose of this thesis will be to examine some of the social consequences arising from the formative years of broadcasting between 1918 and 1939. If it is surmised that broadcasting has some influence on the ideas and activities of the population, then the range of subjects which can be researched is enormous. It would be interesting to discover if broadcasting energised people; encouraged them to develop new interests, or if it reduced them to passivity. It would be fascinating to discover the influence of broadcasting on ideas about the shape of the family, or about social and moral attitudes. There is a great deal to discover about the role of broadcasting in shaping public attitudes towards politicians, other countries, the surrounding locality and even towards the broadcasters themselves.

The period between 1918 and 1939 was a distinct phase in the development of broadcasting. It is essential to examine the period from 1918 to 1922 because it was then that many crucial decisions were taken about the future pattern of a regular broadcasting service. After 1922 the utilisation of radio technology continued and the broadcasting system was developed further until the outbreak of war which marked an abrupt end to this era - not just because of the inevitable social and political upheaval, but also because wartime introduced a completely different phase in the use and influence of broadcasting.

Television has been largely excluded. Its development continued from the early twenties and in November 1936 regular transmissions were begun by the BBC. However, the audience never rose above 10,000³, was confined entirely to the London reception area for the Alexandra Palace transmitter and the service was closed down on the outbreak of war in 1939.⁴ Consequently television was not a serious social force until after 1945.

Before proceeding further a few definitions are required. The words 'radio', 'wireless', and 'broadcasting' were all used in a rather casual, random and interchangeable way during the period before 1939. 'Radio' tended to be the more formal term for the process of sending signals without physical connections between transmitter and receiver. Derived from the Latin for rays, this word had been used in scientific research, particularly during the nineteenth century. Radio was eventually adopted because it was considered to be the most accurate, scientific term and because it was hoped to use it as the basis for greater international uniformity in terminology.⁵ For instance, it was widely used in the United States. Otherwise the most common parlance in Britain for the sending of signals was 'wireless'. The earliest practical examples of sending messages were described as 'wireless telegraphy' as, for instance, when Marconi first demonstrated the phenomenon in 1896.⁶ The first legislation prepared to help the Post Office handle the new medium was styled the 'Wireless Telegraphy Act' in 1904.⁷ When speech was transmitted, the term was naturally 'wireless telephony' and the common abridged form 'wireless'

was confusingly applied to both methods of communication. The choice of wireless was only superficially obvious since even the most primitive crystal set needed an extensive aerial wire and a tuning coil using considerable quantities of wire. This contributed to the rejection of the term by formal circles. 'Broadcasting' was used equally casually to describe almost any form of signal transmission and reception. Only gradually was it limited to mean the more specific transmission of programmes by telephony for large audiences - as opposed to private messages from, for example, ship to shore. The arrival of television complicated the definition still further and the BBC attempted, without success, to amend broadcasting to 'sound broadcasting' to distinguish it more clearly.⁸ In lay usage, the terms 'wireless' and 'radio' were interchangeable and only gradually did radio gain the upperhand. Unfortunately popular description was not aided by the lack of consensus on terminology elsewhere. The confusion was compounded by the continuing issue by the government of 'Wireless' rather than 'Radio' Acts before 1939. This interchangeability has to be accepted in the text of any study of broadcasting.

The absence of existing research into this question is at first sight quite perplexing. Certainly the lack of research did not imply a lack of interest in the medium. There was a great willingness to attribute social changes to radio and pass unsubstantiated comment on many aspects of the relationship between the broadcasters and their audience. Indeed, it would be surprising if radio had been completely ignored. The phenomenon was so enormous - both in terms of the number of people brought into contact with it and the potential which it possessed for influence. Few but the most hardened stoic could resist at least one aspect of the output emitted by radio.

Before 1939, the lack of interest could be explained by the lack of sufficient perspective needed to judge the social changes which occurred and attribute them through detailed research to radio or some other influence. Moreover, as in the post-war period, the materials for research into the activities of the radio audience were never conveniently collected together. They were discouragingly diffused into all the activities on which broadcasting

touched. Furthermore, the influence of radio broadcasting was not readily separable from the influences of other mass media or leisure activities.

As Asa Briggs has argued:

'despite all the talk of wireless being "permeating" and "ubiquitous", it is almost impossible to separate its social and cultural consequences from the tangle of social forces which were changing Britain during the 1920's and 1930's. The influence of broadcasting was neither exclusive nor necessarily paramount.' 9

For the post-war researcher, these problems are not entirely convincing reasons for the absence of any significant attempts to study broadcasting and its social consequences. The evidence exists but it requires some resourcefulness and determination to extract it. Unfortunately radio shares the fate of many other important social and scientific questions which emerged in British society after 1918. The absence of substantial interest in radio and broadcasting is equally applicable to the internal combustion engine and transport or the mains electricity supply and the growth of the consumer durable industry. There has been a general neglect of these supremely important influences on British history.

Where radio broadcasting is concerned the foundations for further research have at least been laid down. Asa Briggs has led the way with research into the related course of the institutional development of broadcasting. The comprehensive History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom¹⁰ has filled a considerable gap in institutional and cultural history. Inevitably it paid some attention to the social aspects of broadcasting but it could not hope to cover more than a small fragment of the potential. Of course, the institution, when formed, acted as a mould for many audience attitudes and opinions. In that sense the institutional history is a valuable support for social history. Such work has acted as a tremendous catalyst, amply demonstrating that there is a real need for a social historian to study the broadcasting audience more closely. The work of Briggs, Coase,¹¹ Paulu,¹² and others has generated a demand for a counter-weight. Their emphasis has centred on the institution looking at its audience. Crudely speaking, the corollary is the audience looking at the institution.

Briggs explained his concentration on the institutional side of broadcasting in this way:

'It was during the Second World War rather than before it that it [the BBC] fully achieved what had always been its aim, that of informing, inspiring - and diverting - a whole community. Yet because it always set out to do this, it is necessary at every point in the history of British broadcasting to turn back from social history to institutional history, to the strategic decisions taken inside the BBC to the relations between the BBC and the controllers of the other media, and to the philosophy of communication which Reith and his staff upheld.' 13

This, of course, he managed admirably, but he also appealed for a complementary but 'extraordinarily difficult' second approach:

'to concentrate on the impact of broadcasting on society, the divided society of the inter-war years, divided by age, by class, by education, and by region, yet more and more coming to accept radio as a part of life's routine.' 14

The challenge which Briggs offers can be readily accepted - without any illusions that the difficulties which will be faced can be easily surmounted. Indeed, some critics have been less than confident that such a challenge can be taken up at all. In his review of the first volume of Briggs' History, Goldthorpe argued that,

'one's chief doubt about this volume, as about the proposed work as a whole, concerns the treatment of wider questions of the social consequences of broadcasting. In this respect the evidence required to make other than vague or fairly obvious statements is lacking, and there is little the historian can do about it.' 15

The initial attempts to extract information about the audience do tend to confirm this opinion. The lack of research by social scientists and historians, and the absence of a substantial body of audience research by the broadcasters themselves, seriously complicates the collection of direct evidence on the structure of the audience and its relationship with the broadcasters. Scarcity dictates that measures must be taken to draw on a very wide range of sources in order to gather a significant impression of the influence of broadcasting.

Much of the evidence is of an impressionistic character - recorded observations of the comments and behaviour of many social groups - the opinions of commentators, of critics from inside and outside the BBC, of related organisations and of the press must be used. Unfortunately, even this course runs into serious problems. The literature of the period before the Second

World War was indifferent to all but the most general aspects of broadcasting influence. Certainly there are plenty of books which mention the subject and several which devoted considerable attention to the changes which broadcasting induced.¹⁶ Too frequently, however, the quality of the broadcasting studies was very low - a casual journalistic approach was normally preferred and opinions were usually of a speculative kind - sensationalised to help sales but rarely substantiated by detailed observation of the audience.¹⁷ Authors such as Beatrice Webb and George Orwell have left the occasional insight into audience behaviour but they do not provide a more substantial analysis, nor do they sustain their observation of the audience for more than a few months.¹⁸ It is interesting that socially conscious writers, academics and novelists rarely supplied more than the most fleeting and elusive reference to broadcasting.

It is evident that this dearth of good source materials is a serious barrier to the observation of the audience and presents many problems for detailed interpretation. However, since the Second World War, academics have taken an increasing interest in the media and the rapidly growing body of mass communications research can provide some assistance in the observation of broadcasting before 1939.¹⁹ Modern researchers have by no means covered all the areas of the relationship between broadcasters and their audience nor have they produced satisfactory answers to questions which have been examined in depth. Perhaps the first consensus to emerge was a piece of cautionary advice: that the influence of the media is normally a matter of reinforcement - very rarely is it a means of complete conversion or the sole cause of a change in opinion or behaviour.²⁰ Hence rapid and thoroughgoing changes should not be attributed solely to the influence of broadcasting nor should they be expected unless other social influences have predisposed the audience towards such changes. Recent research also demonstrates the collective influence of the media. Where it is possible to isolate the influence of broadcasting it should not be expected that a simple connection between social change and broadcasting has been discovered. It is probable that the influence of other media is also a contributory factor. For instance, an increase of interest in music revealed by the rising sales of gramophone records or musical instruments could be

attributed as much to an improving standard of elementary education or a more successful advertising campaign by the gramophone industry as to the influence of broadcasting.

Several approaches have been propounded as a means of attributing a causal connection to the effects of broadcasting alone. In the 1950s the most common approach was neatly coined by Lasswell's aphorism, 'who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?'²¹ This approach placed excessive emphasis on the broadcasting institution looking out towards its audience. To redress the balance in favour of the audience, the emphasis changed towards 'uses and gratifications'²² research, which looked more directly at, 'what people do with the media'.²³ This accords neatly with one of the main aims of this thesis - to relate broadcasting and its effects to the behaviour of the economic and social system between the wars.

The main flaw in the application of these post-war approaches is that they are all based on the assumption that radio and broadcasting already exist and, in many cases, are already complicated by the co-existence of television.²⁴ This is less reliably applied to an era when radio was quite new and developed virtually continuously without the presence of a large scale television service. Rival visual media such as the film and the newsreel did exist and must be considered, but they did not have the same home-based influence which television can apply and which has fundamentally changed the role of radio. Radio is now the day-time complement of television - omnipresent but subordinate. Before the Second World War radio was dominant but never universal. The use of modern research may, therefore, impute current behaviour into the past where the circumstances of listening were quite different.

The most serious objection, however, arises from the lack of suitable data before 1939. Many of the more recent approaches assume that detailed social survey statistics are available or that such research can be undertaken. Before 1939 this kind of assumption is clearly inapplicable. For instance, it is on the grounds of inadequate data that innovation diffusion analysis has to be rejected. For this approach to have any validity, quite detailed

information is required.²⁵

With these considerations in mind, the structure of this inquiry must now be established. The scarcity of source material does mean that any demographic information about the audience is at a very high premium and must be used as a basis from which to develop further research. Many fundamental questions must be answered: who are the listeners, where are they, how many of them are there, how old are they? All of these must be investigated if it is to be at all possible to proceed and learn more about the social changes wrought by broadcasting. The first part, therefore is devoted to the collection and analysis of the available statistics. The licence returns are the main raw material and they must be used carefully to build an impression of the changing composition of the audience. Despite the enormous rate of growth, the composition of the audience was never identical to that of the whole population in the United Kingdom before 1939.

Although the central purpose in this investigation is to examine a social relationship, technical and economic questions constantly impinged upon the transmission and the reception of broadcasting. Therefore, some attention must also be devoted to these influences on the rapidly growing audience. It is very easy to imagine, for instance, that radio was a homogeneous medium, consistent in the quality of its transmissions. The truth was considerably more complex. Radio was not invented in a magnificent and spontaneous combination of scientific knowledge and technical skill: it evolved and improved as new inventions and improvements were applied. There was never a uniform provision of the radio service before 1939 - radio broadcasting varied in the quality of transmission throughout the country. Reception conditions varied according to the different wavelengths used, the changing provision of BBC transmitters and the decidedly fixed problems of physical geography which blocked radio signals.²⁶ The social consequences of these technical changes and the economic circumstances in which they were made must be considered. Otherwise, many reasons for the pattern of listening would remain obscure.

Moreover, there was little consistency on the listening side of the microphone. The growth of the audience was influenced by the technical development of radio sets and by the financial circumstances of the population. Early radio sets were often cheap but rather crude crystal detectors. With the advances in radio technology, simple thermionic valve sets took over the market and these were in turn replaced by increasingly sophisticated multi-valve sets, which improved the qualities of reception and amplification. By 1939 the performance and reliability of the typical set had been improved out of all recognition from the sets available at the beginning of the public broadcasting service in November 1922. Furthermore, the changing costs of radio sets and the ten shilling annual broadcast licence were important factors for potential listeners to consider. The economic circumstances of these listeners and the pricing policy of radio manufacturers deserve a detailed inquiry. In the long term, radio could be a very economical means of supplying entertainment and information, within reach of all but the poorest. There is, however, little doubt that lack of income was a constraint on the growth of broadcast listening. As if to emphasise this point, some listeners attempted to avoid some of the costs by discarding sets altogether and using loudspeakers connected by cable to a relay exchange.

In search for evidence about the relationship between the broadcasters and their audience it seems sensible to turn to the listeners and try to collect evidence of their attitudes and responses. The diversity of the audience can be overwhelming - the infinite number of voices, shades of opinion and preference is particularly evident in this area of social study. To gain some focus, it is advisable to select an organised group, where a common voice can be heard; a group which is reasonably representative of the audience. Representativeness is extremely difficult to judge but a selection has to be made on the basis that some groups were more articulate, better informed and more determined than others in their opinions on broadcasting. Many of these groups attempted to influence and lead the views of those less committed around them and the subjects they chose for criticism cast some light

on the priorities in broadcasting which were most commonly of interest to the audience as a whole. The second part of the inquiry will be devoted to some of these representatives of audience opinion. For the sake of convenience, the first of these groups to be dealt with may be called 'wireless organisations'. These consisted largely of committed radio experimenters but also of some equally committed but non-technically minded listeners. Their value as commentators on the social influence of broadcasting is invaluable, not just because they are good sources of evidence about the practices of listeners but also because they acted as opinion leaders for the community. On technical questions the gap between the knowledgeable and the largely ignorant made this role all the more essential. The wireless experimenter was the only member of the community equipped to make an articulate response on such questions. This was especially noticeable during the campaign for public service broadcasting, and in the early days of the British Broadcasting Company, when licence holders formed a relatively small proportion of the population and radio sets were at their most primitive. The commitment of these organisations stimulated interest in broadcasting throughout the country and increased the pressure for a full public service. For a brief period following the formation of the BBC, interested listeners continued to organise themselves - not just for social or technical reasons, but also because they wanted to express their opinions and preferences as loudly as possible about programme content and, frequently, about the form of control and representation under which the BBC operated.

To supplement this form of audience response there is no better opinion leader and commentator on audience behaviour than the press. The press was well placed to view the relationship between the audience and the broadcasters; certainly it was the self-appointed guardian of the public on this and many other questions. As a rival medium the press was also likely to pay close attention to its reports on radio. The emphasis must be carefully concentrated on the press role as a commentator or opinion leader and not digress too often on to the territory of the political relationship between the two rivals.

To concentrate attention on this role, the investigation will take the form of a content analysis. This analysis will attempt to demonstrate the major themes in press criticism throughout the period. The main campaigns to influence audience opinion and the attempts made to investigate the broadcasters and their programmes will be seen in their entirety. The choice of papers for the analysis must be made to represent fairly broad cross-sections of newspaper readers and this can be achieved by careful preparatory studies: by examining the potential newspapers for their political persuasion, the size and social composition of their circulations, and by using random observations of their content.

To conclude this analysis of audience responses there is some value in a reference to the work of inter-war social surveyors - despite the poverty of their research. Authorities such as Rowntree, Llewellyn Smith, Caradog Jones²⁷ and others provide a limited amount of information about the audience, indeed, the collection of their views will present an opportunity to highlight the context of broadcasting in the leisure and recreation activities of inter-war Britain. The amount of leisure available for most social groups increased substantially in this period, particularly for the working class, either voluntarily through the advent of a shorter working week or, more tragically and involuntarily, through the high level of unemployment which persisted throughout these years and the context is therefore extremely important. Such observations will guard against the danger of seeing radio broadcasting as a solitary influence. Since radio was so rarely an exclusive means of influence of change, it is essential to understand something of the interaction with other media or social influences before 1939.

A further part of this survey turns attention towards the BBC as a major source of information about the audience. Through its position as the recipient of listeners' correspondence and, eventually, the results of audience research, the BBC was in a unique position to gather information about the tastes and habits of listeners. Unfortunately, for various reasons which deserve comment, the BBC was very slow to employ audience research. Before the creation of the BBC Listener Research Committee in 1936 the

the relationship between the BBC and the audience has to be studied largely by reference to the personal impressions of BBC employees. A few observations of some value have emerged from a wide range of memoranda, books and articles,²⁸ although the general standard of comments on the audience is disappointingly poor.²⁹ It was really only after 1937 that the systematic collection of information about the audience was allowed to proceed on any scale. However, despite the brief period of research before 1939, the Listener Research Committee worked quickly and produced a considerable body of evidence. These findings merit very detailed attention. It is possible to learn still more about the location, age, sex and social class of listeners as well as something about their tastes and habits. Of course, there is a danger of obtaining the BBC view of the programmes which people listened to, rather than a view of actual preferences. Questionnaires for social research are drawn to regiment replies in a certain way and an organisation generating programmes is likely to ask questions most relevant to its own production needs. Sadly there is little in the way of comparable work, apart from the odd commercial survey of lesser quality, to decide whether the BBC did build an accurate impression of its audience. Reliance must therefore be placed on the efficiency of the BBC research method except where critical analysis suggests otherwise.

Perhaps the most obvious place to see the work of broadcasting is in the localities - where any social changes actually occur. At the very least, this search for material should act as a counterbalance to the material derived from BBC sources. The emphasis will be placed on a grass roots view of broadcasting - of the audience observing and reacting to broadcasting and expressing opinions in its own words. This search for evidence will form the fourth and final part of this thesis. Again there are problems of selection - the extensive choice of areas for study means that some limits will have to be set. The term British broadcasting will be a misnomer in this respect as the choice will be confined to English localities. The inclusion of Scottish and Welsh examples would present an impossibly large task. Within these limits a selection must be made. Rather than choose the localities on a crude, random

basis, the aim must be to show as many contrasts as possible in the geographical position, economic structure, social composition and prevailing political allegiances of localities. With this consideration in mind, the overriding contrast most relevant to broadcasting was the geographical position. The choice of three widely separated areas viz., a metropolitan borough, a rural shire with some proximity to the metropolis and a decidedly provincial county with some industrial development should satisfy the other salient criteria.

The strength of a study of the localities is that it acts as a useful test for the value of all the other evidence and, at the same time, draws all the separate themes together. For instance, it is possible to look at the activities of the local wireless societies and the local press. It is also easier to see how the opinion leaders were integrated within the community. Some themes can only be studied in this way - the views of local interest groups and local authorities must be collected and many kinds of parochial opinions can be seen in either a rural or an urban context. The influence on the local community by the coverage of national events such as speeches by the royal family, the coverage of general elections and the commentaries on national sporting events is a subject of great interest. It will be fascinating to trace any influences on the sense of national identity in each locality. Radio's unique power of immediacy, of transmitting the voices of the famous and of capturing some of the atmosphere of special national occasions would seem to have given the medium a strong attraction for the audience. In the localities it is easier to make a more reliable assessment of the extent of this power.

The assessment must stand back from the main body of the investigation to shape a perspective of broadcasting in the community and review the themes which have emerged from the different source materials used. The contribution of radio broadcasting to social change will be stressed by drawing a contrast between the state of British society in 1918 and that existent in 1939. It

will be important to re-emphasise the context of broadcasting in the rapidly changing social circumstances of the inter-war period. Although this was an age of variable economic fortunes it was also an era of numerous technological developments which improved communications and introduced the so-called consumer society. A thematic approach will help to answer some of the rather pressing questions concerning the most significant social consequences attributable to the influence of broadcasting. Hopefully it will also encourage more research, by establishing the possibilities for many other studies of broadcasting and its role in British society since 1918.

Chapter 2
Listening Patterns

2.1 Introduction

Initially, the fascination of radio was its magical quality: its marvellous ability to generate sound from an apparently lifeless box; its capacity to allow even the most isolated soul to listen to the very best music or the finest orator, without moving from the comfort of the fireside. Almost everyone seemed to have some kind of enthusiasm for such a simple way of being informed or entertained. Inevitably, some professed to dislike the broadcast cacophony but the possession of a wireless set came as near as any other technological product to being a universal necessity.

Fortunately the broad pattern of wireless set ownership can be gained from the licence returns which are available for the period before 1939. The growth and distribution of the audience can be judged from these returns and it is particularly important to begin with an analysis of this raw material. From this basis it will be much easier to move on to investigate the apparent anomalies which emerge. In particular it will be necessary to examine the economic and technological constraints on transmission and reception which influenced the development of the radio audience.

2.2 Demography

Broadcast Licences were issued at Post Offices and it was the responsibility of the GPO to collate the returns and supply revenue to the BBC. The annual returns provided a broad idea of the growth of licence holding between 1922 and 1939 (see Table I). The tremendous rate of growth was immediately apparent and the figures were seized upon by the BBC as proof of its success. Each year the BBC Handbook featured the latest increase as prominently as possible.

However, for the purposes of more detailed analysis it is important to break new ground and use the basic licence statistics to try to estimate the maximum potential audience for broadcast programmes. This was not the same as the actual audience for each programme or even the average available audience that could listen at all the various times of the day. It was simply the crude maximum, assuming no other constraints on listening: the purpose is to show the saturation point. This point can be expressed in terms of whole population, but it is more sensible to discover the number of households that existed and express it in these terms, since only one licence per household was required - regardless of the number of people in that household or the number of wireless sets which they possessed. The number of households is estimated by dividing the whole population by the persons per private family, as calculated by the censuses of 1921 and 1931. This is not necessarily a straightforward task. For instance, in 1926 and 1936 any figures calculating the percentage of households with sets will have been derived from calculations of household size which are five years out of date.¹ The problem can be partially resolved by using the Registrar General's estimates of the total population in each year between the censuses and dividing the figure by either the census calculation of the persons per private family or a revised interim estimate of the number of persons. This gives the closest guide to the advance of licence holding in terms of the likely advances in the numbers of people able to listen.

Table I: Total Licences Issued 1922-1939.²

Year Ending on 31st Dec.	U.K. Population (Estimated)	Total of all Licences issued (including Licences for the Blind)	% increase over previous year	Estimated total of people able to listen	Estimated number of households in the U.K.	Approximate number of licences per 100 households
1922	44,325,000	36,000	-	149,000	10,706,500	1
1923	44,550,000	595,496	-	2,465,000	10,761,000	5.5
1924	44,866,000	1,129,578	89.7	4,676,500	10,837,000	10
1925	45,014,000	1,645,207	45.6	6,811,000	10,872,000	15
1926	45,185,000	2,178,259	32.4	8,713,000	11,296,000	19
1927	45,394,000	2,395,183	10	9,581,000	11,348,500	21
1928	45,580,000	2,628,392	9.7	10,513,500	11,395,000	23
1929	45,685,000	2,956,736	12.5	11,827,000	11,421,000	26
1930	45,878,000	3,411,910	15.4	13,648,000	11,469,500	30
1931	46,038,000	4,330,735	26.9	16,327,000	12,250,000	35
1932	46,335,000	5,263,017	21.5	19,841,500	12,290,500	43
1933	46,520,000	5,973,758	13.5	22,521,000	12,339,500	48
1934	46,666,000	6,780,569	13.5	25,563,000	12,378,000	55
1935	46,869,000	7,403,109	9.2	27,910,000	12,432,000	60
1936	47,081,000	7,960,573	7.5	30,409,500	12,325,000	65
1937	47,289,000	8,479,600	6.5	32,392,000	12,350,000	68.5
1938	47,494,000	8,856,494	4.4	33,832,000	12,470,000	71
1939	47,762,000	8,893,582	0.4	33,973,500	12,503,000	71

The result is a considerably more illuminating impression of the growing audience. In 1939, for instance, the rate of growth in licence holding had considerably diminished and the saturation point appeared to be within sight. In fact 13.5 million people appear to have had no direct means of listening to a radio set in the home - in other words 3.6 million households did not have a set (see Table I). Of course, this figure can be reduced by licence evasion but it does suggest that a considerable part of the population did not have regular access to a radio set. Some may have abstained from listening voluntarily but evidently other causes prevented maximum set ownership. On the other hand, it is clear that, from 1934 onwards, more than half the population, or 25.5 million people, had the capacity at their fingertips to hear a single speaker - a feat which 25 years previously would have seemed quite incredible. The scale of listening has to be seen in this context.

Figure I. Licence Distribution according to Counties 1971.

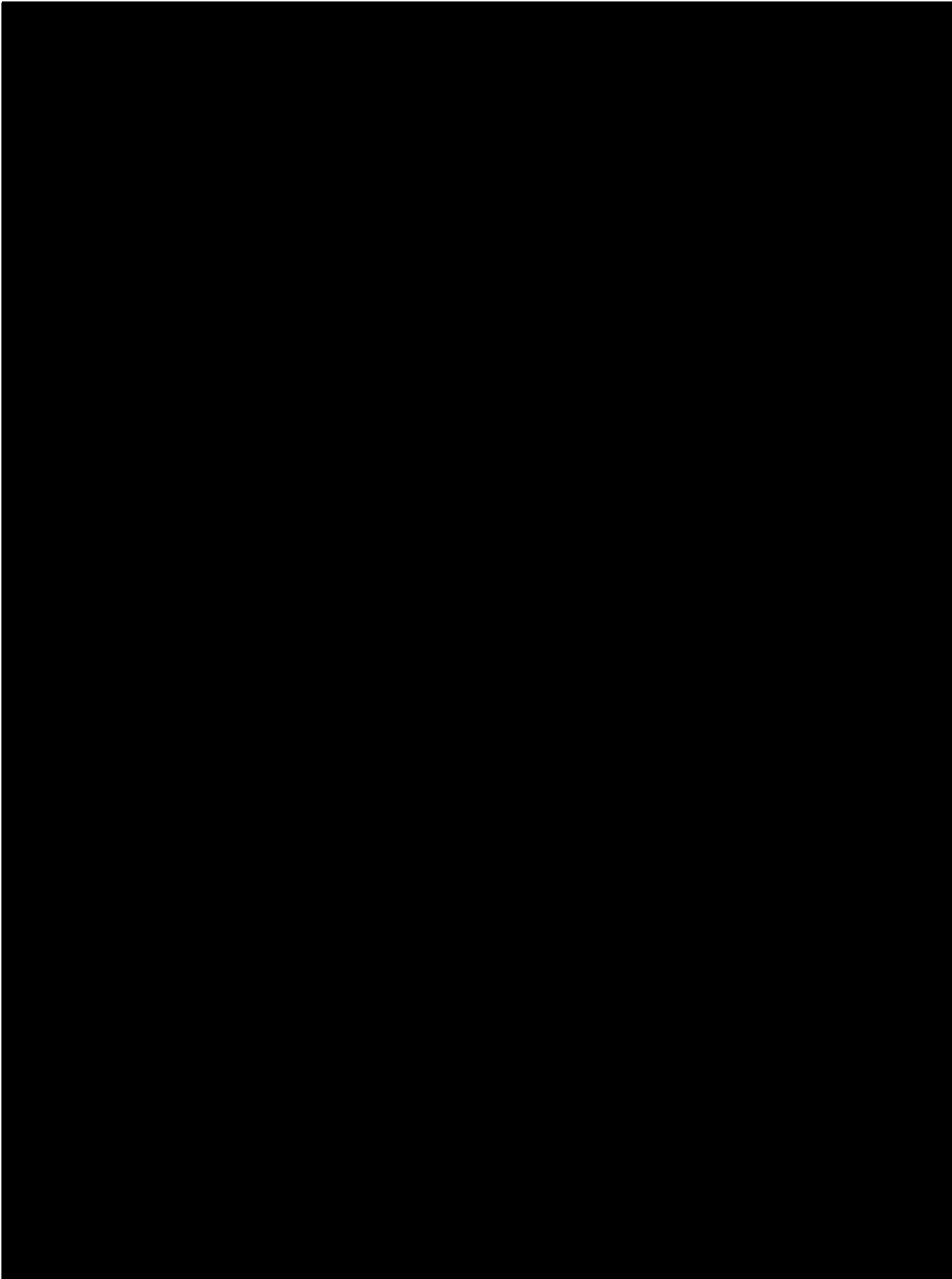


Figure II . Licence Distribution According to Counties 1938.

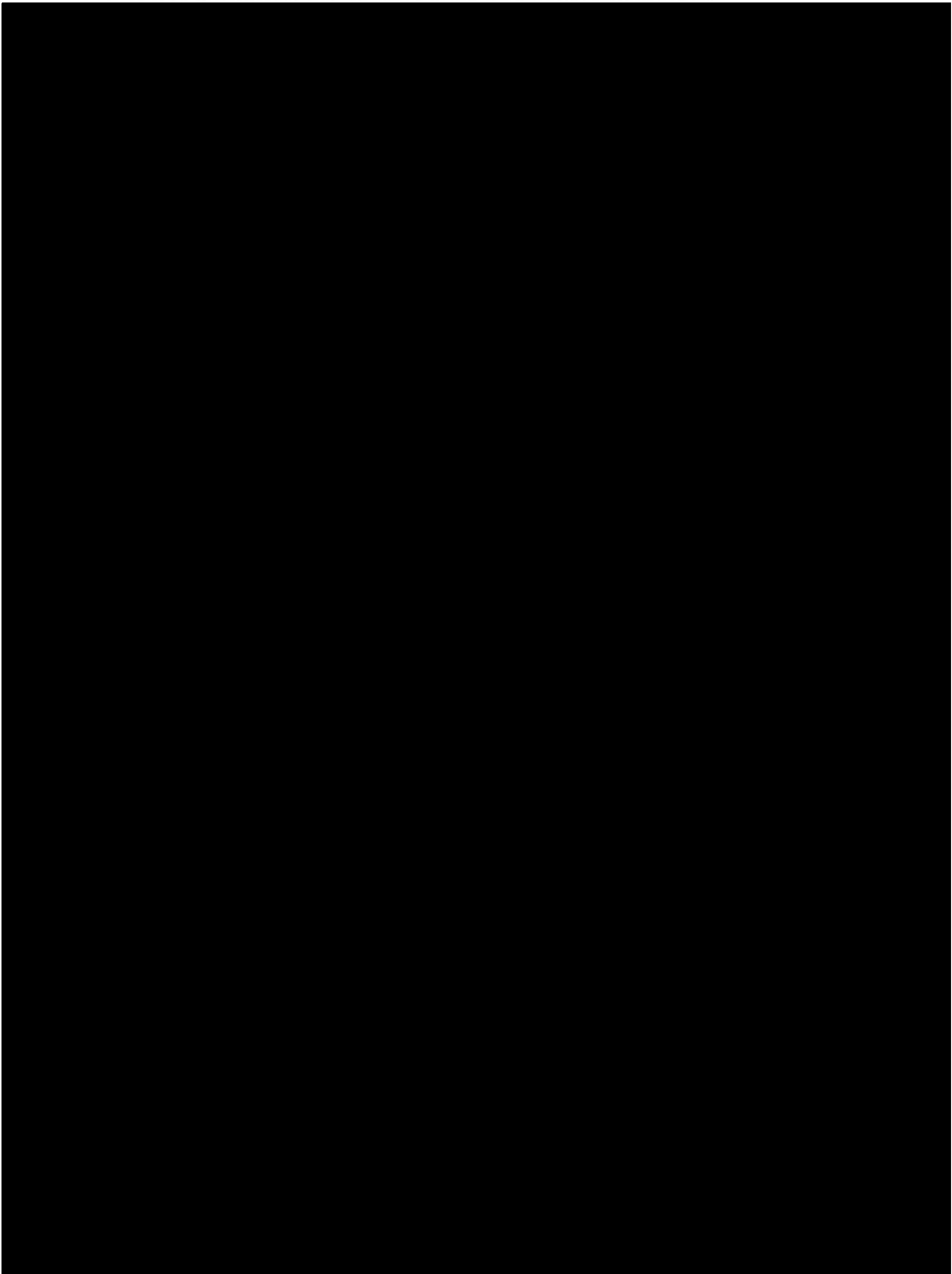


Table II: Licences by Regions 1930-1936. 3

Allow for a small error caused by using the 1931 Census calculation of the Persons per Private Family for the whole period.

Area	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936	
	Population	Licences	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%
Bedfordshire	220,474	24,091	29,109	11	33,756	13	37,093	17	41,284	19	45,164	20	48,153	22
Berkshire	311,334	38,982	41,650	13	48,484	16	53,112	17	57,952	19	62,598	20	67,351	22
Buckinghamshire	271,565	21,565	31,739	8	36,650	14	40,754	15	46,847	17	50,270	19	53,553	20
Cambridgeshire	217,709	25,168	30,579	12	34,807	16	38,826	18	42,952	20	46,042	21	48,862	22
Cheshire	1,087,544	52,705	66,791	5	84,214	6	95,460	9	105,506	10	113,960	10	121,677	11
Cornwall	317,951	18,383	22,742	6	27,436	7	32,055	10	39,097	12	45,715	14	51,567	16
Cumberland	262,897	12,488	16,089	5	20,684	6	25,143	10	30,094	11	34,510	13	37,839	14
Derbyshire	757,332	38,069	48,913	5	59,705	8	67,974	9	77,979	10	86,622	11	94,913	12
Devonshire	732,869	64,261	78,124	9	95,516	11	108,876	15	124,439	17	139,455	19	151,347	21
Dorset	239,347	19,834	24,334	8	28,786	12	22,588	9	25,739	11	28,935	12	31,920	13
Durham	1,485,978	41,087	56,143	3	74,350	5	88,277	6	105,266	7	115,820	8	124,587	8
Essex	1,755,240	171,623	223,897	10	261,754	13	282,696	16	310,606	18	332,988	19	352,665	20
Gloucestershire	785,656	70,889	87,877	9	101,445	11	115,095	15	132,685	17	147,161	19	160,809	20
Hampshire	1,102,515	95,689	119,684	9	143,855	11	172,726	16	192,071	17	211,644	19	229,361	21
Herefordshire	111,755	8,809	10,090	8	11,993	11	14,136	13	14,030	13	15,526	14	16,927	15
Hertfordshire	401,159	54,323	67,974	14	78,276	20	84,862	21	93,190	23	100,772	25	107,141	27
Huntingdonshire	56,204	4,973	5,347	9	6,398	11	7,209	13	7,475	13	8,103	14	8,814	16
Kent	1,218,565	121,396	158,376	10	193,014	16	220,497	18	250,135	21	269,166	22	291,395	24
Lancashire	5,039,097	357,314	471,825	7	616,421	12	712,999	14	792,512	16	851,365	17	898,206	18
Leicestershire	541,794	49,444	58,731	9	68,364	13	76,668	14	87,177	16	94,950	18	102,693	19
Lincolnshire	624,553	54,034	62,889	9	73,431	12	85,393	14	96,583	15	106,714	17	114,475	18
Middlesex	1,638,521	150,612	200,390	9	231,091	14	247,606	15	267,988	16	295,656	18	319,755	20
Monmouthshire	434,821	22,379	27,645	5	34,462	8	41,742	10	52,201	12	57,816	13	63,124	14
Norfolk	504,846	39,041	47,823	8	56,373	11	64,914	13	75,325	15	86,331	17	95,971	19
Northamptonshire	361,273	43,074	47,768	12	54,349	15	61,478	17	68,171	19	73,562	20	78,586	22

Table II continued

Area	Population	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936	
		Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%
Northumberland	756,723	50,978	7	65,457	9	82,044	11	97,160	13	113,527	15	126,614	17	134,830	18
Nottinghamshire	712,681	58,937	8	76,487	11	95,002	13	110,627	16	128,407	18	138,794	19	151,186	21
Oxfordshire	209,599	26,632	13	29,562	14	33,478	16	35,660	17	38,544	18	41,572	20	44,662	21
Rutland	17,397	1,191	7	1,266	7	1,409	8	1,544	9	1,711	10	1,840	11	2,284	13
Shropshire	244,162	19,938	8	23,731	10	27,321	11	31,057	13	34,763	14	39,004	16	42,739	18
Somerset	475,120	34,253	7	42,265	9	50,005	11	57,977	12	66,554	14	74,178	16	82,089	17
Staffordshire	1,431,175	76,662	5	95,527	7	118,528	8	139,493	10	161,760	11	182,109	13	202,120	14
Suffolk	401,114	28,348	7	35,170	9	41,986	10	49,226	12	56,798	14	64,494	16	71,330	18
Surrey	1,180,810	136,807	12	170,294	14	195,783	17	216,639	18	239,789	20	261,201	22	280,334	24
Sussex	770,078	69,434	9	87,610	11	104,735	14	119,055	15	135,446	17	147,762	19	159,704	21
Warwickshire	1,534,782	145,323	9	182,015	12	216,344	14	242,189	16	277,827	18	308,582	20	340,432	22
Westmorland	65,398	3,139	5	3,961	8	4,987	8	5,737	9	6,434	10	7,088	11	7,757	12
Wiltshire	303,258	27,843	9	34,211	11	39,808	13	45,053	15	50,489	17	55,448	18	59,862	20
Worcestershire	420,156	35,271	8	43,766	10	51,649	12	58,906	14	68,619	16	76,740	18	84,202	20
Yorkshire	4,389,465	295,549	7	398,086	9	521,901	12	612,237	14	704,629	16	760,539	17	818,805	19
London County Area	4,396,821	414,473	9	531,857	12	596,215	14	628,779	14	660,190	15	696,482	16	724,990	16
Isle of Man	49,338	3,917	8	4,642	9	5,289	11	6,292	13	6,644	13	8,014	16	8,301	17
Channel Islands	93,061	7,059	8	8,318	9	10,197	11	11,839	13	13,842	15	15,687	17	17,491	19

Table II continued

Area	Population	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936	
		Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%
Aberdeenshire	340,294	18,945	6	21,148	6	26,171	8	30,505	9	35,282	10	40,498	12	45,021	13
Argyll	63,014	2,321	4	2,756	4	3,678	6	4,500	7	5,564	9	6,534	10	7,408	12
Ayrshire	285,182	10,629	4	13,514	5	19,901	7	25,835	9	31,659	11	35,964	13	39,517	14
Banffshire	54,835	1,415	3	1,713	3	2,246	4	2,825	5	3,588	7	4,299	8	5,388	10
Berwickshire	26,601	448	2	560	2	683	3	889	3	1,046	4	1,275	5	4,085	15
Bute	18,822	687	4	861	5	1,116	6	1,385	7	1,611	9	1,809	10	1,872	10
Caitness	25,656	524	2	656	3	913	4	1,182	5	1,460	6	1,833	7	2,375	9
Calckmannan	31,947	989	3	1,231	4	1,925	6	2,470	8	2,848	9	3,256	10	3,536	11
Dumbartonshire	147,751	3,047	2	3,222	2	4,221	3	5,223	4	6,470	4	7,375	5	7,914	5
Dumfriesshire	81,060	3,007	4	3,880	5	5,142	6	6,700	8	8,597	11	10,793	13	12,035	15
Fife and Kinross	283,715	9,816	3	12,836	5	20,282	7	27,987	10	34,931	12	39,624	14	43,213	15
Forfarshire	270,190	14,959	6	17,977	7	22,391	8	27,354	10	33,843	13	39,604	15	44,324	16
Inverness	82,082	1,544	2	2,107	3	3,093	4	4,122	5	5,377	7	6,489	8	7,557	9
Kirkcudbright	30,341	1,048	3	1,266	4	1,501	5	2,012	7	2,635	9	3,042	10	3,401	11
Lanark & Glasgow	1,585,968	71,462	5	86,810	5	120,775	8	144,951	9	178,693	11	203,975	13	219,079	14
East Lothian	47,369	1,878	4	2,382	5	3,244	7	4,448	9	5,493	12	6,260	13	6,888	15
Midlothian	526,277	33,987	6	43,033	8	55,922	11	67,294	13	78,597	15	88,080	17	95,897	18
West Lothian	81,426	1,446	2	1,808	2	2,822	3	3,971	5	4,755	6	6,371	8	9,125	11
Morayshire	49,099	1,493	3	1,918	4	2,563	5	3,319	7	4,234	9	5,062	10	6,039	12
Orkney	22,075	521	2	637	3	833	4	1,052	5	1,279	6	1,497	7	1,806	8
Peebles	15,050	493	3	674	4	872	6	1,119	7	1,337	9	1,602	11	1,750	12
Perthshire	120,722	4,379	4	5,621	5	8,123	7	11,083	9	13,755	11	15,684	13	17,328	14
Renfrewshire	288,575	11,231	4	13,742	5	18,741	6	23,431	8	29,031	10	33,923	12	37,061	13
Ross & Cromarty	62,802	675	1	939	2	1,322	2	1,755	3	2,265	4	2,589	4	3,066	5
Roxburgh	45,787	1,926	4	2,398	5	3,124	7	4,404	10	5,289	12	6,216	14	6,613	14

Area	Population	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936	
		Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%
SCOTLAND															
Selkirk	22,608	1,758	8	2,233	10	3,113	14	4,300	19	5,370	24	6,156	27	4,138	18
Shetland	21,410	470	2	544	3	646	3	860	4	1,093	5	1,341	6	1,660	8
Stirlingshire	166,447	7,601	5	9,762	6	15,948	10	20,831	13	25,083	15	27,193	16	26,761	16
Sutherland	16,100	246	2	320	2	475	3	603	4	793	5	963	6	1,150	7
Wigtownshire	29,299	1,414	5	1,683	6	2,230	8	2,629	9	3,003	10	3,890	13	4,330	15
WALES															
Anglesey	49,025	886	2	1,160	2	1,422	3	1,695	3	2,007	4	2,279	5	2,533	5
Breconshire	57,771	1,260	2	1,434	2	1,652	3	1,755	3	1,904	3	2,071	4	2,263	4
Carmarthenshire	179,063	8,336	5	9,991	6	12,610	7	15,210	8	20,362	11	23,289	13	25,350	14
Caernarvonshire	120,810	11,298	9	14,200	12	16,954	14	19,963	17	22,439	19	24,568	20	27,262	23
Cardiganshire	55,164	2,006	4	2,430	4	2,963	5	3,386	6	3,927	7	4,517	8	5,324	10
Denbighshire	157,645	6,689	4	8,776	6	10,979	7	12,446	8	14,384	9	16,052	10	18,378	12
Flintshire	112,849	5,059	4	6,354	6	7,882	7	8,896	8	10,338	9	11,458	10	12,314	11
Glamorgan	1,225,713	68,982	6	82,517	7	103,516	8	120,118	10	149,818	12	158,941	13	168,139	14
Merionethshire	43,198	1,675	4	2,013	5	2,281	5	2,574	6	2,916	7	3,294	8	3,631	8
Montgomeryshire	48,462	3,009	6	3,519	7	4,007	8	4,443	9	4,982	10	5,716	12	6,288	13
Pembrokeshire	87,179	3,779	4	4,699	5	5,661	6	6,753	8	8,286	10	9,594	11	10,646	12
Radnorshire	21,314	982	5	1,143	5	1,836	9	1,836	9	2,098	10	2,361	11	2,530	12

Table II continued

Region	1930		1931		1932		1933		1934		1935		1936		
	Population	Licences %	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	Licences	%	
Wales	2,593,014	135,320	5	165,881	6	205,915	8	240,817	9	295,662	11	264,140	12	347,782	13
Scotland	4,842,554	210,369	4	258,231	5	354,106	7	439,039	9	534,981	11	613,197	13	670,337	14
Northern Ireland	1,256,561	30,745	2	37,265	3	46,419	4	54,731	4	65,621	5	77,098	6	96,140	8
Midland Region	6,039,057	489,163	8	601,342	10	717,559	12	817,646	14	935,305	15	1,033,666	17	1,133,081	19
London Region	14,666,811	1,419,696	10	1,807,702	12	2,093,628	14	2,297,407	16	2,515,209	17	2,719,511	19	2,903,888	20
North Region	14,207,476	893,672	6	1,174,742	8	1,518,547	11	1,768,803	12	2,007,203	14	2,175,731	15	2,322,433	16
West Region	2,583,972	211,077	8	259,323	10	308,099	12	342,051	13	393,359	15	440,269	17	482,283	19
TOTAL	46,189,445	3,391,042	7	4,304,186	9	5,244,273	11	5,960,314	13	6,747,340	15	7,381,428	16	7,955,944	17

Table III: Licences by Regions 1937-1939. 4

AREA	1936	1937	%	1937	1938	%	1937	1939	%
	Est'd.No. Families	Licences (31 Dec)		Est'd.No. Families	Licences (30 Nov)		Est'd.No. Families	Licences (30 Sept)	
LONDON REGION									
Bedford	68,100	51,200	75	69,900	53,300	76	69,900	54,969	79
Berkshire & S.Oxon	122,100	99,100	81	123,600	103,400	84	123,600	106,310	86
Buckingham	79,700	57,100	72	82,600	60,400	73	82,600	62,381	75
Cambridge & Hunts.	78,900	60,200	76	79,600	60,900	77	79,600	62,838	79
Channel Islands	25,800	19,400	75	25,800	19,700	76	25,800	20,484	79
Hants without Bournemouth	257,500	193,400	75	262,200	201,800	77	262,200	207,167	79
London & Home Counties (Essex, Herts Kent, Middlesex & Surrey)	3,023,800	2,179,300	72	3,071,100	2,271,800	74	3,071,100	2,310,681	75
Norfolk	137,800	103,400	75	138,700	107,400	77	138,700	110,095	79
Suffolk	109,800	76,700	70	109,700	80,900	74	109,700	82,443	75
Sussex	218,500	168,400	77	222,800	177,100	80	222,800	182,247	82
WEST REGION									
Cornwall & Devon	286,800	216,700	76	289,200	228,300	79	289,200	235,424	82
Dorset & Wiltshire (without Bournemouth)	182,900	150,100	82	184,200	157,800	86	184,200	165,203	90
Somerset & S.Gloucs.	272,200	200,500	74	274,700	212,300	77	274,700	219,484	80
MIDLAND REGION									
Hereford	28,800	18,300	64	28,700	19,700	69	28,700	20,805	73
Leicester & Rutland	156,700	112,600	72	158,600	119,300	75	158,600	122,396	77
Northamptonshire	102,900	84,100	82	104,200	87,600	84	104,200	89,701	86
N.Gloucs & N.Oxon	99,300	78,100	79	99,800	79,700	80	99,800	82,825	83

Table III continued

AREA	1936	1937		1937	1938		1937	1939		
	Est'd.No. Families	Licences (31 Dec)	%	Est'd.No. Families	Licences (30 Nov)	%	Est'd.No. Families	Licences (30 Sept)	%	
Shropshire	62,300	46,000	75	62,200	48,300	78	62,200	50,086	80	
S. Derby & Notts	277,100	220,100	79	280,500	233,100	83	280,500	234,146	84	
Staffs & Warwick	774,300	585,600	76	786,600	619,700	79	786,600	640,158	82	
Worcester	115,700	91,100	79	117,300	95,800	82	117,300	99,183	85	
NORTH REGION										
Cheshire, Lancs &										
Isle of Man	1,621,800	1,087,000	67	1,626,100	1,138,200	70	1,626,100	1,157,156	71	
Cumberland & Westmorland	81,700	50,900	62	81,300	57,800	71	81,300	59,316	73	
Durham & Northumberland	560,200	270,200	48	557,400	281,700	50	557,400	287,128	52	
Lincoln	167,000	123,000	74	167,700	130,200	79	167,700	138,423	83	
Yorkshire & N. Derby	1,289,400	912,900	71	1,294,900	946,000	73	1,294,900	965,867	75	
WALES										
Mid-Wales (Cardigan Merioneth, Montgomery and Radnor)										
	43,100	19,200	45	42,000	20,800	50	42,000	22,097	53	
N. Wales (Anglesey, Caernarvon, Denbigh and Flint)										
	114,900	65,300	57	116,100	68,700	59	116,100	70,287	61	
S. Wales (Brecon, Carmarthen, Glamorgan, Monmouth & Pembroke)										
	482,400	289,400	60	473,700	306,000	64	473,700	313,570	66	
NORTHERN IRELAND										
Antrim & Down										
	192,400	83,300	43	192,400	89,700	47	192,400	93,575	49	
Armagh										
	22,500	7,500	33	22,500	8,400	37	22,500	8,915	40	
Fermanagh & Tyrone										
	46,900	9,300	20	46,900	11,200	24	46,900	12,462	27	
Londonderry										
	32,400	9,300	29	32,400	10,500	32	32,400	10,961	34	

Table III continued.

AREA	1936 Estd. No. Families	1937 Licences (31 Dec)	%	1937 Estd.No. Families	1938 Licences (30 Nov)	%	1937 Estd.No. Families	1939 Licences (30 Sept)	%
Aberdeen & Kincardine	86,100	49,600	58	88,700	52,600	59	88,700	55,410	63
Argyll & Bute	20,600	10,100	49	20,500	11,200	55	20,500	11,859	58
Ayr, Dumbarton, Lanark & Renfrew	563,700	324,300	58	579,200	336,700	58	579,200	346,035	60
Banff, Inverness, Moray & Nairn	44,800	22,900	51	45,900	25,500	56	45,900	28,107	61
East Central Scotland: Clackmannan, Edinburgh, Fife, Kinross, F&W Lothian & Stirling	287,900	196,000	68	298,000	204,400	68	298,800	208,493	70
Forfar & Perth	107,600	67,000	62	108,000	70,600	65	108,000	73,760	68
N. Scotland:Caithness Orkney, Ross, Shetland & Sutherland	37,900	12,100	32	38,800	14,400	37	38,800	16,104	42
West Central Scotland: Berwick, Dumfries, Kirkcubright, Peebles, Roxburgh & Wigtown	66,400	38,300	58	66,800	42,000	63	66,800	44,115	66

Table III continued

Area	1936 Est'd.No. Families	1937 Licences (31 Dec)	%	1937 Est'd. No Families	1938 Licences (30 Nov)	%	1937 Est'd.No. Families	1939 Licences (30 Sept)	%
London Region	4,122,000	3,008,200	73	4,186,000	3,136,700	75	4,186,000	3,199,615	76
West Region	741,900	567,300	76	748,100	598,400	80	748,100	620,111	83
Midland Region	1,617,100	1,235,900	76	1,637,900	1,303,200	80	1,637,900	1,339,300	82
North Region	3,720,100	2,444,000	66	3,727,400	2,553,900	69	3,727,400	2,607,890	70
Wales	640,400	373,900	58	631,800	395,500	63	631,800	405,954	64
Scotland	1,215,000	720,300	59	1,246,700	757,400	61	1,246,700	783,883	63
Northern Ireland	294,200	109,400	37	294,200	119,800	41	294,200	125,913	43
UNITED KINGDOM & NORTHERN IRELAND TOTAL	12,350,700	8,459,000	68	12,472,100	8,864,900	71	12,472,100	9,082,666	73

To support this broad analysis it is also possible to provide a regional break down of the licence statistics for the years 1930-1936 and 1937-1939. (Tables II and III). Statistics for the other years must have existed since they were sent by the GPO to the BBC on a regular basis.⁵ Sadly they no longer exist and the BBC Handbooks are the main source.⁶ The figures for 1937-1939 were collected on a different basis and hence are not strictly compatible with the earlier statistics.

There are other deficiencies in the material. The GPO regions do not conform precisely to the counties used as the basis in the tables. If the detailed records existed, this anomaly could be corrected. In many cases, the coverage for a county such as Yorkshire may disguise wide variations throughout the area. These variations can only be estimated, partly on the basis of probable reception quality. The general conclusions should be, therefore, that the GPO statistics are a useful guide but are not necessarily exact.

Despite these limits there is another support for clarity. Since it is possible to show the regional distribution of households for 1931 and 1938 (Table IV) it becomes easier to gain a more accurate impression of the regional variations in the audience. Thus hypothetically speaking, a county with a high percentage of licence holders when compared with the population of that county could, quite possibly, have fewer listeners in total than a similarly populated county which has fewer licences but a much larger average of persons per private family. This aspect can also be expressed cartographically for easy visual comparison. (Figures I and II).

There are still more pitfalls besides the unwieldiness and limitation of the statistical material. A calculation using households may actually underestimate the number of listeners, especially in the period 1922-1929. Mass listening⁷ would definitely expand the numbers of those who had some regular contact with the medium. In any case it is worth emphasising that licence figures are not definite guides to radio listening and certainly not radio influence - even if these figures are interpreted as household listening.

Table IV: Regional Comparison of Licences and Households. 1931 and 1938.

Area	1931 Households	1931 Licences	%	1938 Households	1938 Licences	%
<u>London Region</u>						
Bedford	61,243	29,109	47	69,900	53,300	76
Berkshire & S.Oxfordshire	120,227	59,535	50	123,600	103,400	84
Buckinghamshire	74,811	31,739	42	82,600	60,400	73
Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire	77,681	35,926	46	79,600	60,900	77
Channel Islands	26,068	8,318	32	25,800	19,700	76
Hampshire	307,965	95,689	39	287,200	226,800	79
London & Home Counties Essex, Hertford, Kent, Middlesex & Surrey	2,953,583	1,352,788	46	3,071,100	2,271,800	74
Norfolk	140,626	47,823	34	138,700	107,400	77
Suffolk	110,805	35,170	32	109,700	80,900	74
Sussex	220,653	87,610	40	222,800	177,100	80
TOTAL	4,093,662	1,783,707	44	4,211,000	3,161,700	75
<u>Northern Region</u>						
Cheshire, Lancashire and Isle of Man	1,636,926	543,258	33	1,626,100	1,138,200	70
Cumberland & Westmorland	84,211	20,050	24	81,300	57,800	71
Durham & Northumberland	561,351	121,600	22	557,400	281,700	69
Lincolnshire	167,440	62,889	38	167,700	130,200	79
Yorkshire & N.Derbyshire	,278,504	426,945	33	1,294,900	946,000	73
TOTAL	3,728,432	1,172,742	31	3,727,400	2,553,900	69
<u>West Region</u>						
Cornwall & Devon	300,318	100,866	34	289,200	228,300	79
Dorset & Wiltshire	151,195	58,545	39	159,200	132,800	84
Somerset & S.Gloucestershire	276,586	99,912	36	274,700	212,300	77
TOTAL	728,099	259,323	36	723,100	573,400	79
<u>Midland Region</u>						
Hereford	29,961	10,090	34	28,700	19,700	69
Leicestershire & Rutland	151,095	59,997	40	158,600	119,300	75
Northamptonshire	100,914	47,768	47	104,200	87,600	84
N. Gloucestershire & N. Oxford	97,254	41,907	43	99,800	79,700	80
Shropshire	63,750	23,731	37	62,200	48,300	78
S.Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire	267,543	96,541	36	280,500	233,100	83

Table IV continued

AREA	1931 Households	1931 Licences	%	1938 Households	1938 Licences	%
Staffordshire & Warwickshire	750,842	277,542	37	786,600	619,700	79
Worcestershire	111,152	43,766	39	117,300	95,800	82
TOTAL	1,572,511	601,342	38	1,637,900	1,303,200	80
<u>Wales</u>						
Mid-Wales: Cardigan, Merioneth, Montgomery, and Radnor	45,685	9,105	20	42,000	20,800	50
North Wales: Anglesey, Caernarvon, Denbigh and Flint	117,119	30,490	26	116,100	68,700	59
South Wales: Crecon, Carmarthen, Glamorgan, Monmouth & Pembroke	496,856	126,286	25	473,700	306,000	64
TOTAL	659,660	165,881	25	631,800	395,500	63
<u>Northern Ireland</u>						
TOTAL	282,358	96,140	34	294,200	119,800	41
<u>Scotland</u>						
Aberdeen & Kincardine	84,650	21,148	25	88,700	52,600	59
Argyll and Bute	21,583	3,617	17	20,500	11,200	55
Ayr, Dumbarton, Lanark and Renfrew	549,153	117,288	21	579,200	336,700	58
Banff, Inverness, Moray and Nairn	45,854	5,738	13	45,900	25,500	56
East Central Scotland: Clackmannan, E. Lothian, Fife, Kinross, Midlothian, West Lothian and Stirling	283,971	71,052	25	298,800	204,400	68
Angus and Perth	105,688	23,598	22	108,000	70,600	65
North Scotland: Caithness, Orkney, Ross and Cromarty, Shetland and Sutherland	38,680	3,096	8	38,800	14,400	37

Table IV continued

AREA	1931 Households	1931 Licences	%	1938 Households	1931 Licences	%
<u>Border:</u> Berwick, Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Peebles, Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Wigtown.	65,584	12,694	19	66,800	42,000	63
TOTAL	1,195,163	258,231	22	1,246,700	757,400	61
UNITED KINGDOM TOTAL	12,259,885	3,391,042	27	12,472,100	8,864,900	71

Licence holding is not necessary to gather radio news. Indirect distribution of radio information takes place even if it is difficult to quantify or verify. When sets were scarce, verbal exchanges of knowledge derived from a radio source were likely to be more frequent - even if precise information about the extent of this practice is impossible to gather. Radio probably served to silence malicious gossip or rumour and, instead, it stimulated the transference of information available only through the radio. The obvious example of this being the printing of broadsheets based upon the BBC news bulletins during the General Strike. The BBC may have had a bias and was certainly guilty of supplying incorrect news but it was generally more reliable than the neighbour gossiping over the garden fence.⁹ Radio was the aural centre of the community. Only when set ownership expanded sufficiently was it possible to argue that this aural centre had, by and large, passed into the household. Hence the size of the audience was probably larger than it appeared, particularly if licence evasion is taken into account, but the exact dimension must remain elusive.

With these words of caution, further analysis of the statistics can proceed. A study of the maps most easily yields some of the trends. As these maps show proportions, not absolute figures, they do underline the under-representation of certain areas. In both 1931 and 1938, the greatest proportions of households with licences were concentrated in the South-East and the Midland Counties, with reasonable levels in the West of England, North Wales, the Northern English Counties and East Anglia. Counties with conurbations retain the lead in licence holding. Lower levels of licence holding can be seen in the North East and North West of England, South Wales and the Far North of Scotland and Northern Ireland, which are particularly under-represented. Physical barriers and interference may have a part to play in this but the areas concerned do tend to have large rural elements. The solace of radio for isolated communities was apparently not incentive enough.¹⁰

Despite the uneven distribution, the statistics and maps make it transparently clear that the overall picture is one of growth. In many cases the percentage of households with licences doubled or trebled between 1931 and 1938.

The increased number of households being easily surpassed by the increase in the number of licences issued. Notable increases were in the North Region, where households with sets in Cumberland, Westmorland, Durham and Northumberland trebled. Many other counties saw the same effect to a slightly lesser extent. Some of the outer reaches of Scotland and Northern Ireland showed similar increases even though absolute levels were normally lower. Elsewhere the normal increase was a doubling of the 1931 level, with proportions of 84% in South Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. The uneven growth and distribution of licence holding does require some explanation. Obviously the influences which led to the inexorable advance of radio in some parts of the country were absent from others. These variations demand some more detailed examination.

2.3 Technical Policy and Development

One lesson which emerges from an analysis of demographic trends in the radio audience is that the ideal world of perfect reception, perfect choice of stations, and free access to the means of receiving programmes did not exist before 1939 - nor has it existed since then. The basic desire to listen was easily obstructed by inadequate transmitters or receiver facilities. Listeners wanted specific things: the immediacy of news reception, the excitement of sporting commentaries, and entertainment of music or drama. All of these motives for listening were important and deserve examination but none of them could be entirely separated from the technological or economic constraints on listening: they were inexorably shaped by them and deeply interwoven with them. Even an ideal broadcasting system which could pander to all the tastes of every member of the population would founder on the rock of dissatisfaction and frustration caused by the weakness of the radio signal or the poverty of potential listeners. Consequently these technological and economic limitations, and the BBC policies which controlled them must be considered as a substantial influence on the attitudes of the radio audience.

In 1967, the British Broadcasting Corporation introduced the first of its local radio stations.¹¹ With its opening, a peculiar circle in broadcasting history had been completed. In 1967 this form of radio was introduced to satisfy what was felt to be a need for closer contact between the medium and local community groups. Yet in carrying out this change in policy, the social attitude of public broadcasting in Britain was turned upon its head - since the first form of radio had been local radio. In both cases, technical considerations had been very influential - even if the policy processes which took them into account had quite different intentions in mind.¹²

In 1922, the inability to produce a high-power, low frequency transmitter had meant that it was technically impossible to broadcast programmes to audiences more than twenty-five miles away in the case of crystal receivers or approximately a hundred miles away for efficient two valve sets. In 1967, very high frequency (V.H.F.), frequency modulated (F.M.) transmitters were used deliberately to reduce the propagation distance; V.H.F. signals having the advantage in localising signals and reducing interference, whilst at the same time extending the available wavebands for domestic broadcasts in the United Kingdom.¹⁴

In the early twenties, the restricted propagation distances meant that transmitters were built in the centre of urban concentrations. Consequently reception was very good for those within range of a station such as 2LO broadcast from Marconi House and later from the roof of Selfridges Store in Oxford Street but almost impossible for those living in rural Hampshire or Wiltshire. These technical restrictions meant that localities fortunate enough to receive BBC programmes heard broadcasts produced by each station with its own production staff. Simultaneous broadcasting (S.B.) from all transmitters at once was only occasionally possible on an experimental basis.

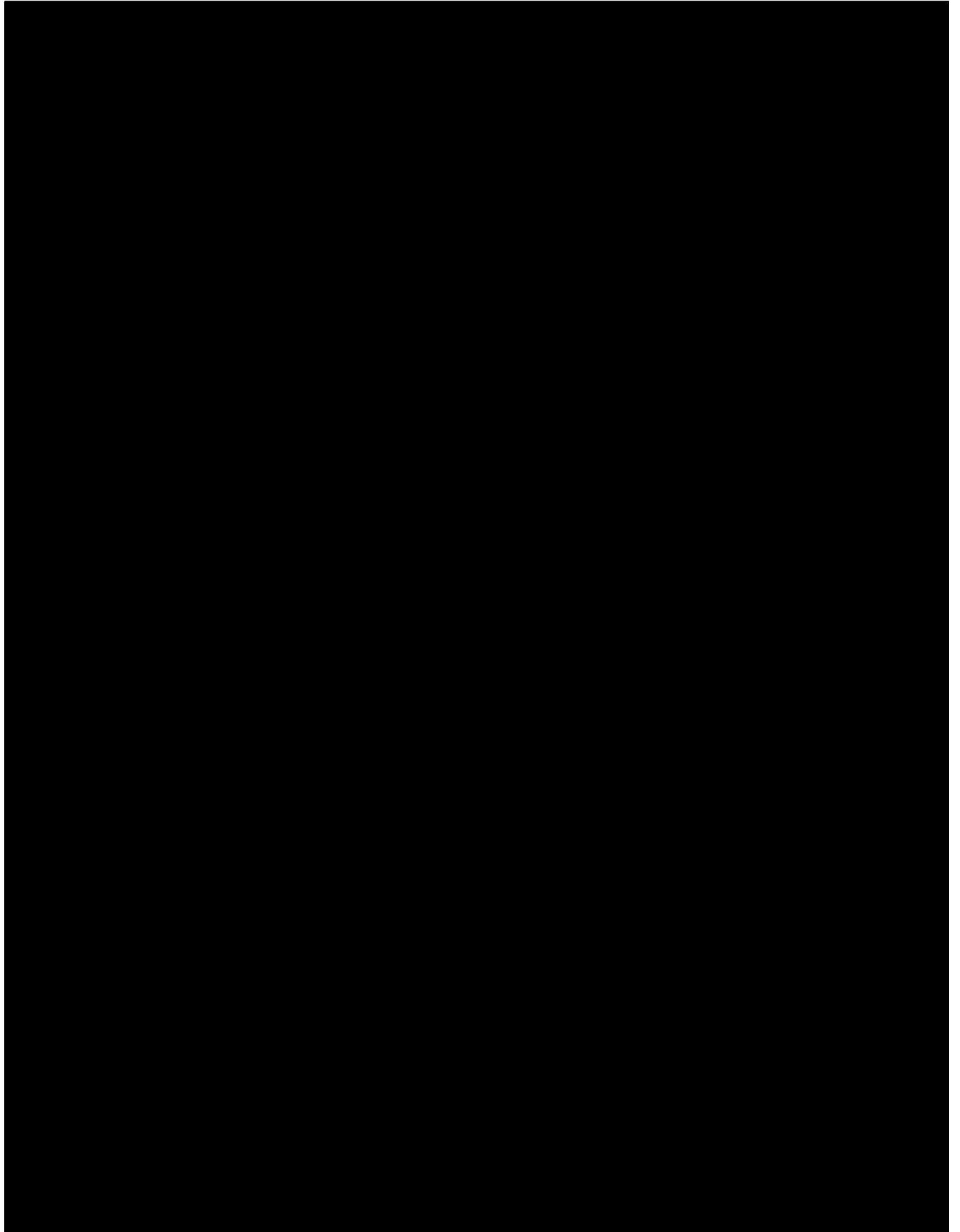
Local broadcasting was a technical limitation which actually ran counter to the avowed BBC policy to provide a full national service, based upon the terms of the monopoly granted to it by the Post Office.¹⁵ The aim was simple; to provide everyone with at least one programme on a relatively cheap

receiver.¹⁶ However, this period was brief and the BBC, ever anxious to fulfil its obligations, continued to develop new and improved transmitter facilities through the research work of its own engineering department and that of the component companies. Firms such as Marconi's, Western Electric and Metropolitan Vickers had in fact built the first BBC transmitters originally for their own research purposes. By 1924 the aim had already expanded to include plans to provide listeners with a choice of programmes.¹⁷ Once the technical complications were overcome, simultaneous broadcasting became far more frequent, largely prompted by the financial savings which could be made. The first tests were made in 1923 after which time it became common practice - the savings in providing one programme instead of nine different ones were obvious.¹⁸ (See Figure III)

The next course was to expand the service area to reach listeners using crystal sets outside the main urban areas. Again, only technical constraints had prevented such a course at the outset. With the development of the high power, long-wave transmitter, it proved possible to provide crystal strength reception for 85% of the population compared with the 60 to 70% who could receive the existing local stations.¹⁹ The new station at Daventry in Northamptonshire, call sign 5XX, opened on the 27th July 1925, using 25 kW compared with the 1.5 kW of the local stations. This made national broadcasting plausible for the first time.²⁰

This did not mean that all of these listeners had perfect conditions for listening. There were still many variables which limited reception in the transmitter service areas. One side of the problem was caused by inadequate and inefficient receivers, which can be examined later, but on the transmitter side the main problem was interference. The broadcasting of speech and music required the use of thermionic valves and continuous wave transmission but in the early days of public broadcasting this co-existed with morse code signalling using 'spark' transmitters. This system was widely used by shipping as it was fairly economical and relatively reliable. The only disadvantage was that the 'spark' spread interference over a wide band of the broadcasting spectrum, thus damaging reception severely in coastal areas - especially in Kent and the South and East coasts.²¹

Figure III. Line Pattern of Simultaneous Broadcasting Network 1927.



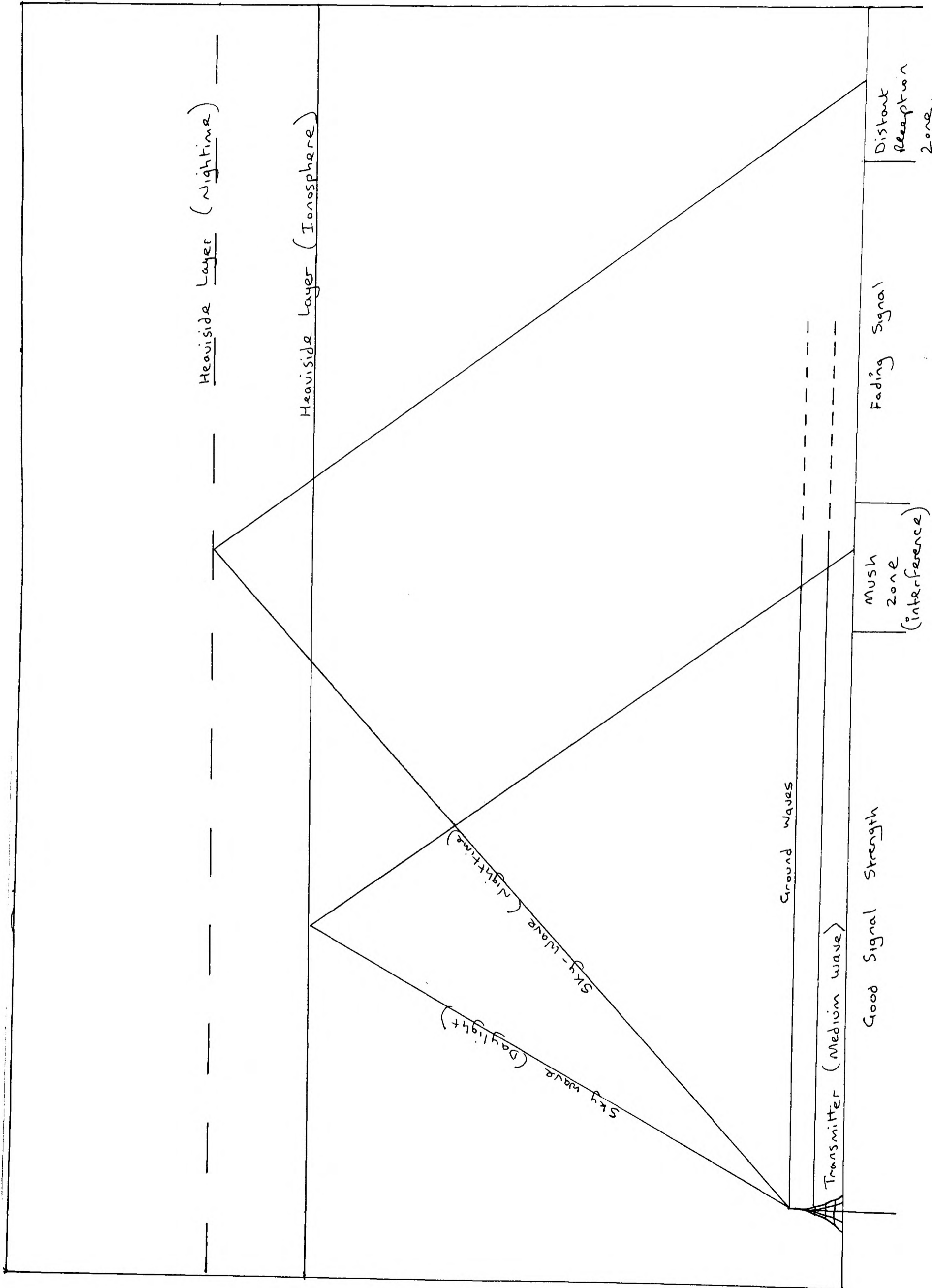
Other areas inland suffered from interference too, either through weak signals due to physical barriers or from being on the edge of service areas. Sheffield suffered particularly badly on both counts.

The other problem was that of radio waves themselves. Medium-wave transmissions vary in their propagation distance according to the wave-length of the signal, the amount of solar activity as well as the ambient atmospheric temperature. When the signal is transmitted there are, crudely speaking, two components: the ground wave and the sky wave²² - the one carrying directly to the receiver, the other bouncing back off the ionosphere. When the two meet on the ground (see Figure IV) the result is interference, the so-called 'mush area'.

For local stations, the best reception was had in the daylight, declining quickly after nightfall, with the signal travelling along the ground now foreshortened and losing strength. Paradoxically, the clear reception area for the sky wave was well beyond the horizon after dusk, so that at night time, listeners at the limits of the service area could receive the signal better than those at an intermediate distance from the transmitter. The sky wave travels further at night because of changes in the ionosphere caused by the loss of direct solar energy. Thus long-wave listening was better at night-time during long cold winter nights and so autumn saw the launching of the new season for listening, not merely because of restricted out-door activities, but also because of the better quality of the signals.

Unfortunately, this effect made listening irritating for those in the 'mush area' or at the extreme edge of a service area and even for those close to a transmitter where any other signals might be swamped by the nearby station. But it did increase listening to continental stations by listeners in Britain and vice versa. This tendency was particularly marked throughout this era, since it was the only way of avoiding the BBC monopoly. Radio possessed this international character from the first Marconi tests at Poldhu.²³ Early commercial stations such as PCCG in the Hague attracted large audiences for its English speaking broadcasts before the BBC was even created.²⁴ In the thirties, the

Figure IV. Transmitter Service Area and Interference.



commercial giants of Luxembourg and Normandie were particularly popular and at the end of the period, there was the significant, if eccentric, listening to the broadcasts of Lord Haw-Haw emanating from Radio Hamburg.²⁵

This long distance exchange of signals on the medium wave had other more unfortunate side effects. Very quickly, the concept of 'the crowding of the airways', which had been one of the fears which led to the BBC monopoly, became a reality. Interference reached serious proportions and some form of international co-operation and control became essential. The first result was the Geneva Plan, agreed by the new Union Internationale de Radiophonie (UIR), formed in April 1925.²⁶ This confined the BBC to eight exclusive wavelengths, two shared wavelengths and one common wavelength for relay stations, all on the medium wave, plus one long wavelength at 1600 metres. The implementation of this scheme was begun in the winter of 1926.²⁷ This new arrangement meant that the relay stations had to be synchronised properly. Although the relay stations only had a crystal reception range of five to ten miles, interference with each other would cause serious signal distortion or fading.²⁸ The work of the UIR continued throughout the period up to 1939 - international co-operation was crucial to the development of radio in Europe. The BBC had to observe the recommendations of a further agreement - the Prague plan of 1929 - which hastened the need for another phase of transmitter changes.²⁹ In the nineteen-seventies, the work has continued and as recently as November 1978 the BBC reshuffled its national programme service to help reduce night time interference in Europe.³⁰

The Geneva plan changes were implemented fairly easily as they did not require anything more than a few adjustments to existing receivers. The introduction of the next stage of wavelength changes had a much greater impact upon the domestic audience. The entire pattern of transmission and reception was transformed. Yet, despite the dislocation that this caused, the process was fully in accord with the BBC's previously announced aims: to provide service

areas for those previously excluded, to reduce interference and, ultimately, to provide a choice of programme for as many listeners as possible in Britain.

The Chief Engineer, Peter Eckersley, had proposed the provision of a choice as early as 1924,³¹ and it had been accepted as policy by the BBC's Control Board in 1926.³² As on previous occasions, the uppermost considerations were those of technical potential and financial efficiency.

The technical problems revolved around the fact that the BBC had still not been offered, or developed itself, a sufficiently powerful medium wave transmitter. The BBC had also encountered strong resistance from the GPO, which strenuously objected to the proliferation of the projected high powered stations, operating on wavelengths which might interfere with its own, military or governmental transmissions.³³ There was also the threat to aircraft from the taller masts which would be needed.³⁴ The BBC only managed to remove the restrictions on the development of the necessary transmitters, after an independent committee - the Eccles Committee created to arbitrate in the dispute - ruled in the BBC's favour and the scheme rapidly went ahead.³⁵ The only other resistance came from the wireless trade which thought that it had a vested interest in preserving the status quo. However, by giving plenty of warning, the BBC was able to convince the traders that they had time to convert production lines and actually take advantage of the increased sales which the change would bring.³⁶

The BBC Engineering Section had, in the meantime, been attempting to turn the policy of listener choice into a practical proposition.³⁷ This led eventually to the development and construction of an experimental 50 kW medium wave station at Daventry. The new station, call sign 5GB, began transmissions on 21st August 1927, and the first practical step on the road to what was soon called 'the Regional Scheme' had been made.³⁸

There were excellent economic motives, too, for putting the scheme into practice. Once the licence fee had been fixed at ten shillings per annum for all types of listeners, on 1st July 1924,³⁹ the main struggle for income came

from increasing the number of licence holders and from a more futile struggle to increase the share of this revenue vis-a-vis by the GPO.⁴⁰ Allegedly to cover collecting costs, the GPO retained 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the revenue, reduced to 10% after 1932. In addition, the BBC could only collect 90% of the revenue on the first million licences, 80% on the second million, 70% on the third million and 60% on the remainder; the rest being retained by the Postmaster-General.⁴¹ Furthermore, in 1931, the BBC also agreed to make a voluntary contribution of £200,000 to the Exchequer during the national economic crisis, to be paid in the financial year of 1932-1933.⁴²

Clearly the expansion in listeners did not necessarily produce a commensurate increase in the BBC's financial standing. Consequently any extension of the service would have to draw in proportionately more listeners before it could be cost effective. It was hoped that the Regional Scheme would draw in many more listeners. The Regional Scheme transmitters would expand the service area and yet be cheaper to build and maintain than the existing local transmitter and relay station system.⁴³

Obviously a fairly large audience size would be needed before the BBC could order the initial capital expenditure necessary to build a series of high power transmitters, but otherwise the plan would make savings in the long term. Once the audience in urban areas was sufficiently large to sustain expansion, it was possible to provide a service for all potential listeners and use the resources liberated from local stations to provide alternative programmes. The public got its choice but, in the process of providing this service, the BBC were forced to place any local requirements on the listeners well down the list of priorities.⁴⁴

2.4 The Regional Scheme

The cultural and social effects of the BBC's Regional Scheme were subordinated to economic, technical and even bureaucratic needs. This was hardly unexpected: the process conformed almost precisely with the model of élitism and monopoly control which the BBC propounded. The BBC gazed out of its metropolitan base at Savoy Hill and later Portland Place on to the audience which it recognized vaguely or even with indifference. The justification for this indifference was that listeners throughout the country could be brought into contact with national figures, national events and hear a higher quality of programme. Better programmes, it was argued, would result from the concentration of resources which the Regional Scheme would permit. As Reith remarked with great clarity:

'Even on the most ordinary occasions we find the amenities of metropolitan culture made available in large measure to those who live in circumstances of the greatest physical isolation equally with those who inhabit the great centres of population. They are present equally at functions and ceremonials upon which national sentiment is concentrated; they are in touch equally with the movements of thought and the processes of action which determine national destiny, and there are set before them equally the problems which are vexing the statesman of their day.'⁴⁵

This creation of a sense of national identity may have been valuable but it was pursued to the exclusion of important parochial interests. The two were not necessarily mutually exclusive, but too often the BBC acted as if they were. The key-word to describe this policy was 'centralization' - a natural policy extension from the technical progress made in simultaneous broadcasting. To break this monolithic concept into manageable administrative and transmission areas, it was employed hand in hand with regionalisation.⁴⁶

Regionalisation was a reflection of the casual thinking about the distinction between 'local' and 'regional'. Inside the BBC mind, with its primitive philosophy of audience behaviour, the two were synonymous. In reality this vagueness rode roughshod over many important distinctions.

The BBC thought it knew something about its audience but in reality it possessed little precise knowledge. The conviction of metropolitan superiority and the vice of broadcasting élitism led the BBC to set standards of its own estimation rather than pander to regional variations in taste, which were, in any case, considered by the BBC to be merely capricious.⁴⁷

Yet what were these variations or distinctions? A locality generally revolves around a small part of a county, or a single urban area. A region can spread across several counties. The exact size varies and there are no hard fast rules - hence the problem of respecting any distinct qualities which the area may have. The common denominator may be geographical or it may be a matter of dialect - but, needless to say, the BBC regions were so large that they enveloped many of these separate qualities and could not in any sense be considered to be localities. Regionalisation was not a BBC invention.⁴⁸ Census and Poor Law Commissioners had evaluated such areas in the mid-nineteenth century. In contrast it is interesting to note that at the same time the common identity of many localities was being strengthened by the municipal pride arising from the new industrial concentrations which had replaced the old local loyalties of pre-industrial Britain.⁴⁹ Thus, although the locality drew much of its strength from social and cultural loyalties, the political and administrative battle for control by locality or by region had begun well before radio was even considered.

The advance of the wireless and the BBC added another, slightly different character to the struggle. Whereas previous efforts at the creation of a regional character had been largely administrative in origin, the BBC's effort was derived as much from economic and technological, as from administrative reasons. Moreover, its regions were far larger than anything that had yet been conceived - the North and West Regions in particular. There is a certain logic in arguing that the acceleration in the speed of communication should lower barriers and permit the creation of larger units - where localities find it easier to express a common interest because of the erosion of dialects,

derived from exposure to the microphone voice, or because of the provision of better information and the potential means of sharing common interests with neighbouring localities.

With this concern for economic and technical rather than purely administrative dictates, the BBC had more in common with industrial groups of the twentieth century than with nineteenth century administrative processes. The grouping of the Railway Companies in 1921 was a similarly created convenience as, too, was the creation in 1926 of the Central Electricity Generating Board, with its associated regions. These in turn set the basis for post-war nationalisation schemes in Coal, Gas and Steel. In each case, technological and business efficiency were the motivating forces.⁵⁰

Yet the BBC still remained distinct from all of them. In the eyes of consumers, the external manifestations of all these creations were bureaucracy, taxation, or crude production and supply statistics. The BBC possessed a much more identifiable and vivid connection with its consumers. The output provided a constant reminder - perhaps because of the jarring accent of the announcers, the style of the programmes or even the apparent irrelevance of the news bulletins. The addition of this cultural effect made the influence of the BBC unique and, in consequence, any clumsiness in handling social and regional differences of taste or interest were likely to be much harder for the consumer to bear. Erosion of local distinctions might eventually occur but, in the short run, the audience reaction to the implementation of the Regional Scheme might be expected to be fairly hostile.

But was it? The re-introduction of local radio in 1967 suggested that broadcasting, or any other mass medium, had not eliminated local interests, accents or identities. Otherwise there would have been no 'needs' for the new BBC policy to satisfy. The attempt to 'regionalise' these needs seemed to have been borne stoically until the policy makers bowed to the inevitable, and accepted that local interests should be recognised rather than ignored. But were local interests asserted so strongly in 1929, when the introduction of the Regional Scheme commenced? Was regionalisation really borne so stoically?

BBC opinion on the validity of the scheme may have confused local and regional interests but it had at least made the step of considering some non-metropolitan variations in taste and interest, rather than resort to a full-blown national service. From the early planning stage, Peter Eckersley, the Chief Engineer, recognised, as others such as his brother, Roger, and the Drama Director, Val Gielgud, did not,⁵¹ that variations in regional taste did exist and that they merited some consideration.⁵² In this sense there was some contentment at the provision of a limited contrast to the National programme. In fact, there were few complaints from the listening public in the cases where old local stations or relay stations were replaced by a good quality service - offering better reception standards and a choice of programme.

Complaints were often aimed simply at the change in itself rather than at the quality of the replacement service or the enforced obsolescence of equipment. In fact the quality of reception was extremely influential in deciding the audience reaction. In other words, the loss of local content was not necessarily a basis for excessive remorse provided that the quality of the new National and Regional programmes equalled or exceeded the standard of the old service in terms of modulation, purity or volume. In this respect some of the BBC predictions were satisfactorily fulfilled.⁵³ Reaction was most hostile from those who had previously received a good service, usually through proximity to an old transmitter, and now found themselves on the periphery of the new service area. Hull, Sheffield and Newcastle fell into this category when the North Region was introduced, whereas Leeds, Bradford and Manchester did not. Hostility was certainly not universal. Following the introduction of the scheme in each area the immediate reaction was generally one of contentment with the quality and choice from the favoured areas and resentment at the lack of these characteristics from the others.

The BBC recognised that change in itself would be a cause for complaint and therefore gave prominence to the detailed preparation of the audience for the changeover to the Regional Scheme. The lesson had been learnt the hard way from the very beginning of the scheme with the introduction of the new Birmingham station. Here inadequate prior warning and publicity caused a storm of protest when the 5IT Station, sited in Birmingham, was fully replaced by the Daventry Experimental Station, 5GB, on 21st August 1927. Curiously, Peter Eckersley had expected the storm and had prepared to ride it out - indeed the riding of the storm was the 'make or break' test for the whole Regional policy.⁵⁴ As Eckersley remarked:

'We knew, from measurements, that the new station would give perfectly adequate signals in Birmingham, albeit weaker than those the Birmingham people were accustomed to receive, and so we knew that while there would be plenty of complaint it would not be justified. But unjustified or not the volume might be embarrassing. Indeed, it might be so great as to prejudice the whole scheme. So "changing over" was a crucial test of the problem of "dislocation". Would listeners willingly adapt their receivers to the new conditions or would they just howl to get back the super signal they were accustomed to receive?' 55

The prediction was correct but it was a 'damned close run thing',⁵⁶ and some palliatives were needed to reduce the strain on the nerves. The lesson learnt led to a much greater effort in the area of public relations. For the next stage of the scheme at Brookmans Park, a pamphlet was widely distributed to explain the change, anticipate its effects and help prepare the listener for any practical changes to his or her receiver.⁶⁰ In this pamphlet the BBC recommended changes to aerials according to proximity and in the sequel pamphlet, The Reception of Alternative Programmes, suggested the fitting of a wavetrap to crystal sets, so that the choice of programme could be clearly separated by such unselective sets. At that time a wave-trap would cost between 1/6 and 2/6.⁶¹ In private Peter Eckersley was disdainful in his attitude to such adjustments:

'If we had to wait until everybody gave up using old junk and expensive toys before we could institute any new schemes we might just as well never make any changes at all.' 62

But the public expression was adopted in each region as the scheme continued to spread during the course of the next ten years.

Table V: Transmitter Opening Dates.⁵⁷

Main and Relay Stations: 1922-4

Station	Call-Sign	Wavelength (m)	Frequency (kHz)	Opening Date	Closing Date
Main Stations:					
London(Marconi House)	2LO	363.7	825	11.5.22	5.4.25
London (Selfridges)	2LO	363.7	825	6.4.25	4.10.29
Manchester	2ZY	378	793	16.5.22	17.5.31
Birmingham	5IT	477	629	15.11.22	21.8.27
Newcastle	5NO	404.5	742	24.12.22	19.10.37
Cardiff	5WA	353	850	13.2.23	28.5.33
Glasgow	5SC	422	717	6.3.23.	12.6.32
Aberdeen	2BD	496	605	10.10.23	9.9.38
Bournemouth	6BM	387.2	775	17.10.23	14.6.39
Belfast	2BE	440	682	24.10.24	20.3.36
Relay Stations:					
Sheffield	6FL	306.1	980	16.11.23	16.5.31
Plymouth	5PY	338.2	887	28.3.24	13.6.39
Edinburgh	2EH	328.2	914	1.5.24	12.6.32
Liverpool	6LV	318.2	943	11.6.24	16.5.31
Leeds	2LS	346.2	866	8.7.24	16.5.31
Bradford	2LS	310	968	8.7.24	16.5.31
Hull	6KH	355.5	844	15.8.24	16.5.31
Nottingham	5NG	326.1	920	16.9.24	1.11.28
Dundee	2DE	331	906	12.11.24	12.6.32
Stoke-on-Trent	6ST	301.1	996	21.10.24	16.5.31
Swansea	5SX	482.2	622	12.12.24	28.5.33

Table VI: Transmitter Opening Dates.⁵⁸

BBC Wavelengths 1926

	In use immediately before Geneva Plan	Allocated in Geneva Plan 14.11.26.	In use 12.12.26.
Main Stations:	(m)	(m)	(m)
Aberdeen	495	491.8	500
Birmingham	479	491.8	491.8
Belfast	440	326.1	306.1
Glasgow	422	405.4	405.4
Newcastle	404	312.5	312.5
Bournemouth	386	306.1	326.1
Manchester	378	384.6	384.6
London	365	361.4	361.4
Cardiff	353	353	353
Daventry	1600	-	1600
Relay Stations:			
Swansea	482.2	288.5	288.5
Plymouth	338.2	288.5	400
Hull	335	288.5	288.5
Liverpool	331	288.5	297
Edinburgh	328.2	288.5	294.1
Nottingham	326.1	288.5	275.2
Leeds	321	297	277.8
Dundee	315	288.5	288.5
Bradford	310	294.1	254.2
Sheffield	306.1	288.5	272.7
Stoke on Trent	301.1	288.5	288.5

Note: A number of changes were made in the frequencies used in order to avoid interference.

Main and Relay Stations up to 1 September 1939

Station:	Frequency (kHz)	Wavelength (m)	Power (kW)	Opening Date
Droitwich (National)	200	1500	150	Oct 1934
Brookmans Park (National)	1149	261.1	40	Mar 1930
Moorside Edge (National)	1149	261.1	40	July 1931
Westerglen (National)	1149	261.1	50	June 1932
Moorside Edge (North Regional)	668	449.1	70	May 1931
Stagshaw	1122	267.4	60	Oct 1937
Westerglen (Scottish Regional)	767	391.1	70	June 1932
Burghead	767	391.1	60	Oct. 1936
Redmoss	1285	233.5	5	Sept 1938
Washford (Welsh Regional)	804	373.1	70	May 1933*
Penmon	804	373.1	5	Feb. 1937
Brookmans Park (London Regional)	877	342.1	70	Oct. 1929
Lisnagarvey (N. Ireland Regional)	977	307.1	100	Mar. 1936
Droitwich (Midland Regional)	1013	296.2	70	Feb. 1935
Start Point (West of England Regional)	1050	285.7	100	June 1939
Clevedon	1474	203.5	20	June 1939

* As West Regional Station

Figure V. Line Pattern of Simultaneous Broadcasting Network 1938.

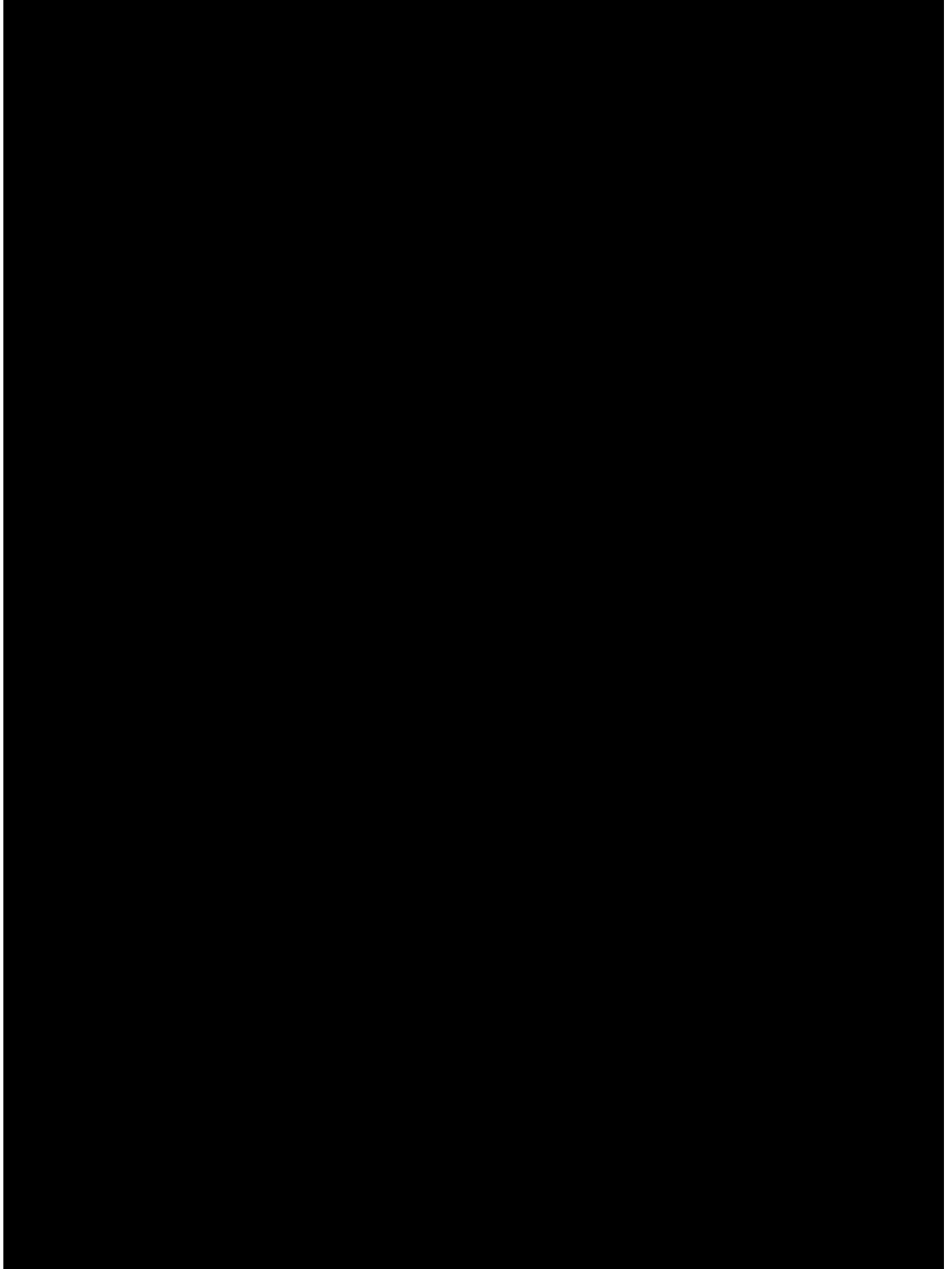
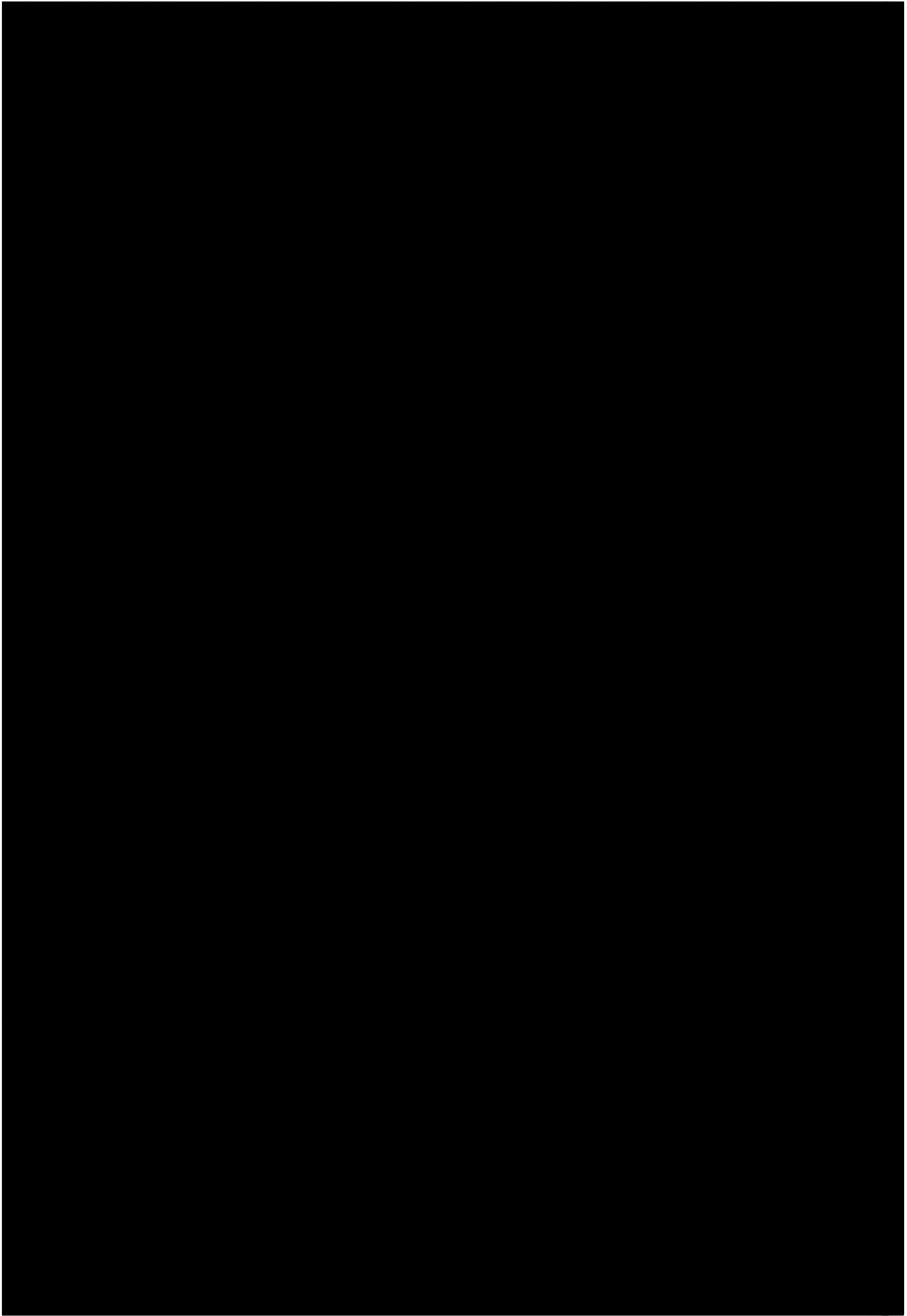


Figure VI. Transmitter Map 1922-1939.



One of the greatest problems during the course of this implementation was not the level of resistance to the scheme but the envy of those in areas outside it. Some areas on the periphery had a genuine grievance because of the weakness of the new signal. Such areas included Hull, Sheffield, North Wales, the Highlands, Newcastle and some rural parts of the southern English Counties. All were eventually provided with a better service before 1939.⁶³ In the interim, protests forced the perpetuation of some of the old local stations - either independently or in relay for Regional programme broadcasts. These included the Newcastle, Bournemouth, Plymouth and Aberdeen stations. Another amelioration of grievances was the introduction of a more powerful National Programme, with the introduction of the Droitwich transmitter to replace the station at Daventry on 6th October 1934.⁶⁴ The shadow areas could now receive at least one programme properly. (see Tables V and VI, Figures V and VI.)

Thus it appeared that audience reaction was largely inevitable and certainly predictable. Ignorance of the change was a serious irrational element which had to be handled. Weak signal strength was a more genuine basis for complaint and exceptionally strong signals 'swamped' foreign stations. Set adaptations proved too much for some of the less technically minded. Only in a few cases were the losses of local information or entertainment mourned as loudly as these other grievances. Nevertheless, each region had different claims, different priorities and different levels of contentment. It is essential to look at a sample of them.

The London Region was the first to see a full service from the scheme. Here, BBC publicity clearly paid off.⁶⁵ The main response came with the introduction of the full alternative programme service in March 1930.⁶⁶ This was deliberately delayed to allow the public to make preparations following the introduction of the first programme, the National Programme, broadcast from the Brookmans Park transmitter on 21st October 1929. The press was favourably disposed towards the innovation and definitely appreciated the introduction of a choice.⁶⁷ Complaints were expected and even predicted in the newspapers,

although most newspapers hoped that the BBC would weather the storm without concession.⁶⁸ Advice was given by national newspapers on how to take advantage of the service by aerial alterations and by the fitting of wave-traps.⁶⁹ The delay certainly helped to diminish the extremes of public response. In some cases, crystal sets may have been jammed by the two signals but great stress was laid on the fact that even these crude receivers could be saved by simple alteration. With the wide distribution of this advice the crisis soon passed.⁷⁰

Potentially, the North Regional scheme presented a more difficult task - largely because the area to be covered was so vast. The local press met the plans with some trepidation.⁷¹ Special fears were devoted to the uneven quality of reception which was expected - either through 'swamping', as in Huddersfield,⁷² or through the weakness of the signal, as at Hull.⁷³ Generally, however, the new station at Moorside Edge, near Slaithwaite, was met with sympathetic anticipation. All the main Yorkshire papers backed the scheme, with some reservations about the signal strength.⁷⁴ The building of the mast and station was closely monitored and the first tests met with adulation. Any fears seemed to evaporate.⁷⁵ The 'Giant' transmitter was capable of a much superior quality of broadcasting when compared with the old fashioned local stations. Their loss was mourned barely at all. The swamping effect was considerably less than was expected.⁷⁶ The alternative programme was welcomed too. The Daily Herald even offered readers the chance to buy a wave-trap for the station.⁷⁷ In the Yorkshire and Lancashire area the main dispute centred on the more trivial issue of the name of the new station. 'Slowit' was generally agreed to be the most correct pronunciation of Slaithwaite - an endearing gesture of individuality in the face of the change.⁷⁸

There were more serious problems elsewhere, mainly for listeners in Northumberland and Durham. The Newcastle Station, 5NO, was to be synchronised with Moorside Edge to relay the Regional programme. This was because it was too far from either Moorisde Edge or Daventry 5XX to get reception of any station other than 5NO. At first the plan was actually welcomed - as the

Newcastle Evening Chronicle remarked:

'A large amount of this programme will come from the Newcastle, Manchester and Leeds studios and from other sources in the North of England, and Mr. Liveing (North Regional Director) indicated the other night, some of the extremely interesting plans the BBC has for entertaining features in this North Country Programme. It is distinctly promising to find Mr. Liveing and his staff so keen to make this programme a source of real satisfaction to Northern listeners, and I do believe that Northern officials have a better idea of the tastes and sympathies of the ordinary working class and middle class wireless listeners than have some of the staff at London Headquarters who live in an atmosphere remote from that of the man in the street.' 79

This favourable attitude, demonstrating no sign of regret at the ending of local programmes, soon evaporated. The reason was technical. The relay synchronisation system failed during a trial held during August 1931. For a large part of the local population, all programmes from the BBC were jammed. The Durham area, already an area of low licence holding levels, was cut off in a 'mush zone' of high interference levels. 5NO became 'Five No Good'.⁸⁰ Eventually the outcry led to the dropping of the scheme.⁸¹ 5NO continued on its own wavelength and the Newcastle area remained at a disadvantage until the opening of the Stagshaw transmitter in 1937. Then the relay of the North Regional programme was carried out successfully and the audience growth rate stimulated.

The West was the last of the English Regions to be provided with a service. This was not greeted as a mark of favour, rather it was a source of some feeling of neglect.⁸² When the station was finally built, the Region was subject to the most serious of the disputes over local interests. The main conflict rounded on the Welsh language programme service, which was shared with the rest of the West programmes. The Cornish listeners were especially annoyed by this, as they had an inferior reception quality to that of South Wales listeners.⁸³ Listeners in North Wales were also aggrieved. A few could receive the North Regional programme but not the West Regional Welsh language programmes. This rather obvious clash of local interests was only resolved by the separation of the two regions and the provision of extra transmitters at Penmon and Start Point. Before they could be built, the relay stations at Plymouth and Bournemouth provided some support for the service - a rather unsatisfactory compromise.

Listener reaction does not, so far, seem to conform to the expected pattern. The local needs of the nineteen-sixties seem to have been absent or at least repressed in the nineteen-thirties. The quality of reception and the opportunity of a choice were the two leading requirements. Whether this was a primary need, or a secondary need paying due deference to the technical limitations which prevented the provision of a fully localised service, it is hard to say. Some regions were probably too large, especially the North and West Regions. This grievance was recognised and acted upon - not by breaking up the programme service as in the case of Wales - rather by providing a relay transmitter for the same regional programme. Any local services which had provided an interim service were eventually terminated and the available wavelength reallocated to complete the Regional Scheme. Other areas, such as the Highlands of Scotland, were glad just to get a service. The Scottish character of their programmes seemed adequate and was certainly better than no programme at all.⁸⁴

After the initial gratitude for the new service, some problems did begin to emerge. Often they were to be found in areas which had a very good regional and national service on the medium wave, plus the Droitwich National programme and even, in some cases, the Regional programme of a neighbouring region. The BBC aware of this dissatisfaction sent the Director of Regional Relations on a tour of the Regions. He produced his report in January 1936.⁸⁵ The Director, C.A. Siepmann, was not noted for any predisposed sympathy towards the regions but he severely criticised the overall policy of centralisation as one of the main reasons for the grievances:

'The danger inherent in the power and range of broadcasting of achieving a uniform pattern of ~~thought~~, of standardising taste and values according to the authoritarian few and 'expert' are too obvious to need elaboration.'

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This was the first dent in the confidence of metropolitan supremacy. Related to this were his fears about the consequences of this type of development at regional level. 'Regional centralisation' was caused by a shortage of regional resources - both in financial and personnel terms:

'This leads to a tendency to draw material and artists for the purpose of convenience from the area in which the officers happen to be. This is much resented by towns and districts further afield within the Region'.

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Manchester was one example of this practice, but savings of time, effort and money also starved some of the non-metropolitan Home Counties.⁸⁸

Another grievance was the lack of a full regional programme choice on the alternative programme. Standards were set which contained an implicit metropolitan bias. As Siepmann stated:

'It is appropriate that national services should achieve as high a standard of excellence as possible, but the purist's concern for artistic integrity can be carried too far, and the case for Regional broadcasting cannot be measured by this single yardstick of artistic achievement. There are subordinate considerations which are bound to qualify the mere concern for high standards of achievement. The patronage of all the arts, the representation of local life and of local interests are limiting factors from a Head Office point of view, but need to be carefully weighed in the balance of advantage in considering the purpose on which our Regional programme policy depends. Concessions are necessary, though I should be the last to defend a lapse of standards beyond a certain point.'⁸⁹

One enemy was particularly detested - that was 'Diagonalisation' - where a programme was broadcast at the same time on all frequencies at once; normally because it was considered too important for any other programme to challenge for an audience.⁹⁰ In retrospect, Peter Eckersley expounded his views about the validity of this practice:

'The extra wavelength is an administrative convenience, not an extra facility to expand the scope of the service. It might have been thought that the two programmes would always be different, both in items and inspiration. Not only have they, in today's practice, the same inspiration but often the two wavelengths both carry the same item.'⁹¹

Admittedly Eckersley had an axe to grind and wanted the alternative programme to be handed over to private enterprise to provide the necessary contrast, but his view was shared by others who advocated different solutions.

Siepmann feared the effect this policy might have on regional talent. Whilst observing that:

'Despite broadcasting and other influences, the vigour and conservation of local life and local interests persist,'

he also saw the dangers should this extraordinary resilience be broken down:

'The provinces are the seed-ground of talent and the ultimate source of our supply for London programmes. The existence and development of our Regional work provides an effective insurance policy against the drying up of sources of supply for our programmes.' 93

In only one region did Siepmann see any signs that local activity could not fill a greater part of the regional output - and that was in the West Region.⁹⁴ He felt that only here was the quality low enough to justify a reduction in regional programme hours. Needless to say, this advice was much resented in the region and the idea was stillborn.⁹⁵

The broadcasting élite thus suffered a challenge to its confidence. The BBC Control Board accepted some of the comments but they did so grudgingly; with reservations about the extent of any concession. Regional programme material only gradually increased. Centralisation was only a little less attractive. As the Control Board minutes show:

'As a matter of policy the general tendency outside broadcasting towards centralisation on the metropolis is regarded as bad, and broadcasting can counter this by representing the local point of view and encouraging local talent, but not at the expense of replacing metropolitan by regional centralisation.' 96

That was vaguely worded but clearly more sympathetic than hitherto. The Board also took up another of Siepmann's suggestions. He had advocated a 'Charter of Rights' to try and strengthen the position of the Regional Station Directors in their disputes with Head Office over programming.⁹⁷ The Control Board agreed, but left only a small gap for more regional programmes to enter. The 'Charter' stated:

'A regional broadcast must either (1) have a local justification, or (2) if it is general programme material, be better, or at least as well performed in the Regions as elsewhere.'

These changes in emphasis were communicated to the BBC Departments as a semblance of action. In fact the public were more likely to benefit from the continued expansion of the Regional transmitter system in the late thirties than from any move towards more regionally generated programmes.

Fortunately some other changes in attitude by the policy makers following the report did have effect, albeit belated in their impact. The main benefit of Siepmann's action was a contribution to the internal BBC debate about the collection of information concerning the audience. Siepmann frequently alluded to the ignorance about the needs and character of the audience in the regions. He pressed heavily for the greater use of the Public Relations Officers, recently attached to each station, and for a campaign of audience research:

'Regional correspondence is small and, great as is the collective knowledge of the staff of Regional characteristics and sentiment, I could not fail to be perplexed in my survey by the total lack of evidence as to the attitude of listeners to our Regional services. Our work here remains an act of faith and I found a general concern on the part of Regional Programme Assistants for more guidance as to listener's needs and for the setting up of the machinery to secure reliable data for the determination of future policy. Regional offices are to my mind the proper centres for the establishment of some such information service as is universally demanded.' 98

Thus, even if Siepmann claimed that local culture was suffering from a lack of stimulation or that local talent for broadcasting was drying up, it would be difficult to prove. Reluctantly, the Control Board did approve of listener research to end the information starvation. It also put the Public Relations Officers to work gathering listener responses.⁹⁹ The policy makers finally had to admit that the imposition of the Regional Scheme had created problems and that it was only out of good fortune that the dictates of the élite had been accepted so readily by the audience. Such closer contact with the public would verify whether the scheme needed improvement in order to satisfy some of the audience demands, and would reduce the dependence upon personal estimations of the public taste.

Nonetheless, the absence of a really adverse reaction was the most noticeable response to the Regional Scheme. Only where language, or some other distinctive cultural variation existed was there likely to be major frustration at the imposition of one alien culture to replace the old locally created programme. With the creation of a separate Welsh Region and the reallocation of some areas of North Staffordshire and North Nottinghamshire even this problem

was erased.¹⁰⁰ Only with the waning of the initial enthusiasm generated in each region at its moment of creation was there any sign of more considerable localised frustration. The provision of a fuller national service pattern was widely appreciated - this Reithian approach was not resented if an alternative was available. It is also worth emphasising that for many areas the change was inconclusive. Neither Derbyshire nor Oxfordshire had possessed a particularly local station before. To them, the Regional Scheme may have seemed a more equitable way of sharing out the opportunities for local talent. The old local stations were as capable of 'local centralisation' as the regional stations were of 'regional centralisation'. The attitude to the radio service in these areas was very little influenced by the change. The special attention paid to appearances by local artistes and the coverage of local events was undiminished, arousing as much pleasure as before.¹⁰¹

The puzzling aspect is still to explain why local needs were held in abeyance when local stations were replaced. Why was there so little reaction of a hostile kind towards the Regional Scheme? Did local needs then exist - or had they already been eroded by another mass medium such as the national press? Siepmann felt that they had survived but did not explain their reticence. Perhaps they were reduced to a comatose state only to be revived by some later stimulant. Perhaps radio eventually helped to revive local standards by the example of its own quality of performance. It may also be true that the BBC Regions simply satiated a public demand for a broader cultural diet.

The answers to these questions are often only partly formed, because of the lack of detailed information about the audience. On the whole it seems that the answer can be most nearly reached by addressing the problem in a different way: the audience did not press for a better local service because it knew that if it asked for one, it would not be forthcoming. The likely response to such a request was well known. The audience was, therefore, resigned to the service they were offered. The wavelength restriction and the fears of interference meant that listeners just had to accept a share in a regional

programme. They were generally content with that as long as this alternative was a genuine one and provided that the available time was shared out fairly evenly amongst the component localities, not confined to the area immediately surrounding the regional station. The comparison with the nineteen-sixties is not, therefore, entirely a fair one. Local interests were still felt to exist in the sixties, although they may even have been weaker than in the thirties since the radio service had become much more nationally oriented, with two purely national wavelengths - the Third Network and the Light - and only the Home Service providing limited regional options.¹⁰² But the difference was that the public knew that local radio was technically possible - and that changed the approach.

The introduction of the Regional Scheme did change the relationship between the BBC and its audience. Its introduction drew more listeners within reception distance of a transmitter for the first time and provided the majority of listeners with a choice of programme, before 1939. For most of the audience the new scheme was an improvement and the service was accepted as a change towards better programmes, better reception and a closer relationship between the needs of listeners and the output of the broadcasters. Nonetheless the reins of control for the regional programmes were still held tightly in London. Regional broadcasting stations were restricted in the range of the programmes they could produce and in the size of their budgets for new initiatives. By 1939, few inside the BBC would have argued that a regional service was not an essential adjunct to the main National programme but, as the Report on the Regions showed, a great deal of potential was left untapped by the restrictive nature of BBC central control.

Despite these criticisms the Regional programmes did provide for many previously unsatisfied tastes and extended the range of programmes which could be provided. Furthermore, the experience of introducing the scheme taught the BBC a great deal more about closer public relations. The Corporation accepted the need for positive efforts to discover public moods and to assuage the worst

discontents. Each Regional Station was eventually provided with a public relations officer reporting functionally to Stephen Tallents, the BBC's Public Relations Officer.

The Regional Scheme was only one of many changes which the BBC has continued to make in the service. Bowing to the ever changing national and international requirements, new programmes were introduced and wavelengths changed.¹⁰³ In November 1978, for instance, a new series of wavelength changes was introduced. The well-oiled BBC machine gave a year's notice of the changes, provided plenty of advance publicity and was well prepared to roll over the inevitable consumer resistance wherever it arose. The lessons of 1929 had been well learnt.

Chapter 3

The Means of Listening

3.1 Wireless Equipment

Technological and economic constraints did not apply only to the transmission of radio. The listener was beset with considerable problems in purchasing or building a set which was reliable and capable of receiving the full range of broadcast programmes. Technical constraints were paramount, although considerable progress was made in improving the quality of radio sets before 1939. The cost of a licence and the price of the set were further barriers to ownership. If disposable income was low, or, for the unemployed in inter-war Britain, non-existent, then it may not have been possible to build even the cheapest crystal set, least of all pay the annual licence fee. This primary influence must be investigated in some detail. Commercial considerations were an important influence on the growth of the audience. The radio industry had an important part to play in the development of listening and, furthermore, it was a useful source of information on the shape of the audience. The level of sales, pricing policy and advertising all merit attention. Finally the alternative to wireless must be considered. Broadcasting could also be received by cable from a relay exchange. There were technical and economic advantages accompanied by some loss of flexibility. A considerable number of listeners chose this method of listening and the relay system helped to swell the audience before 1939.

The technical limitations of the early receivers placed considerable constraints on aspirations for perfect reception. The crystal set was the most popular of the early receivers. This was the simplest, cheapest, easiest to operate and crudest form of listening. No power supply was needed and the only components required were an aerial, an induction coil, a crystal detector and a pair of headphones - all linked together in a circuit. Using the sketch and circuit diagram attached (Figure 1), the method of operation should be fairly clear. The signal transmitted reaches the aerial and sets off a sympathetic oscillatory current, the wavelength of the aerial being adjusted to match that of the incoming signal by altering the length of wire in the circuit at the point where it is wrapped around the inductance coil. The resultant current is then detected by the quartzite or carborundum crystal, which is thus set in

Figure I . Circuit Diagram and Details of a Crystal Detector.

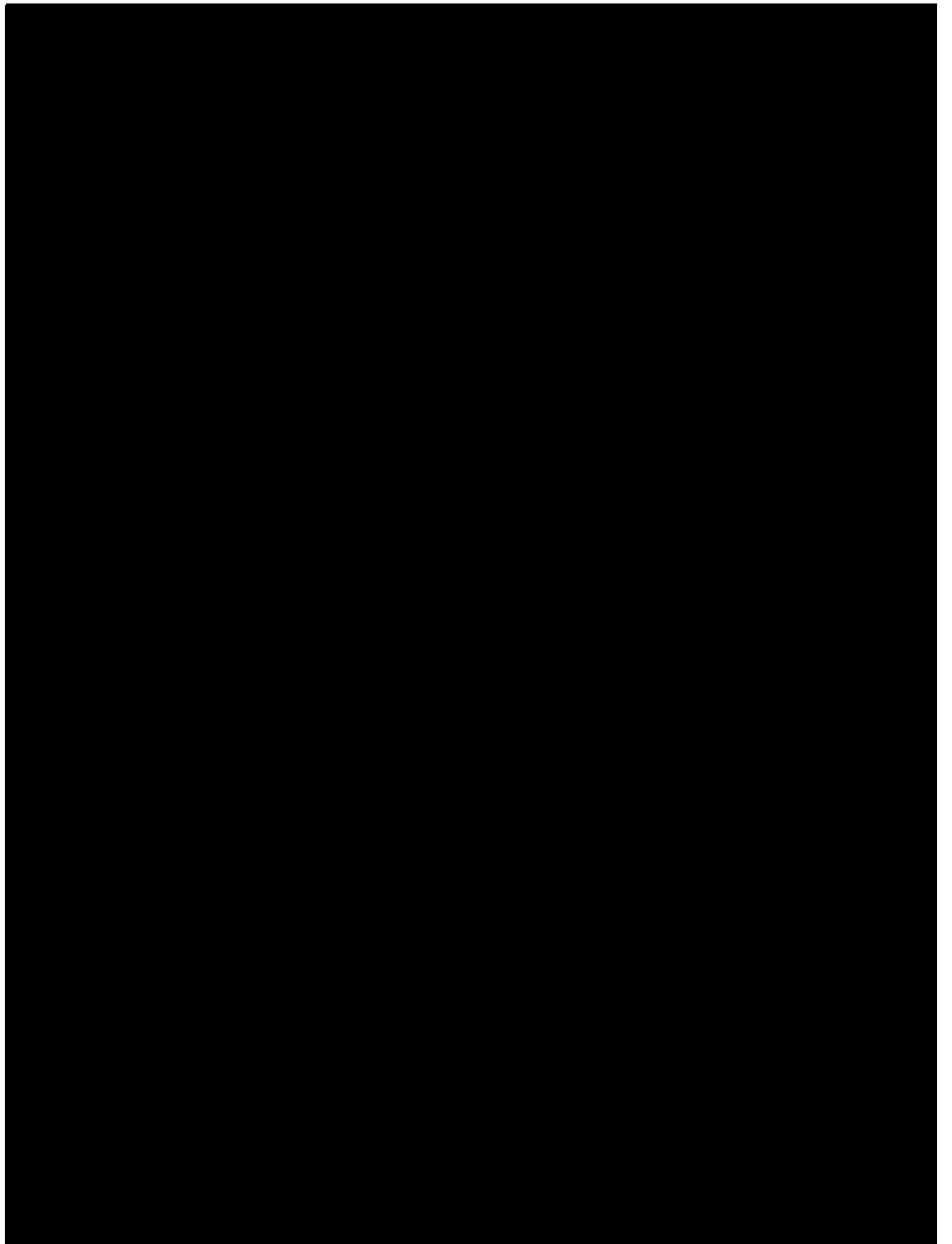
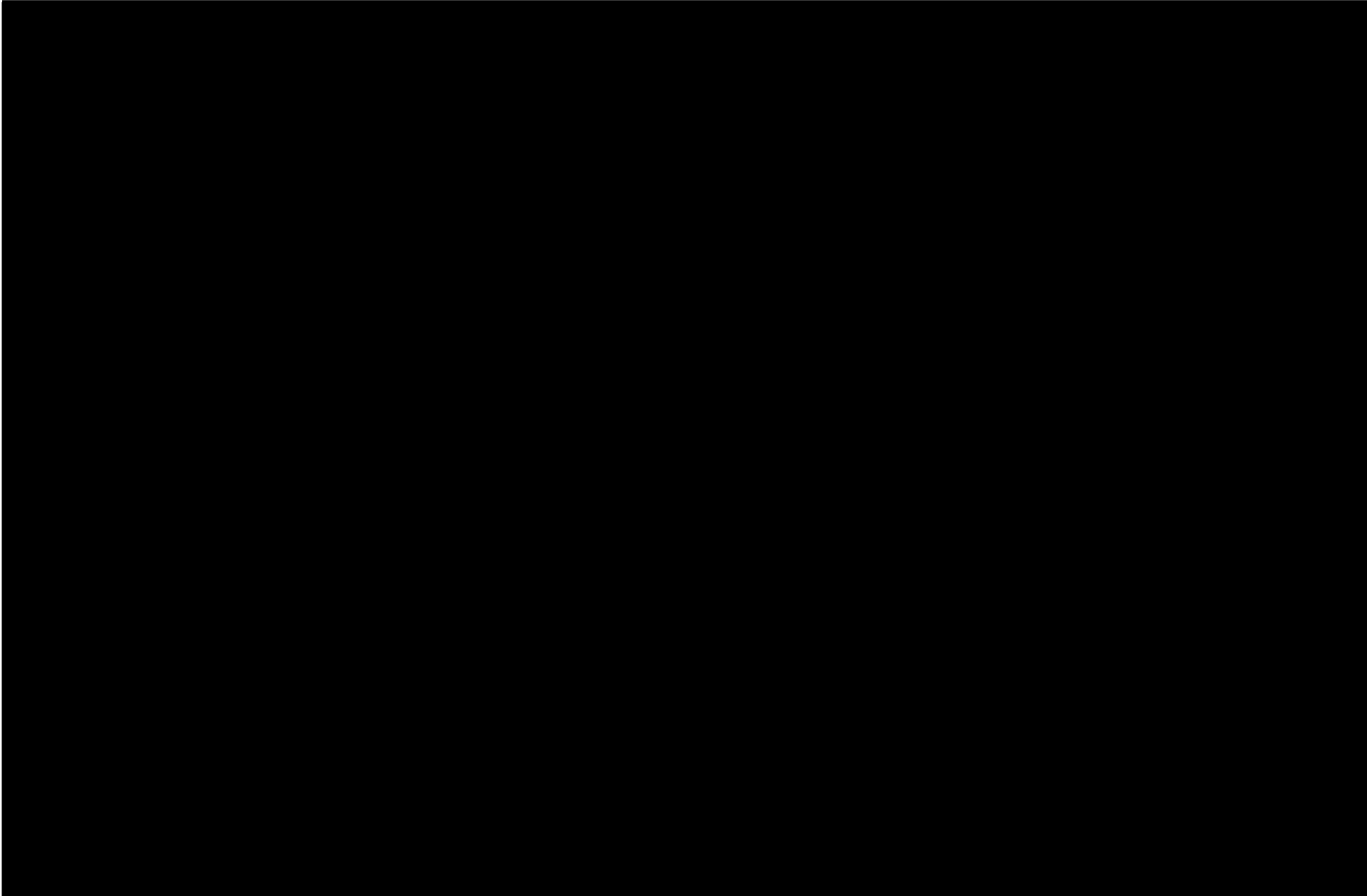


Figure II . Valve Set Circuit Diagram.



motion. The minute currents are then transmitted by a spiral of copper wire or 'cat's whisker' to the headphones, where the signals are converted into speech by the telephonic microphones of high resistance.

The main social consequence of the crudity of crystal sets was the growth of the amateur set constructor. Many simple explanations of the method of construction and operation were made available by specialist wireless periodicals and local or national newspapers in the period between 1923 and 1925.¹ The vast circulations of the specialist periodicals proved that, for a short time at least, this method of obtaining a set was very popular.² Normally, only those with a predisposition towards technical matters would have chosen this course but it can be guessed that the set builders of the time were willing to overcome some simple technical barriers in order to satisfy the eager desire to 'listen-in' using the most economical way possible. The disadvantages were numerous. Because the sets relied upon the power of the transmitter, they were extremely insensitive. For the $1\frac{1}{2}$ kW stations, sets had to be within a fifteen mile radius for any kind of quality reception and a hundred miles was the maximum for the Daventry long wave transmitter. They were also incapable of separating signals of equivalent strength, unless these were widely separated on the waveband. The GPO laid down restrictions on the length of aerial which could be used - a hundred feet being specified among the restrictions listed on the back of each licence.⁵ Longer aerials were granted only under special circumstances.⁶ The reason for this restriction was not clear but it probably related to fears about aerials being used for illegal transmissions and a concern that a proliferation of long aerials would increase the risk to the public from falling masts or cables.

For these technical or artificially imposed reasons, the crystal set was very quickly rendered obsolete. The detector was a fragile and unreliable instrument at the best of times and the crowding of the airways increasingly interfered with reception. The introduction of the Regional Scheme dealt such sets a heavy blow. Dwellers in urban areas frequently found that they could not receive sufficient signal strength and the alternative programmes could not be separated by the insensitive detectors. A wave-trap could be

fitted to filter the signal but this presented more complex technical problems for the average listener and was, in any case, not always successful in cutting out unwanted signals.⁷ The crystal set was then very quickly laid to rest, lingering on only in the hands of the very poor, of those in areas not yet reached by the Regional Scheme or, more often, in the hands of the enterprising schoolboy - and even simply relegated to the shelves of the local museum.⁸

Contemporaneously with the ephemeral heyday of the crystal set, the valve set was steadily consolidating its grip on the 'listeners-in' - as the first listeners called themselves. Unlike the crystal set, the valve set amplified the incoming signals and was capable of a much greater degree of sensitivity. Valve sets were much more complicated to build (see Figure II), especially with the extra fittings acquired through technical progress and the use of multi-valve sets. Nonetheless, it was to this type of set that most of the articles about home construction were devoted throughout the twenties when the wireless magazine flourished.⁹

The valve set needed a power supply of its own in order to supply the thermionic valve with enough energy to amplify the incoming signal. The valve invented by Fleming in 1904 and developed as the triode by de Forest in 1906, was essential if an acceptable quality of continuous wave transmissions of speech and music was to be achieved.¹⁰ At first the valve set was the essential receiver equipment only for those living at distances outside the normal crystal range - where amplification and selectivity were required to provide sufficient audible power in the microphone without interference. Eventually, as has been implied, the sheer volume of transmissions and the resultant interference, along with the addictive search for better reception, led to a rapid conquest by valve sets. Following the introduction of the Regional Scheme, the listener was often presented with a fait accompli - either listen with a valve set or cease listening almost altogether. The age when Daventry 5XX was built to allow crystal reception throughout the United Kingdom was now dead. The valve set became the minimum equipment necessary to benefit fully from the BBC service. Inevitably there was an interim period as the Regional Scheme progressed.

In some areas modified crystal sets were quite successful but generally they were declared redundant.¹¹ Precise figures do not exist but it seems safe to say that few crystal sets remained in the early thirties and loudspeaker sets were virtually universal.¹²

Improvements of valve sets over crystal sets were numerous and more were added continuously throughout the period before 1939. The use of multi-valve sets increased, with sets of anything from six to nine valves being used. By 1930, valve technology was sufficiently advanced to make two or three valve sets the normal arrangement for satisfactory amplification. The 'dull emitter' valve had a longer life and these were fitted in increasingly large numbers from 1923-1924 onwards. Screened grid valves appeared in 1927 and also became standard fittings.¹³ Portables and electric mains sets appeared for the first time in 1924. By 1932 mains sets were sold in greater numbers than battery sets and thereafter formed a majority of new sales before 1939.¹⁴ Radiograms first appeared in 1927 and they, too, soon acquired a sizeable share of sales.

Many other inventions also considerably improved performance, the quality of sound, the selectivity and sensitivity of the receiver. The neutrodyne appeared in 1925 to give good quality high frequency amplification. The moving coil loudspeaker first appeared in 1927 and soon replaced the moving magnet loudspeaker in all but the cheapest sets.¹⁵ The most significant of the inventions was the supersonic heterodyne. This sounded exotic but the 'superhet', as it was known, used an oscillator within the set to heterodyne the incoming signal - in other words to convert it to a lower frequency for improved amplification and tuning.¹⁶ This produced a more efficient set although the so-called 'reaction' system was to have some undesirable side-effects.

This catalogue of changes has grossly simplified the process of research and development in radio but it does show the impossibility of viewing radio as a fixed object. Manufacturers were applying these changes and many others at different times, in varying combinations and with widely different effects.

These improvements made sets smaller more compact and more portable - all advantages which might coax more consumers to become listeners. Early portable sets needed frame aerials but sold well during the first boom for portables in the summer of 1925.¹⁷ Later sets were rid of this encumbrance. Other technological changes outside the purely radio sector also had beneficial effects. The first sets relied on accumulators but the rapid expansion of mains electricity permitted the wider use of mains converters to transform the mains current into a suitable low voltage power supply and rectify AC to DC where necessary. This became a more widespread and practical proposition when the introduction of the National Grid standardized voltages and permitted the transformers and rectifiers to be fitted as integral parts of the sets.¹⁸ These were more expensive and the accumulator sets were only gradually displaced during the late thirties.¹⁹ The disincentive to match against price was that the accumulator normally needed recharging at the local radio or bicycle shop at least once a week; it became a common task in British life at the time.

There were drawbacks, even for the best valve sets. Interference from European stations soon rendered some of the less selective sets inoperable. There was a constant race, which European agreements tried to decelerate, between the increasing selectivity of the sets on the one hand and the constantly increasing crowding of the airways on the other - with the former hopefully keeping ahead of the latter.

The growth of mains electricity also increased the amount of interference from other household appliances. Most electrical goods had to be fitted with suppressors to reduce their localised interference effect.²⁰ The internal combustion engine also became more widespread and its ignition system needed to be fitted with suppressors. An older and more established form of public transport also caused serious problems in the search for good reception. In 1932, urban tramways accounted for 60% of the complaints about electrical interference in correspondence to the BBC.²¹

However, the main source of interference was that induced by the incorrect

use of the receiver. This type of interference or 'oscillation' was caused by the method of positive feedback or 're-action' applied to the tuning coil of the receiver circuit. The valve moved into a state of oscillation and this oscillation was transmitted by the aerial of that receiver. The result was localised but extremely annoying for listeners as the high pitched whistle which resulted often cut out a station altogether. Oscillation was the bane of listening, so frequent did it become. The 'super-het' made things worse since, as has been shown, it used feedback oscillation in the amplification of the signal. A badly adjusted set was a very efficient method of jamming signals over a local area. It was only with the introduction during the thirties of a radio frequency (RF) amplification stage, placed between the detector valve and the aerial, that the problem was satisfactorily resolved.²⁴

Oscillation was an important part of the social history of radio. It was a great distraction at a time when the technical problems of listening were of paramount importance, whilst programme policy or content was of secondary consideration. 75% of the correspondence to the BBC complained about oscillation and related problems during the twenties²⁵ - 15,000 letters in all.²⁶ The BBC wrote pamphlets advising listeners on how to prevent the problem. The issue was discussed in the national press and in specialist periodicals. It also filled many of the wireless columns of local newspapers.²⁷ 'Oscillators', as the offenders were called, were also subject to vigorous lampooning. Three examples are attached to give some idea of the hostility and humour which their activities aroused (see Figures III, IV and V).

3.2 The Cost of Listening

The annual licence fee was an influence on the growth of listening. Throughout the period from its introduction in July 1922 to 1939, the receiving licence remained at ten shillings per annum. There were, however, two main exceptions. First, the blind were able to claim exemption from licence payments. This concession was achieved almost entirely through the work of Captain Ian Fraser

Figure III . Oscillation Cartoon, June 1927.

THE WIRELESS CONSTRUCTOR

June, 1927

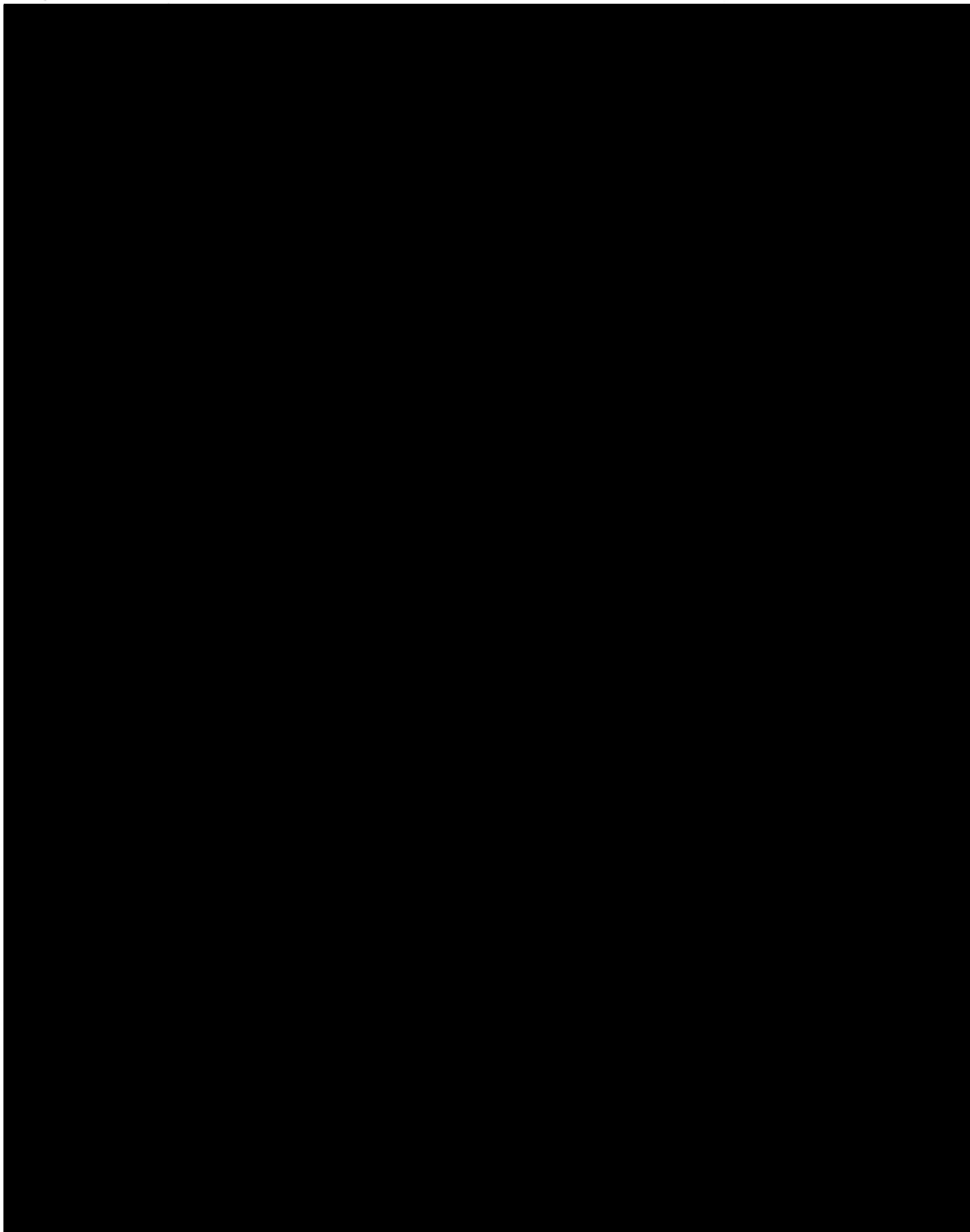


Figure IV. Oscillation Cartoon 1929.²²

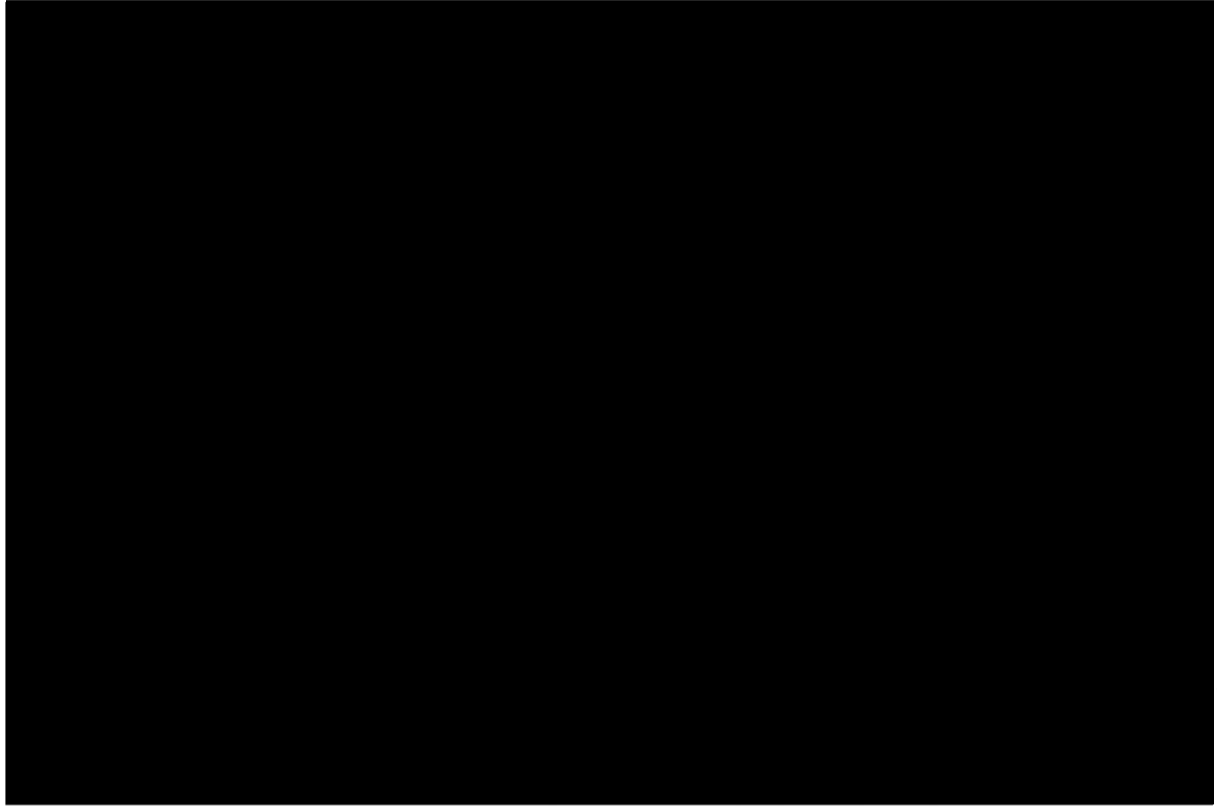
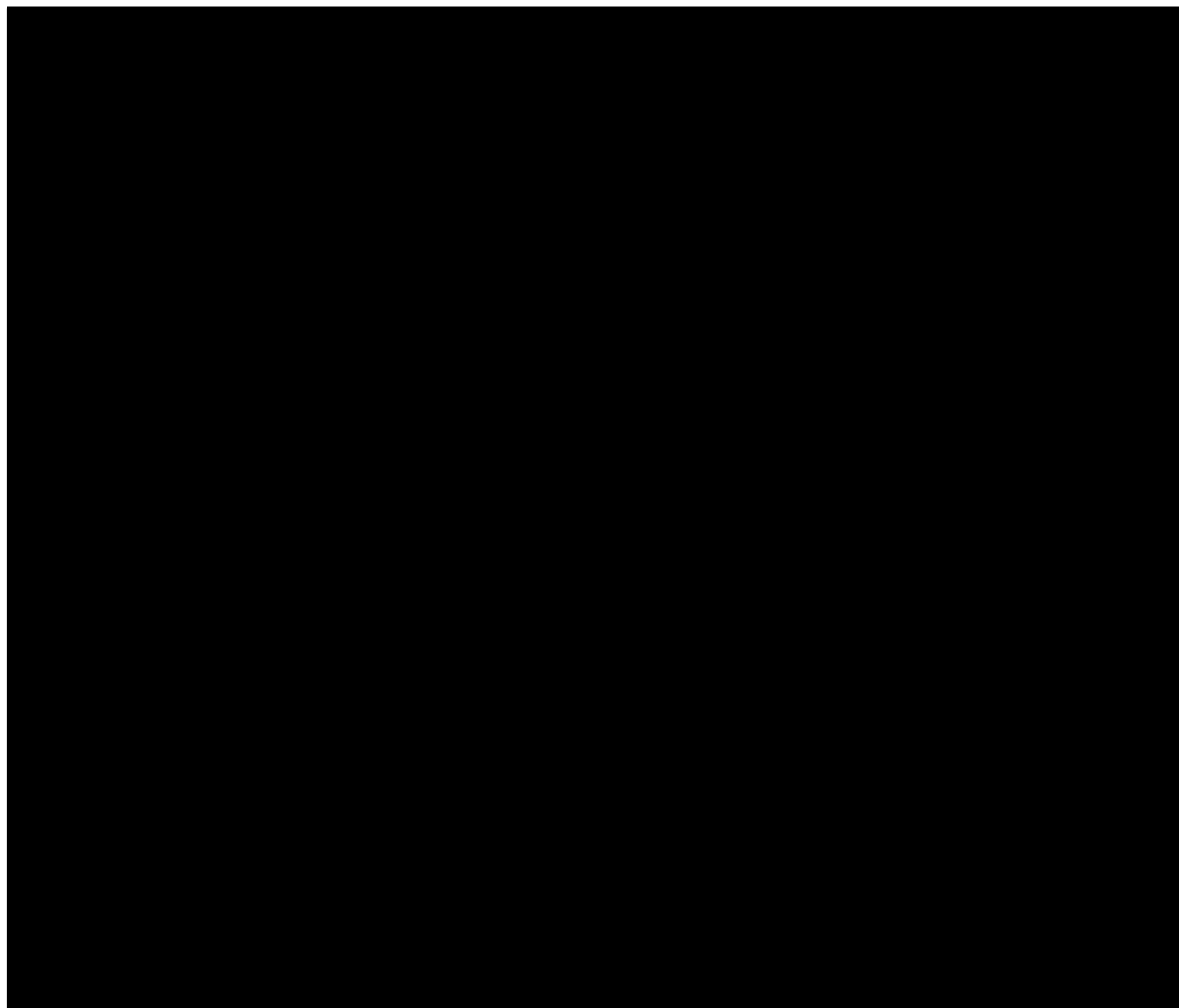


Figure V. Oscillation Cartoon 1929.²³

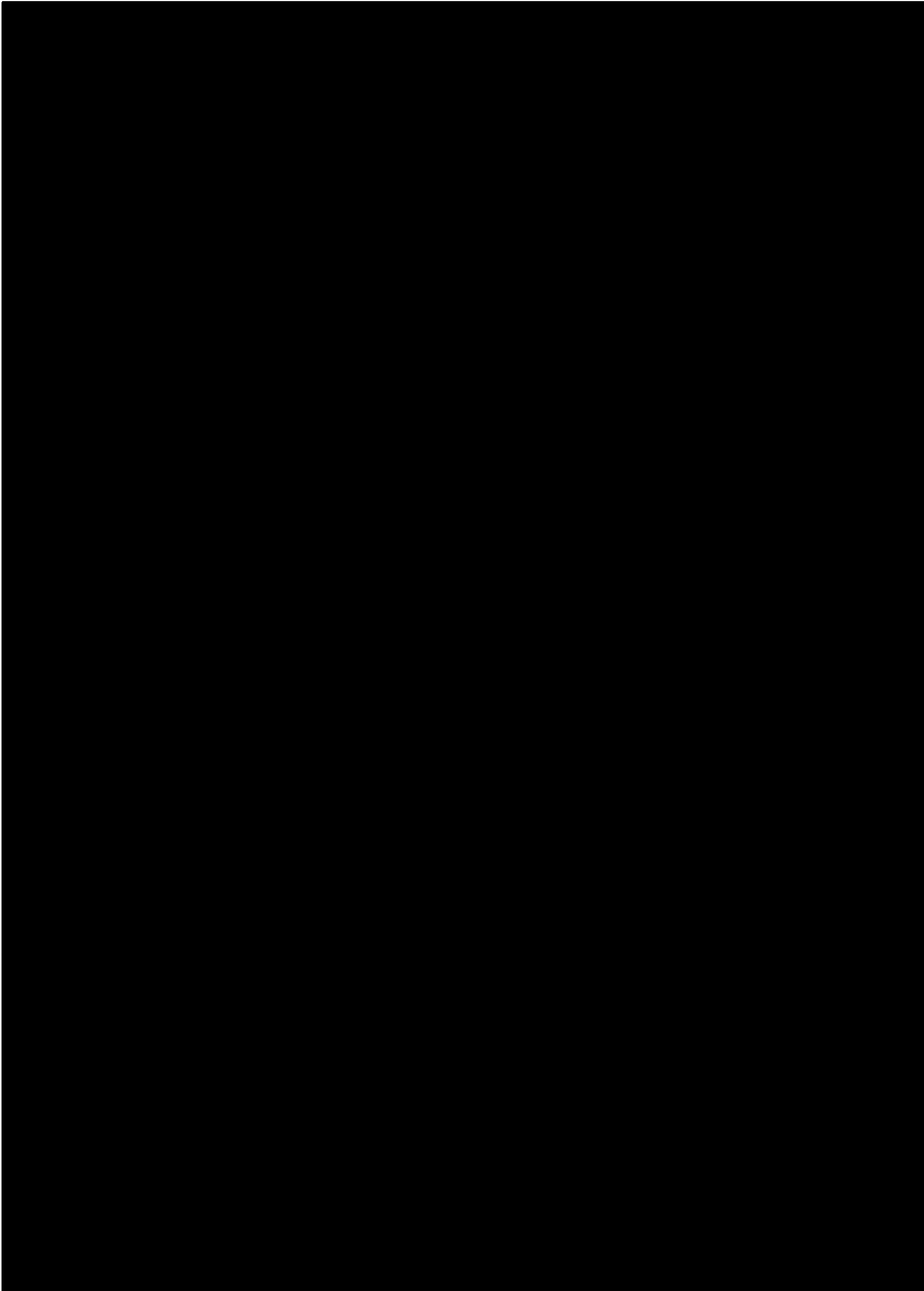


Blinded in the First World War, he became a leading member of the Wireless Society of London,²⁸ and encouraged close links with St. Dunstan's - the institute for blinded soldiers. He was a member of the Crawford Committee on Broadcasting in 1925 and agitated incessantly for the expansion of radio; with its particular significance for the blind.²⁹ Finally, in December 1926, the blind person's concessions received the Royal assent and continued until the abolition of the radio licence in 1970.³⁰

The other major exception was the period between 1st October 1923 and 1st July 1924, when there was a separate licence for the home 'constructor'. This was charged at fifteen shillings to compensate the British Broadcasting Company for the loss of its royalty on the construction of the set. The original licence for receiving only was introduced in July 1922, and cost ten shillings (see Figure VI). From the 1st November 1922 a new licence was introduced for receiving: the Broadcast Licence, also costing ten shillings. The problem thus arose, since the listener now had three alternatives. He or she could buy a set with the BBC stamp on it (see Figure VII), indicating that a royalty on the set had been paid, and obtain the Broadcast Licence. Or, buy an Experimenters' Licence and build a set from separate components, thus avoiding the royalty legitimately. Or, simply evade the licence altogether.³¹

In January 1923, the flood of listeners taking out the old style experimenters' licence led the GPO to refuse issue of them unless the applicant could prove an interest by technical qualification or knowledge. Membership of an amateur wireless society was not, in itself, regarded proof of experimental ability in the eyes of the GPO. The decision was taken reluctantly by the GPO after pressure from the BBC³². The GPO suggested a special 'Constructors' Licence, at ten shillings but the BBC refused to accept this since it enables avoidance of the royalty payment on a finished set and encouraged the use of components which had also evaded the royalty. The BBC pointed out that small firms could fulfil the conditions of the stamp and the royalty by becoming a member of the Company, after payment of a £1 share. Inevitably

Figure VI Early Reception Licence
(Note lack of permission to transmit).



however, smaller firms saw no advantage in joining a company dominated by the 'Big Six' - manufacturers who had founded the BBC: Marconi's, Radio Communication, Metropolitan Vickers, Western Electric, British Thomson Houston and the General Electric Company. Only four hundred firms joined, many stayed out and the main offenders - the imported set and imported component - remained unaffected by any BBC restrictions.³³

With the solution of this impasse in mind, the Postmaster-General recommended the formation of a committee of inquiry and this was established on 24th April 1923: the first departmental committee of inquiry on broadcasting. The terms of reference were very wide but the main aim was to solve the problem of those building their own sets. A vigorous press campaign was in progress³⁴ and the committee had to work quickly, since approximately 33,000 applications for the experimenters' licence were held under embargo. The committee reported in August 1923,³⁵ and recommended an end to the system of royalty payments with the introduction of a universal ten shilling licence. However, the findings were suppressed until the GPO and the BBC could apply these recommendations in a formal agreement.

This was reached on 1st October 1923. It possessed all the characteristics of the classic British compromise. Until 31st December 1924 there were to be three licences. Royalties on sets would also continue until that date. There would be the ten shilling Broadcast Licence as before, with the conditions concerning the BBC stamp. There would also be a fifteen shilling Constructors' Licence: the licence giving an undertaking that in constructing his apparatus he would not knowingly use apparatus manufactured elsewhere than in Great Britain. The third licence was intended to cover evaders, caught in the previous bureaucratic trap. It would also cost fifteen shillings but no questions would be asked about the nature of the equipment. (see Figures VIII, IX and X).

The period of confusion thus came to an end. In fact, the fears of the 'Big Six' about trading prospects were quite unfounded. Trade moved ahead at such a pace that on 1st July 1924, the BBC terminated the alternative licences and introduced a universal ten shilling licence.³⁶ The royalty payments came to an end on the 31st December 1924 as previously agreed.

Figure VII . BBC Royalty Stamp 1922-1924.



Figure VIII. Licences : Receiving Licence and Interim Licence.

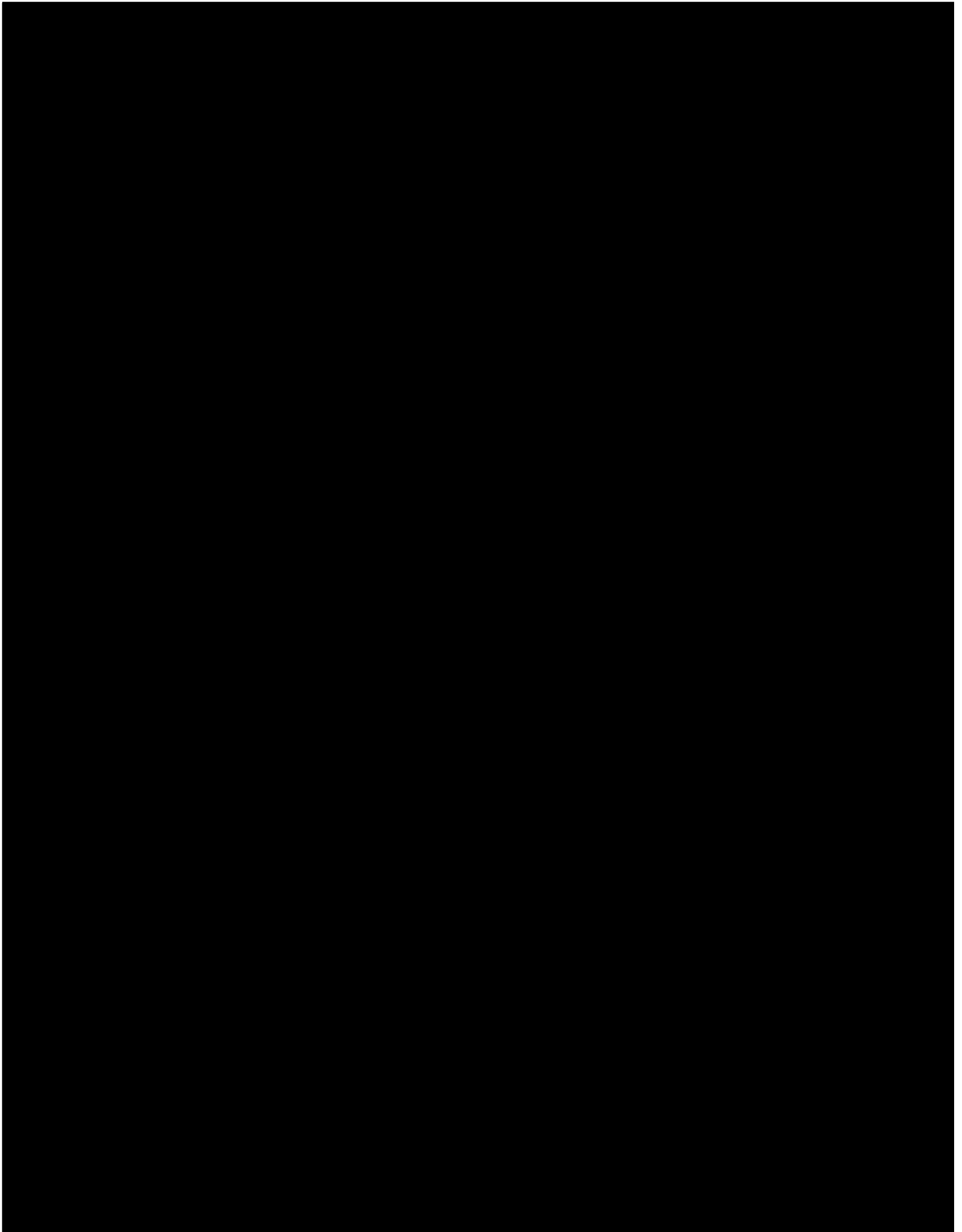


Figure IX . Licences : Broadcast and Constructors Licences.

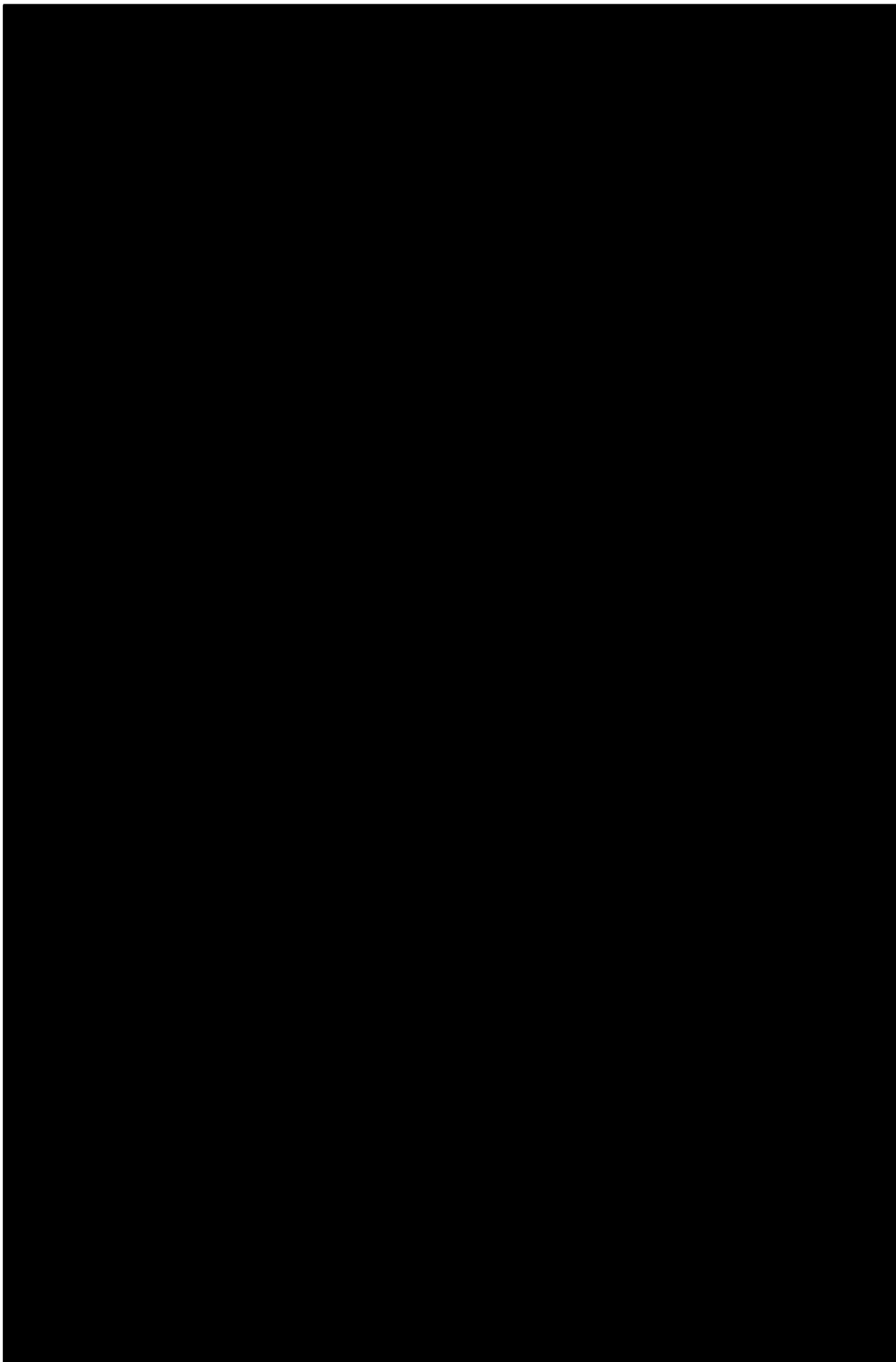
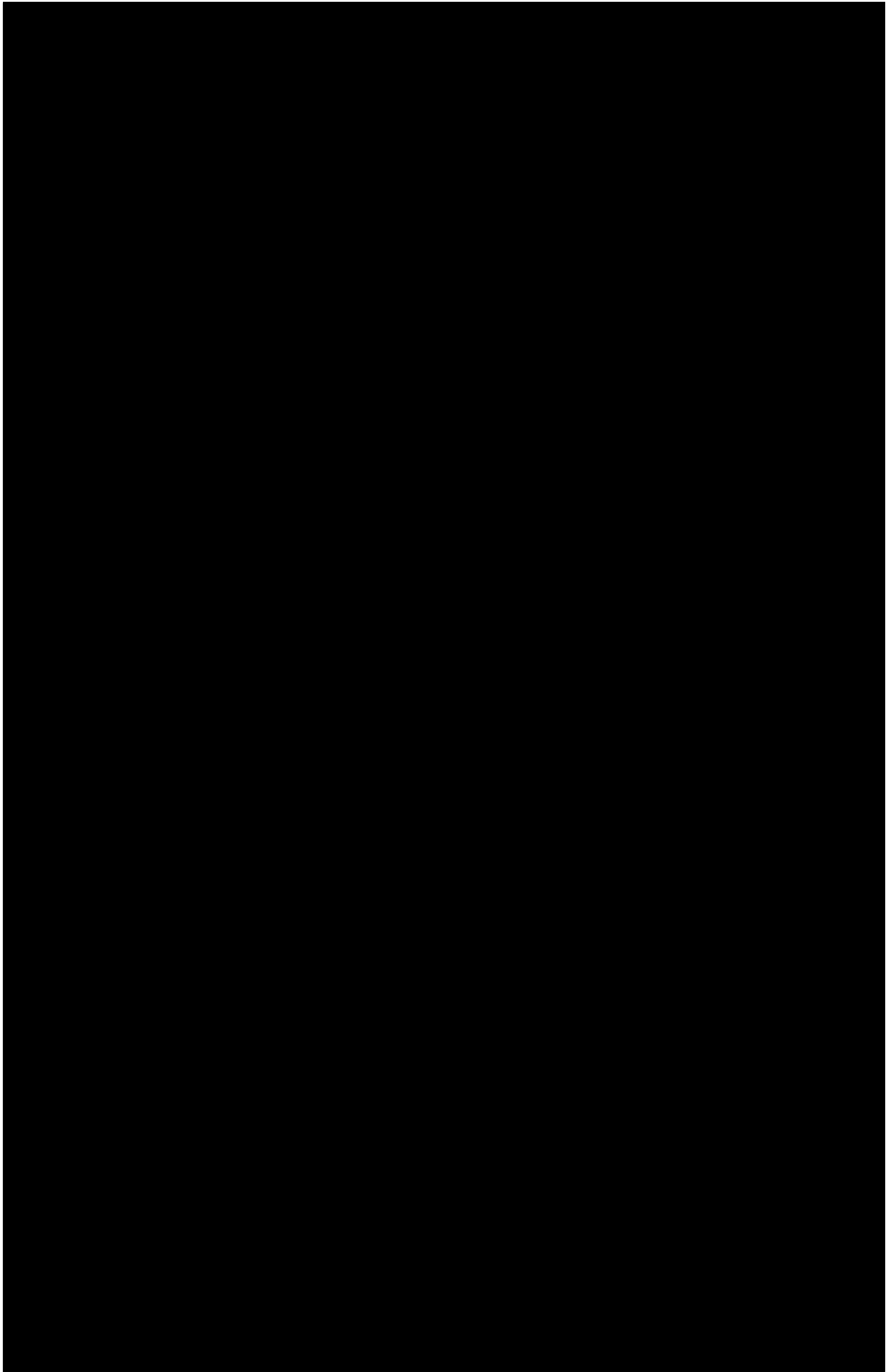


Figure X. The Obverse of Figure IX.



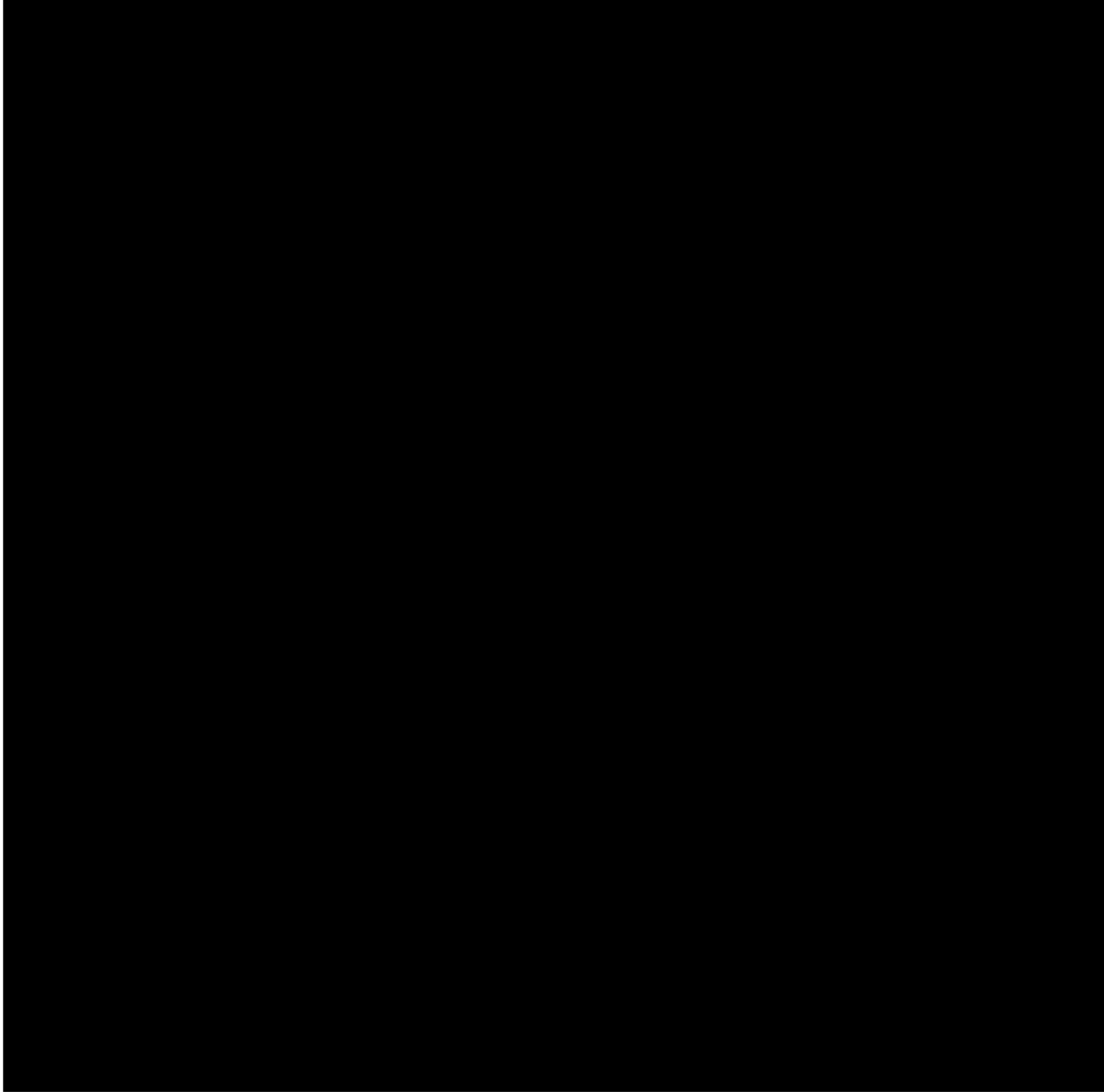
This struggle over the licence was inevitably a predominantly political concern but it had a social significance. The collective power of six large industrial firms, with their legalised monopoly and powers of revenue collection, came to naught against the irresistible social pressure of wireless set constructors, led by the press and the wireless amateurs. The fundamental determination to avoid the royalty payment by home construction proved to be a force of sufficient strength to defeat the barriers placed in the way.

The strength of determination to listen gives some indication of the pleasure that radio reception aroused. The success in beating the royalty system must have helped to induce many more listeners to take out licences. Evasion, where it did take place, was partly due to the bureaucratic barriers which deterred licence holding during the course of the dispute in 1923-1924. It was also due in part to ignorance. Some thought that crystal sets did not need licences.³⁸ Some thought that only one licence was needed for each building when it was the household unit which counted.

The story of the Broadcast Licence is an excellent and extremely interesting example of a voluntary response to a specific form of taxation. Consent through parliamentary representation was only indirect - because, formally, the GPO collected it on behalf of the BBC. Before the creation of the Corporation, it could be argued that it was unethical for a government department to collect money on behalf of a private company. Some other constitutional considerations were also raised, since the licence was arguably raised for a specific purpose, yet considerable parts of the revenue were withheld for purposes other than the covering of GPO collection costs.

The voluntary aspect was important in the case of the Broadcast Licence. The powers of detection and coercion were much more limited than for other forms of taxation. There was no check at the point of purchase and there were, in any case, too many home constructors. Until the GPO made detector vans available and began prosecuting evaders, the payment of the licence depended entirely on a spirit of altruism and social conscience.³⁹ (See Figure XI).

Figure XI Licence Evasion Cartoon.



Certainly the BBC felt that the lack of coercive action led to evasion on a serious scale. Reith advocated the adoption of installment payments to help prevent any poorer listeners from evading through real hardship, but this scheme was rejected by the GPO.⁴⁰ He also demanded much tougher action against evaders. One black spot was Northern Ireland. As the BBC complained,

'The local traders assume that there are 120,000 sets in use and licences are approximately 25,000 ... I very much hope that you will be able to do something about the matter - it is really appalling.'⁴¹

Sheffield was another area, and one resident, Mr. R.M. Ford, caused a minor furore by openly challenging the GPO to prosecute him for evasion.⁴²

The emphasis in BBC appeals against evasion was placed upon the moral obligation rather than the threat of legal action which was, in any case, by no means certain, because of the tardy response of the GPO. One guide to station directors suggested the structure of an appeal to listeners. It is a good example of the type of response which was expected:

'We are aware from licence figures that many people are not taking out licences, and that the so-called pirate or the man who lets other people pay for his pleasure is on the increase.

We need hardly remind our British audience that it is unsporting and unfair to let other people pay for a service which is, for what is given, the cheapest possible form of entertainment.

If you know of people who are listening without a licence, your best action would be to indicate to them that it is not in any sense of the word honourable for them to receive our entertainment at other people's expense.'⁴³

The role of wireless set prices in determining set ownership deserves some attention. The question is really confined to the lowest price for an efficient set since any price above that merely raises questions of the choice of sets rather than the price constraints on actually owning a set. At the beginning, with the very expensive sets available, the purchaser was paying for a slight improvement in the efficiency of reception and a very large increase in the finish, quality and size of the cabinet which held the set. The crystal set in urban areas was not necessarily inferior in the quality of reception. It was only with the introduction of the Regional Scheme that a high efficiency set became essential in many parts of the country. Then valve sets were required, the cheapest crystal set became obsolete and price again

became a considerable determinant of set ownership.

The position becomes clearer if the advertisements for wireless sets are examined. In the period 1922 to 1929, a casual glance through the local press reveals the enormous price differentials at the very beginning of public broadcasting. The most expensive could cost as much as 49 guineas (£51.45) for a large valve set called the 'Wootophone' produced by F.W. Wootten Limited, of High Street, Oxford.⁴⁴ The rival Oxford Wireless Telephony Company had cabinet valve sets on offer at £40 and £73 in 1923.⁴⁵ Crystal sets ranged from £2.10s. to £7.⁴⁶ A nationally available set was the 'Gecophone' made by General Electric. It was advertised at £2.10s. and this seems to have been a good average for 1923.⁴⁷ Small local firms, such as the Oxford Wireless Telephony Company, soon moved into this market and were selling their own sets as early as 1922.⁴⁸ This increased competition and completed crystal sets were soon being offered for as little as 7s. 6d., although £1 was a more typical sum.⁴⁹

Even at this price it was still possible to make savings. A key factor in reducing the prices of finished sets was the competition from wireless component traders supplying the home constructor. The crystal set was simplicity itself to construct and, if this was done at home, the labour cost and retailer's profits were partially avoided. The number of these home constructors is quantifiable for 1923-1924. In 1924 there were 284,500 constructor's licences and 224,500 interim licences.⁵⁰ All of them were likely to be home made, and if allowance is made for evaders amongst this group, and the result multiplied by the national average of the number of persons per private family in the 1921 census, then there must have been approximately 2.2 million listeners to such sets in the spring of 1924.⁵¹

Another indicator of the home construction boom was the rise of the wireless magazine. Almost all of these, including the more respectable Wireless World, included articles providing a step by step guide to the construction of a crystal or valve set.⁵² A certain amount of technical skill was required and some special tools needed, but if the constructor was within strong crystal range and had some determination, then even the most

ham-fisted individual could build a crystal set at least. Valves presented more problems but detailed plans, photographs of the processes and step by step guides took some of the pain out of the construction for those without technical skills.⁵³

The circulations of the specialist wireless magazines were considerable in the mid-twenties, giving some indication of radio's wide appeal. The readership would have been somewhat in excess of the circulation, assuming quite fairly that many magazines were read by more than one person. Of the weekly magazines, Modern Wireless, price one shilling, and Popular Wireless, price three pence, were some of the largest with circulations of 125,000 each in the autumn of 1924. Amateur Wireless, price two pence, sold 100,000 copies per week.⁵⁴ The big proprietors were Radio Press Limited and the Wireless Press Limited - each covering several magazines and producing many explanatory pamphlets and books. Radio Press operated from Bush House and was the market leader. In November 1925, its monthly magazine, Wireless Constructor, price sixpence,⁵⁵ had a circulation of 253,000 whilst Wireless, its weekly stable companion at two pence, produced 450,000 copies for its first issue and averaged 150,000 copies per week.⁵⁶

For a brief period between 1923 and 1929, the expansion of the wireless industry and wireless audience was reflected in these periodicals by an excitement and interest which it is difficult to express. The enthusiasm of the editors and their staff was tremendous. As the Radio Press Limited described itself:

'This magazine has brought thousands of new readers into contact with Radio Press Limited. From now on you will be our friends and we do not want you to think that the Radio Press is a cold-blooded publishing company. It is not. It is a collection of the keenest wireless enthusiasts - names known throughout the world - the authors of articles translated, because of their merit into a dozen different languages.

If you knew us you would realise the feeling of responsibility we have. What we say goes out to 450,000 readers every month in our three papers. We realise our influence, and we never intend to let you down.⁵⁷

The proprietor, John Scott-Taggart had already sold 500,000 books on wireless in his own right by 1925.⁵⁸ He even turned his hand to manufacturing valves.⁵⁹ Both the Wireless Constructor and its rival the Wireless World, produced by the Wireless Press, were so saturated with correspondence from curious readers that limits had to be placed on handling the letters.⁶⁰

An example of the work of these magazines serves to show how the appeal of wireless was cast as wide as possible. The Wireless Constructor showed how to construct the 'Crusoe Crystal and Valve Set'.⁶¹ Economy and simplicity were the essentials. The only cost was the wire, costing two shillings at the most, the crystal at sixpence, or a complete crystal detector at one shilling and sixpence, and lastly, the most expensive item: the headphones at around ten shillings. The valve conversion of the set would cost anything from ten shillings to a pound for the valve and £1 to £2 for the accumulator. Three pennies were also needed to help form the grid condenser - wrapped in waxed paper and held with a paper clip.⁶²

The introduction of the Regional Scheme was a tragedy for many crystal set owners and there is no doubt that the need to employ a valve set in urban areas, which had hitherto enjoyed good reception on primitive equipment, affected low income listeners most severely. Fortunately, it was not all gloom. The cost of living began to fall most markedly in this period and for many of those in employment, wages kept ahead of falling prices (see Figure XII and Table I).

Newspaper advertisements provide some clues to the kind of prices a potential listener could expect. In 1931, for instance, 'Curry's' offered some typical examples in their annual sale. Two-valve sets were priced at 29/6d (£1.47½p) and three-valve sets at 59/6d (£1.97½p), or if hire purchase was preferred 1/6d (7½p) weekly. Elsewhere accumulators cost 6d. per week for hiring and charging, whilst a typical mains set cost twelve guineas or 4/- per week.⁶³ In 1935 'Curry's' offered several sets ranging from £5.15s. to twelve guineas or 1/6d. per week. Sets were generally more expensive than in 1931 and the range was somewhat more limited.⁶⁴

However, a full explanation of cost constraints is only possible if incomes and the cost of living are studied. It would be useful to know consumer patterns of purchase for wireless sets by quantity, value and price between 1918 and 1939. Some work has been done to assemble the inadequate statistics of the period to provide such information for many items of consumption.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the residual categories used do not allow for a detailed study of wireless sales. Wireless consumption is not expressed in a single category: sales of sets were compiled together with other related electrical products such as gramophones in most of the available statistics.⁶⁶

Consequently another, less precise, approach must be used to provide an outline of wireless set sales. If the average price of the cheaper sets for the twenties is taken as a crystal set at between £1 and £2 and, for the thirties, a valve set at £6 to £7, some idea of the target is established. To match this against disposable income available for such consumer durables is more problematic. Between the wars, two of the largest occupational groups were agricultural workers and miners. An analysis of the incomes earned by these typical groups of workers should give an impression of the proportion of income which was available. A typical miner earned an average of £140 per annum between 1921 and 1925, but only about £115 per annum in the years 1927 to 1935.⁶⁷ An agricultural worker could expect even less. Nationally, his average earnings were at around £75 to £77 per annum throughout this period, with only marginal variations above or below this range.⁶⁸ These incomes therefore represented earnings of £1.50 to £2.00 per week throughout the period 1918 to 1939. These figures are only relevant if they are related to the cost of living. In other words, to discover real earnings by deflation of the money amounts by an index of retail prices, weighted for the amounts of goods and services purchased by workers and their families. There are several cost of living and real earnings indices to choose from - and all have weaknesses. Broadly speaking, real earnings showed a gradual increase in the period between 1920 and 1935, and a slight decline between 1935 and 1937. (See Figure XII and Table I).⁶⁹

Table I: Average Money Earnings and Average Real Earnings 1920-1938.

Employees in All Industries for United Kingdom Indices: 1930 = 100

Year	(a) Average annual money earnings.	(b) Cost of Living Index	(c) Average annual real earnings 100 col(a) ÷ col(b)
1920	132.5	157.6	84.1
1921	126.6	143.0	88.5
1922	106.0	115.8	91.5
1923	99.5	110.1	90.4
1924	100.5	110.8	90.7
1925	101.1	111.4	90.8
1926	100.1	108.9	91.9
1927	100.8	106.0	95.1
1928	100.0	105.1	95.1
1929	100.2	103.8	96.5
1930	100.0	100.0	100.0
1931	98.6	93.4	105.6
1932	97.0	91.1	106.5
1933	96.4	88.6	108.8
1934	97.4	89.2	109.2
1935	98.8	90.5	109.2
1936	100.7	93.0	108.3
1937	102.6	97.5	105.2
1938	105.7	98.7	107.1

Figure XII Average Real Earnings: Employees in all Industries, United Kingdom 1920-1938

Index 1930 = 100

-102-



Needless to say the period 1930 to 1933 was the period of the greatest numerical increase in wireless licence holding.

To calculate how much of the £1.50 was actually available for expenditure on consumer durables is difficult to assess. Obviously, it had a lower priority than food, clothing and rents. The desire to purchase a set would also have been blunted by short time working or unemployment. Anything which would eat into the surplus income set aside for luxuries and entertainments would affect the ability to buy a set. Since unemployment never fell below a million in the period and rose as high as 2.7 million in 1932, this has to be considered as a restriction on set ownership for a sizeable body of people.⁷⁰ Ten shillings alone would have to be set aside for the licence each year - a substantial hardship for some.

There was a brighter side. Households with more than one income earner were more likely to have a surplus for expenditure on sets. Overtime working was possible in some industries to add to basic earnings and provide a surplus for such luxuries. Methods of purchase could be changed. Rather than save for one cash payment, long term payment by installments could be arranged. Hire purchase deals began in the twenties and were widespread in the thirties.⁷¹ Often purchasers would be lured in this way to buy sets that they could ill afford - simply because the price was so deceptively attractive.

In contrast to such irrationality, wireless could also be seen as a long term investment, which would save expenditure on rival forms of information or entertainment. A wireless set could save money which would otherwise have been spent on newspapers or on visits to the pub or cinema. In this direct form, the argument seems a little absurd since radio was not necessarily a direct competitor for other entertainments, indeed it frequently stimulated interest in them. At the very least radio could provide one of the cheapest retreats for a long winter evening - expressed in terms of cost per hour of entertainment.

In 1939 the working class was still under-represented in the audience and the residuum was not fully absorbed until the introduction of the 'utility set' in 1944. This should not be allowed to detract from radio's passable attempt

at becoming a universal medium of communication. As the BBC observed in its Handbook for 1940, out of nine million licences, 4.2 million had been taken out by those on incomes between £2.10s. and £4 per week. Two million licences were held by those earning less than £2.10s.⁷²

3.3 The Radio Industry

The fixing of prices depended upon the manufacturers and they merit a further mention here. Competition and technological development might have been expected to reduce prices extensively during the period. Some reductions were made but in 1935, the Ullswater Committee on Broadcasting criticised the radio manufacturing industry for its failure to produce a really cheap set for the mass market.⁷³ The question is, therefore, why did prices not fall faster in what was allegedly a competitive market? The general answer seems to be that the market was expanding fast enough to allow many firms to move into the area and take up the demand without having to reduce prices significantly. Other reasons can also be propounded. Maximisation of profits is the main aim of any industrial concern and a monopoly is one way of assuring this by permitting price fixing at much higher levels.

The monopoly held by the firms with a share in the British Broadcasting Company demonstrated one way of asserting this approach. The six largest firms possessed an obvious advantage in this arrangement but the greatest grip on this monopoly was that held by Marconi's, by virtue of its control of a very large number of vital wireless patents.⁷⁴ Their use required substantial payments and even the other large firms had to make some contribution in this way.

However, all the members of the Company were able to resort to a similar technique to assert their monopoly. The Company insisted on the payment of royalties on sets and components made by its members. The amount so raised was to be used to underwrite the expansion of the transmitting side, since the large firms did not expect licence revenue to be adequate.⁷⁵

The amount charged was as follows:

Table II: Royalty Tariff - November 1922 to 1st October 1923.⁷⁶

<u>Item</u>	<u>Price</u>		
	£.	s.	d.
On each crystal set	7.	6.	
On each microphonic amplifier without valves	7.	6.	
On each crystal set plus one valve	1.	7.	6.
On each crystal set plus two valves	2.	2.	6.
On each one valve set	1.	0.	0.
On each two valve set	1.	15.	0.
On each set adapted for more than two valves, a further sum for each additional valve holder	10.	0.	
On each telephone ear-piece			3.
On each loudspeaker		3.	0.
On each valve			2.

This scale of charges was revised following the recommendations of the Sykes Committee.

Table III: Royalty Tariff - 1st October 1923 to 31st December 1924.⁷⁷

<u>Item</u>	<u>Price</u>		
	£.	s.	d.
On each crystal set	1.	0.	
On each microphonic amplifier without valves	5.	0.	
On each crystal set and one valve	11.	0.	
On each crystal set and two valves	18.	6.	
On each one valve set	10.	0.	
On each two valve set	17.	6.	
On each set adapted for more than two valves, a further sum for each additional valve holder	5.	0.	

After 31st December 1924, these payments ceased altogether to conform with the recommendations of Sykes. When in operation these tariffs or royalty payments worked in conjunction with the BBC stamp, which was affixed to those sets and components on which the royalty had been paid.⁷⁸ The purpose of this stamp was ultimately to preserve the market exclusively for British firms. With a blatant piece of protectionism in an era of supposedly free trade, the GPO refused to issue a licence for a set which was not manufactured in Britain. The restriction continued with the constructor's licence and only ended with the termination of the royalty payments. The main enemy was the well established industry in the U.S.A. which could easily undercut any British rivals. Supplies inevitably got through to the home constructors, thus undermining the monopoly and were partly responsible for the ending of this method of raising revenue. The GPO had been willing to permit such a course of protectionism in order to ensure that the transmitting side of broadcasting was adequately funded without the need for GPO support. In return for this monopoly, dividends were held down at $7\frac{1}{2}\%$. Otherwise there was no real attempt to prevent the monopoly keeping prices at high levels.

This latter restriction on profits did, however, lead to a distinct loss of interest in preserving the monopoly, compounded as it was by the level of foreign competition in the home construction market. The real death blow was the shattering of the pessimistic forecasts of 1922. Despite the monopoly, the protectionism and the pricing system, the introduction of a national broadcasting system produced a public response which exceeded all expectations. The sales boom which resulted erased any fears about demand and so the monopolistic desires evaporated. The Crawford Committee's report in favour of formal public control of broadcasting was met without any serious animosity by the manufacturers.⁷⁹

The 31st December 1926 thus marked the end of direct influence by the manufacturers on the transmitting side of broadcasting. The social effect of manufacturing policy was then confined essentially to activities on the commercial side. The effects of lobbying were limited. The big manufacturers were now only one of many voices and this led to a regrouping of interest to try

and staunch the decline. A united front was essential. The large firms were already joined together in the National Association of Radio Manufacturers, formed in 1923. The smaller firms outside the Broadcasting Company were members of the British Radio Manufacturers and Traders Association. On 6th September 1926 they joined together as the Radio Manufacturers' Association (RMA)⁸⁰. The organisation fulfilled the usual trading functions, having its own newspaper unimaginatively called 'R.M.A.' and it represented the manufacturers at conferences or meetings with the BBC. It also submitted evidence to the Ullswater Committee.⁸¹ The RMA consistently pressed for brighter programmes from the BBC, hoping that this would increase the sales amongst the relatively untapped working class audience. It also turned a blind eye to the support which many of its members gave to commercial stations, such as Luxembourg and Normandie, in the hope that this, too would stimulate trade.⁸²

The social significance of this loss of monopoly by the six major firms was considerable. Smaller firms proliferated and helped to soak up demand. Despite the impact of the now permitted imports, the twenties saw the growth of all manner of makeshift radio set and component manufacturers.⁸³ This small scale led to instability in supply and a wide variation in technical standards - all exceedingly inconvenient for the potential consumer. Many finished sets were inferior to the best of those constructed at home.⁸⁴ There was a considerable turnover in the numbers of firms working. As early as 1923, a minor slump in trade, caused by the uncertainty during the dispute over the licence fee, was enough to lead to a small flurry of bankruptcies.⁸⁵ All of these financial disasters would have had an impact on consumers. Because of the localised nature of many small firms and their sales, some areas suffered more than others. The effect is impossible to measure. Perhaps the lack of standardisation and the financial insecurity of the industry affected consumer confidence. Generally, however, it seems to have been of temporary concern since licence holding continued to increase at a greater rate.

The reign of the larger manufacturer was only restored properly in the thirties, as the valve set came into its own to meet the new conditions created

by the Regional Scheme. The larger manufacturers had the capital to weather any temporary slumps in demand and possessed the reserves to invest in the production of more complex sets. In fact the demand from consumers continued to exceed all expectations and considerable profits were still to be made. The largest firms did best and some of the original six companies were absorbed. Nonetheless some of the smaller concerns survived surprisingly well before 1939. The industry shared the good fortune of the whole electrical sector and remained buoyant throughout the depression of 1929-1933. Early fears about the level of import penetration of the wireless market were clearly unfounded. Obviously the growth in mains electricity and the national grid system were useful stimulants. The success was noticeable enough for the Labour Research Department to turn its eye to the radio industry - with allegations of vast profiteering. The condemnation was sweeping:

'Although a large proportion of the total trade is held by a comparatively small number of firms, the wireless industry is a stronghold of the small employer who rigs up any old shanty in which to house his cheap boy and girl labour. The retailer's profit in the trade is exceedingly high and the heavy demand stimulates the growth of the small mushroom employer.' 86

Trimming labour costs was one way of keeping price competitiveness but generally more savings could be made by the economies of scale resultant from mass production, exploiting technical developments and new materials such as Bakelite to keep profits up and reduce costs. With the manufacture of crystal sets such a possibility had been remote. The larger manufacturers continued to try and remove opponents in order to restore the monopoly, so that price levels could be held up and profits maximized.

Another method of exploiting information about manufacturing, might be to use production figures as a guide to the spread of radio.

TableIV: The Wireless Trade in Figures⁸⁷

Annual Turnover of the Wireless Trade:

1926	£7,800,000	1930	£19,700,000
1927	£9,500,000	1931	£29,800,000
1928	£10,800,000		
1929	£15,000,000		

Types of Receivers Produced in 1931

Details	Production Figures	
	Mains	Batteries
Two Valve Set	107,000	164,750
Three Valves	230,000	52,650
Four Valves	84,050	168,850
Multi-Valve	36,250	53,850
Home Constructor's Kits	-	298,450
Radiograms	61,400	-
TOTALS	519,600	738,550
GRAND TOTAL	1,258,150	

As shown in Table IV, some estimates were made and official sources do exist, such as the fourth and fifth Censuses of Production of 1930 and 1935.⁸⁸ Unfortunately the 1930 statistics are not counted separately from other elements of electrical engineering and in many cases small firms were omitted or failed to make returns. As an alternative there was a survey held by the Wireless and Gramophone Trader in 1930-1933.

Table V: Wireless Set Sales 1930-1933⁸⁹

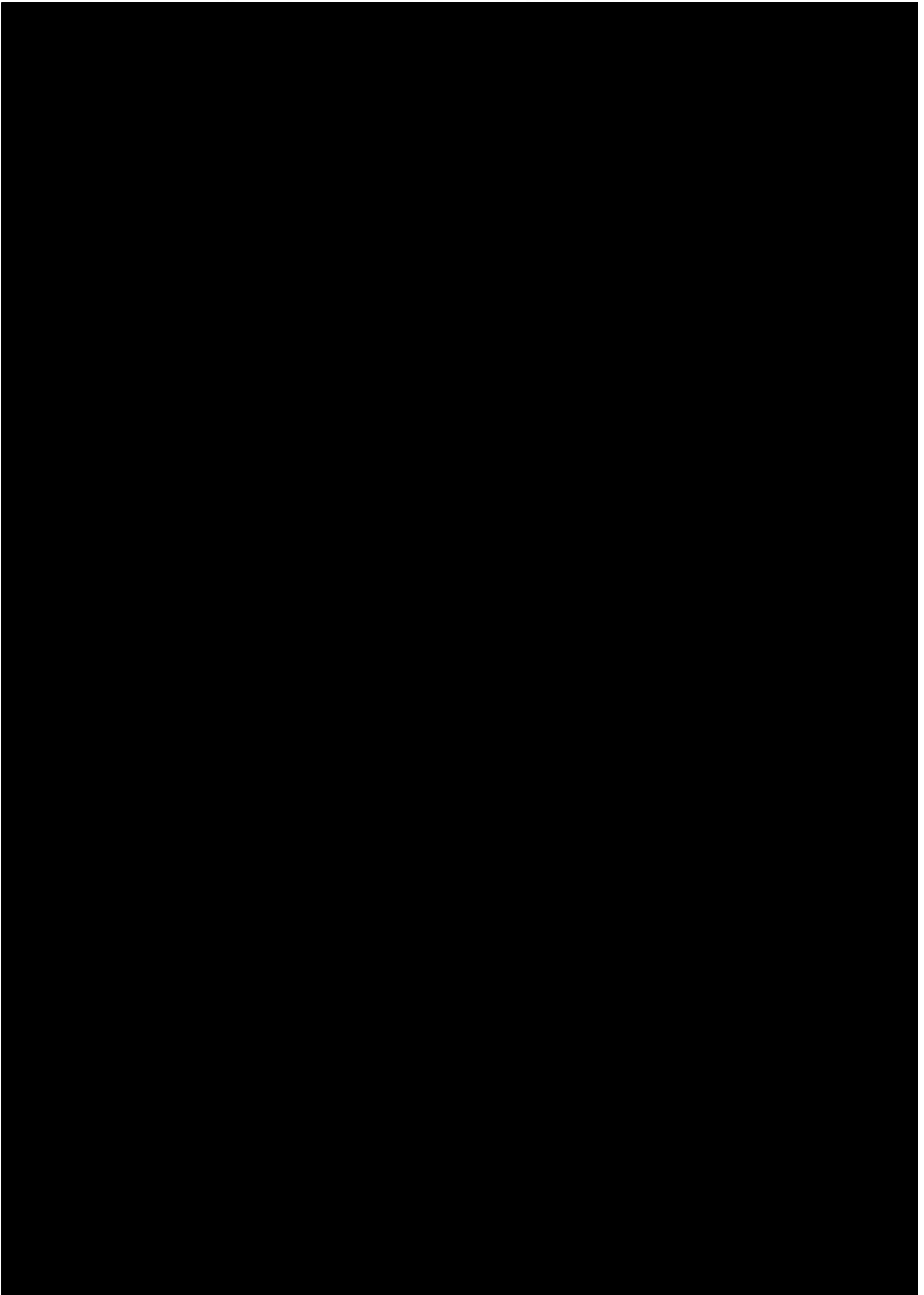
Date	1930	1931	1932	1933
Battery Sets	450,100	738,000	652,808	376,440
(of which portables)	(163,700)	(217,000)	(99,424)	(?)
Mains Sets	199,000	519,660	784,041	591,360
TOTAL	649,100	1,257,660	1,436,849	967,800

Table VI: Sales of Sets by Price in 1932.⁹⁰

<u>Battery Sets</u>	<u>Sales</u>
£6.10. & under	262,412
£6.10. - £13	301,954
£13 +	88,442
<u>Mains Sets</u>	
£12 & under	142,864
£12 - £17	352,901
£17 - £23	142,476
£23 - £30	104,254
£30 - £50	35,071
£50 +	6,475

This provided some useful estimates of sales and creates a clearer impression of listeners as consumers. The information from this source had its limitations. It demonstrated the changing pattern of sales from the domination of home construction to battery sets and then to mains sets. It showed the distribution of sales by price which gives a very broad guide to the likely social composition of purchasers. Such statistics must be used with very great care due to the nature of their collection and the lack of a necessary correlation with the actual use of sets. Licence holding and audience research provide a much more precise guide to listening behaviour.

Figure XIII. Hire Purchase in Operation.



The companies realised this and some must have considered the potential of market research. Works such as the Home Market⁹² and the People's Food⁹³ demonstrated the early development of this type of work by specialist firms. The commercial radio companies closed the gap between consumer and audience research with the work in the United Kingdom of Crossley Incorporated⁹⁴ and Social Surveys Limited.⁹⁵ The RMA also kept a close watch on licence statistics.⁹⁶ Unfortunately the companies which did this kind of research often disposed of this information soon after use and this has left an unfortunate gap in the understanding of some aspects of audience behaviour.

Some other areas of industrial activity had considerable social influence. These included advertising, the design of sets, radio exhibitions and retail distribution.

Advertising can yield useful information about pricing, sales and technical developments in the radio industry but it is also of interest in its own right. At first, advertising in newspapers assumed a purely informational role. References were made, quite bluntly, to prices, the choice of sets and where they might be demonstrated or purchased.⁹⁷ Soon the style changed. Price competition was one influence and often the hire purchase arrangements received more publicity than the actual price - with the down payment printed in the largest type.⁹⁸ (See Figure XIII).

At the same time special events were seized upon as sources of good advertising copy. The start of the first formal broadcasting season in January 1923 was the first instance. From then onwards it became quite normal to prepare potential customers for the autumn season and the long, tiresome winter nights ahead when radio came into its own.¹⁰² Later, the replacement market had to seize on special events in order to encourage people to change sets when there seemed no other sensible reason for doing so. The favourite events in the period included such obvious commercial occasions as Christmas¹⁰³ but also General Elections,¹⁰⁴ the 1926 General Strike¹⁰⁵ and particularly the 1937 Coronation¹⁰⁶. (See Figure XV)

Figure XIV . Advertisement : The General Strike 1926.⁹⁹

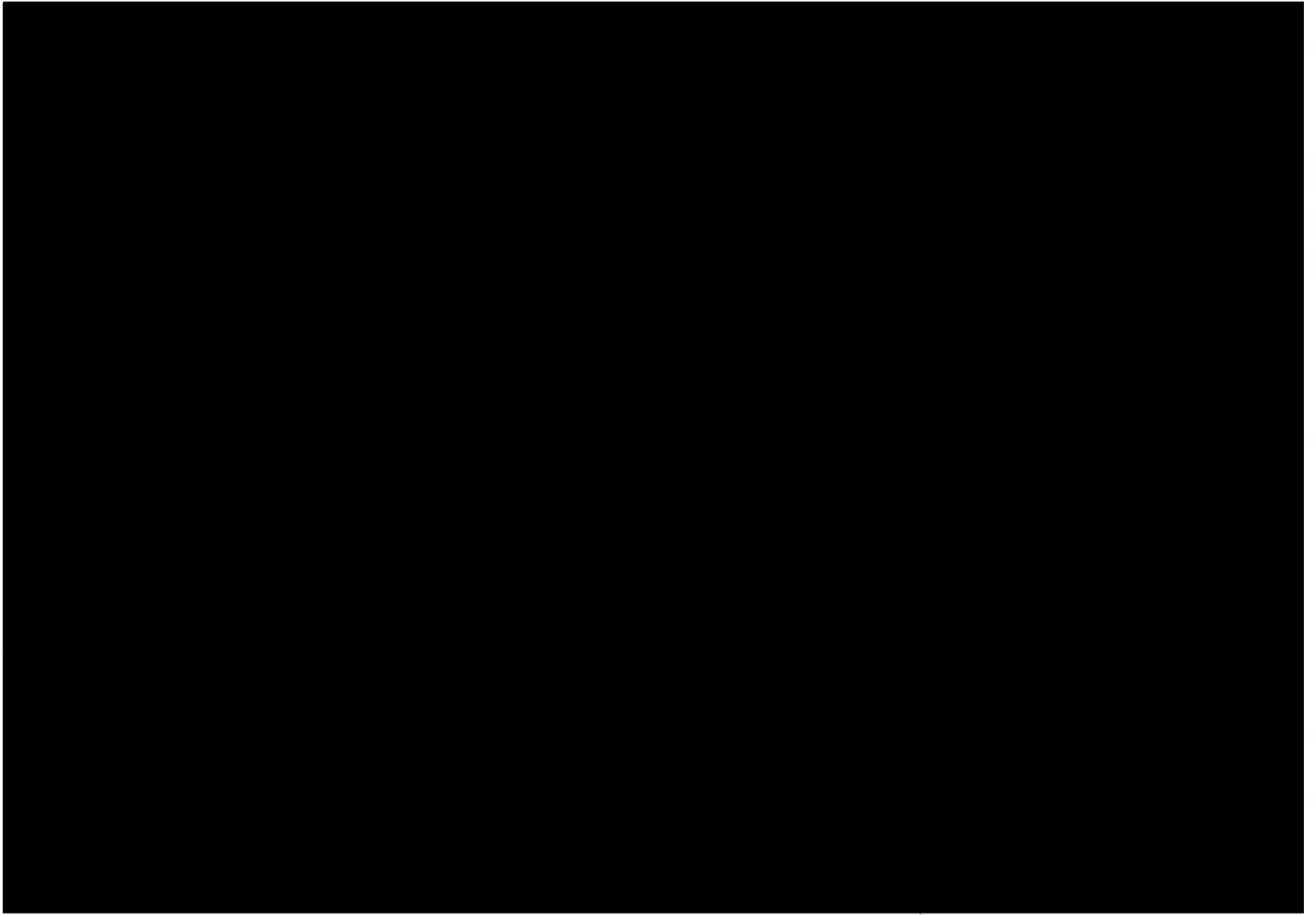


Figure XV . Advertisement : The Coronation 1937.¹⁰⁰

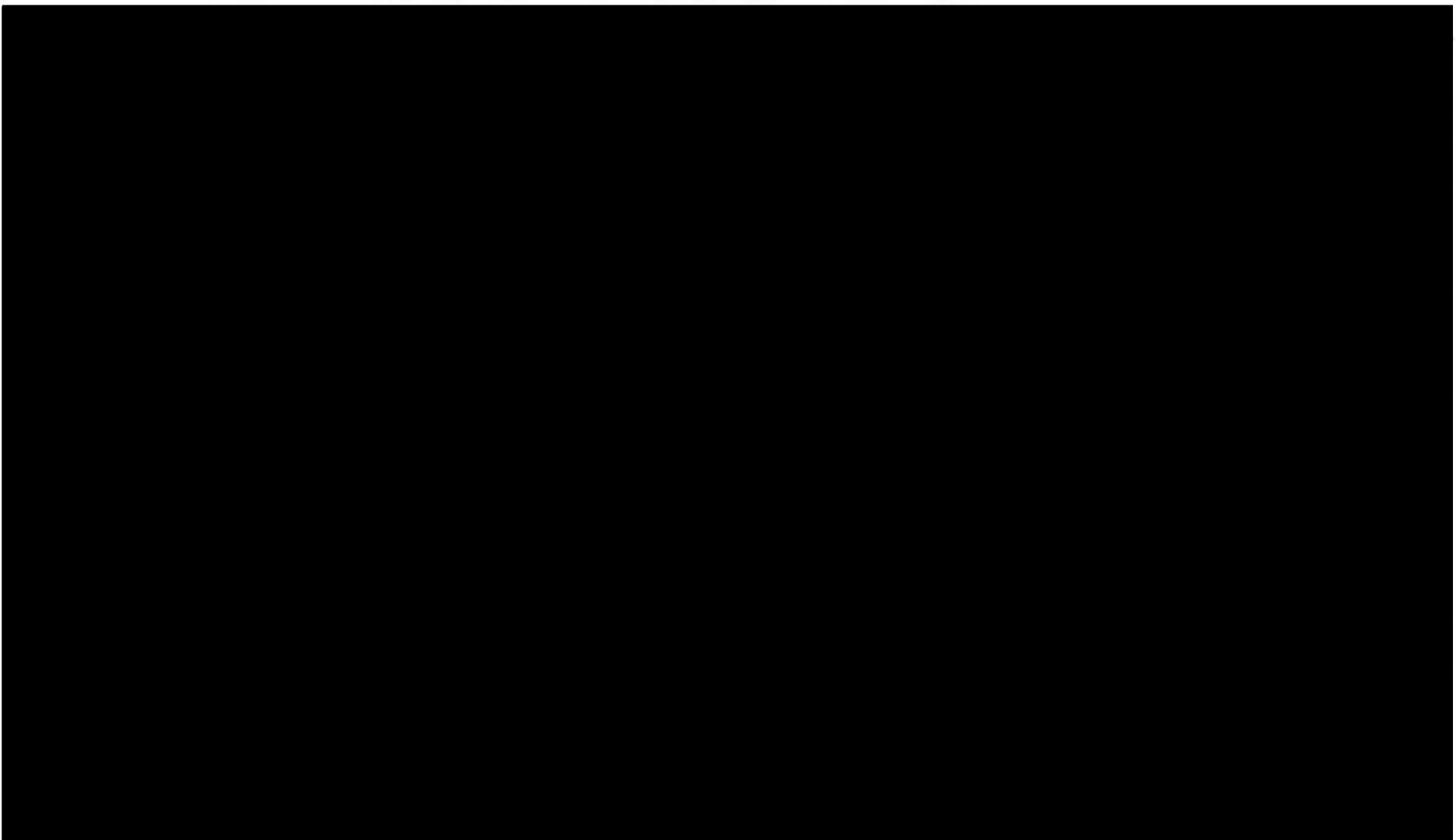


Figure XVI . Advertising in 1923.

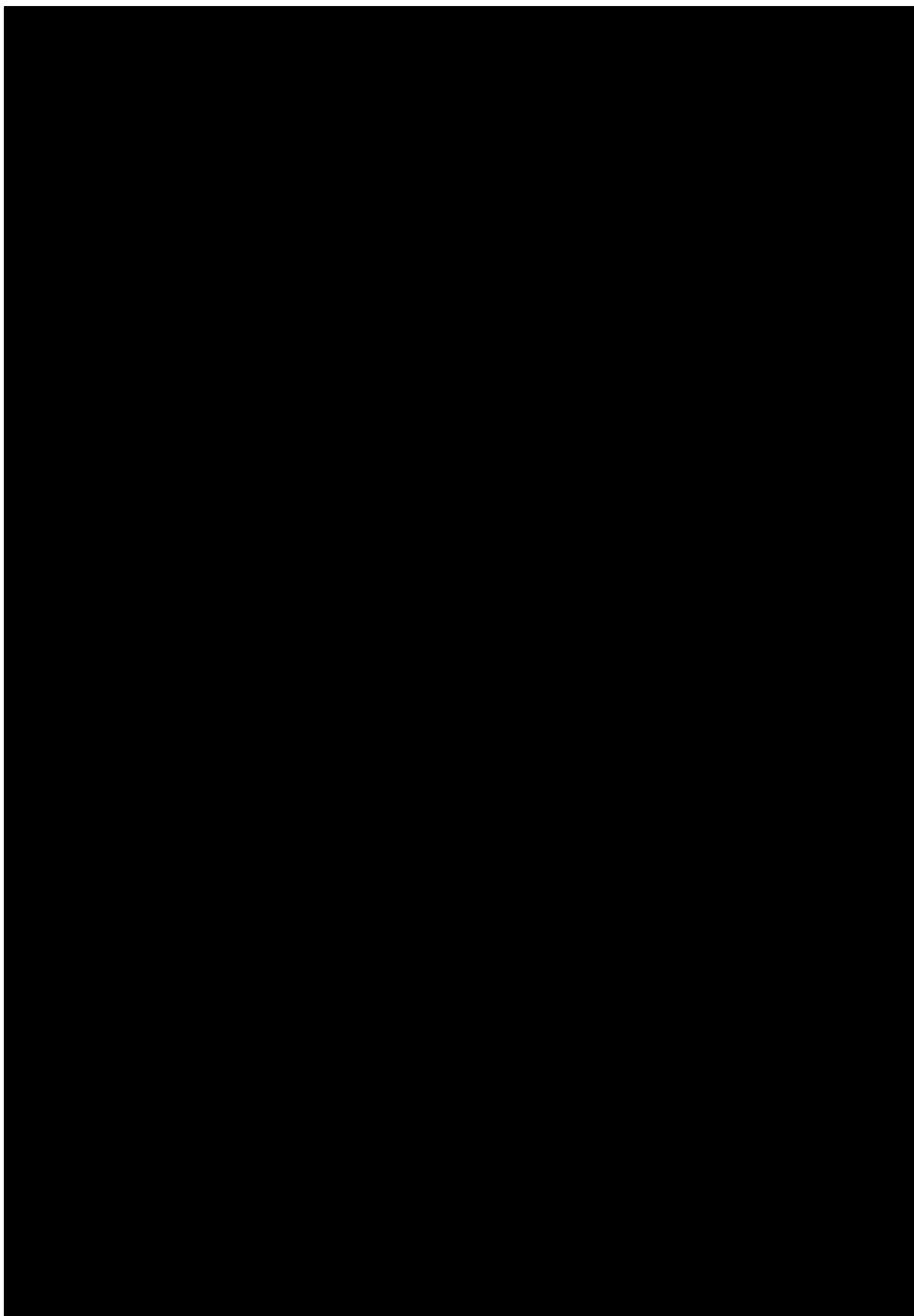
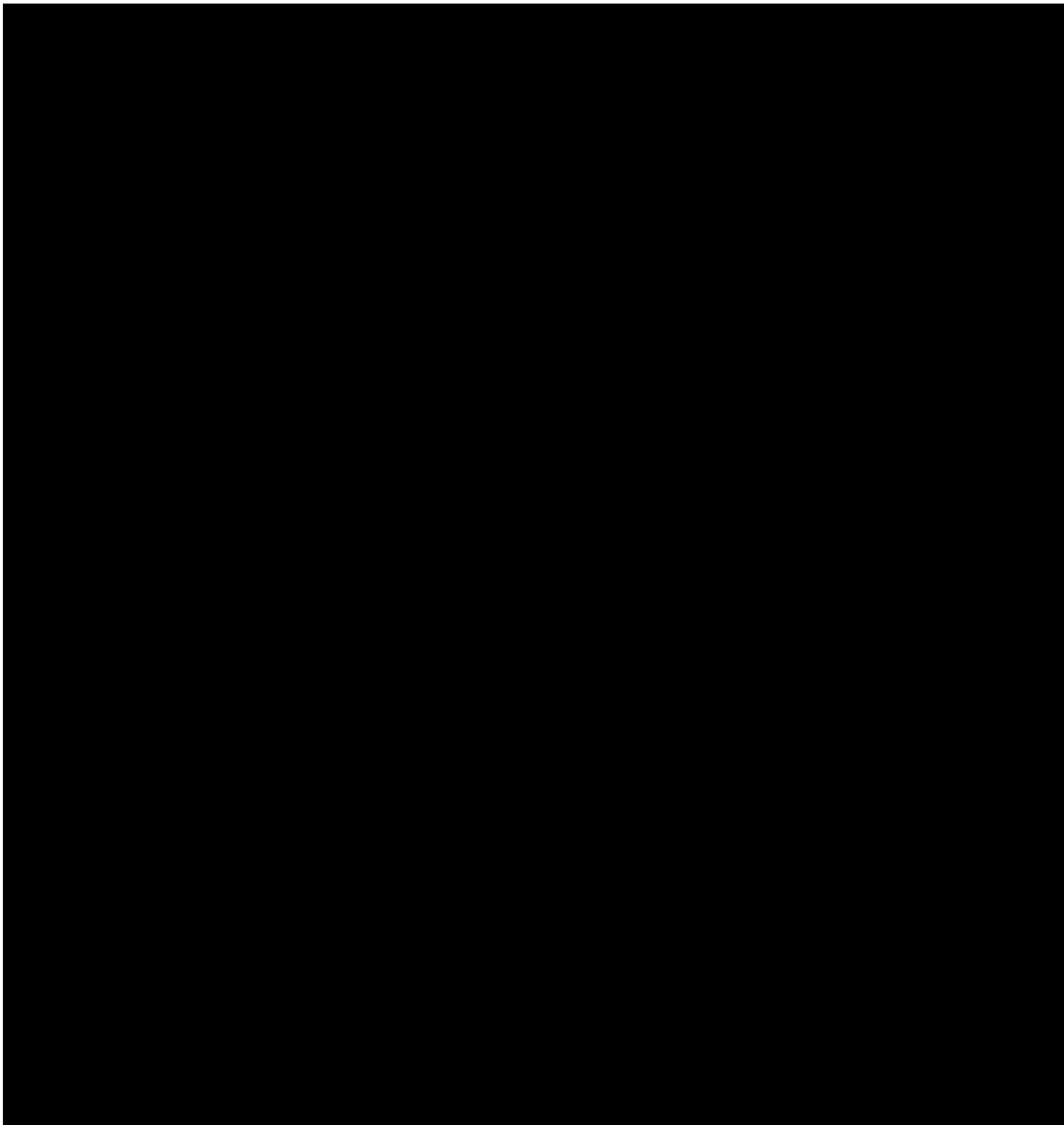
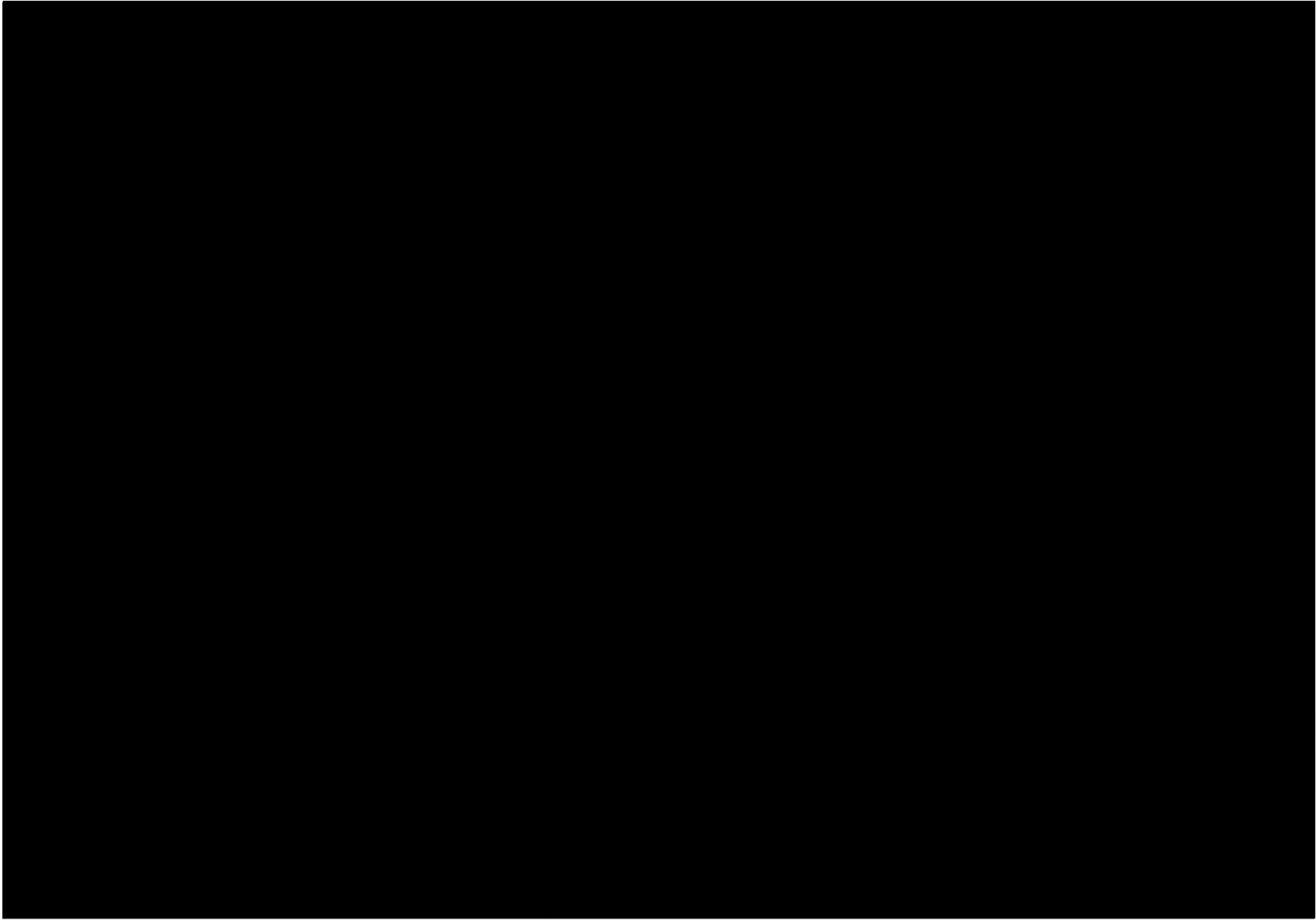


Figure XVII Wireless Sets.



The Ecko AD 65 of 1934

Figure XVII contd.



Co-op's Defiant MSH 938, a push-button receiver with motorized tuner, 1938.

Figure XVIII Advertising in 1932 Kloster - Brandes

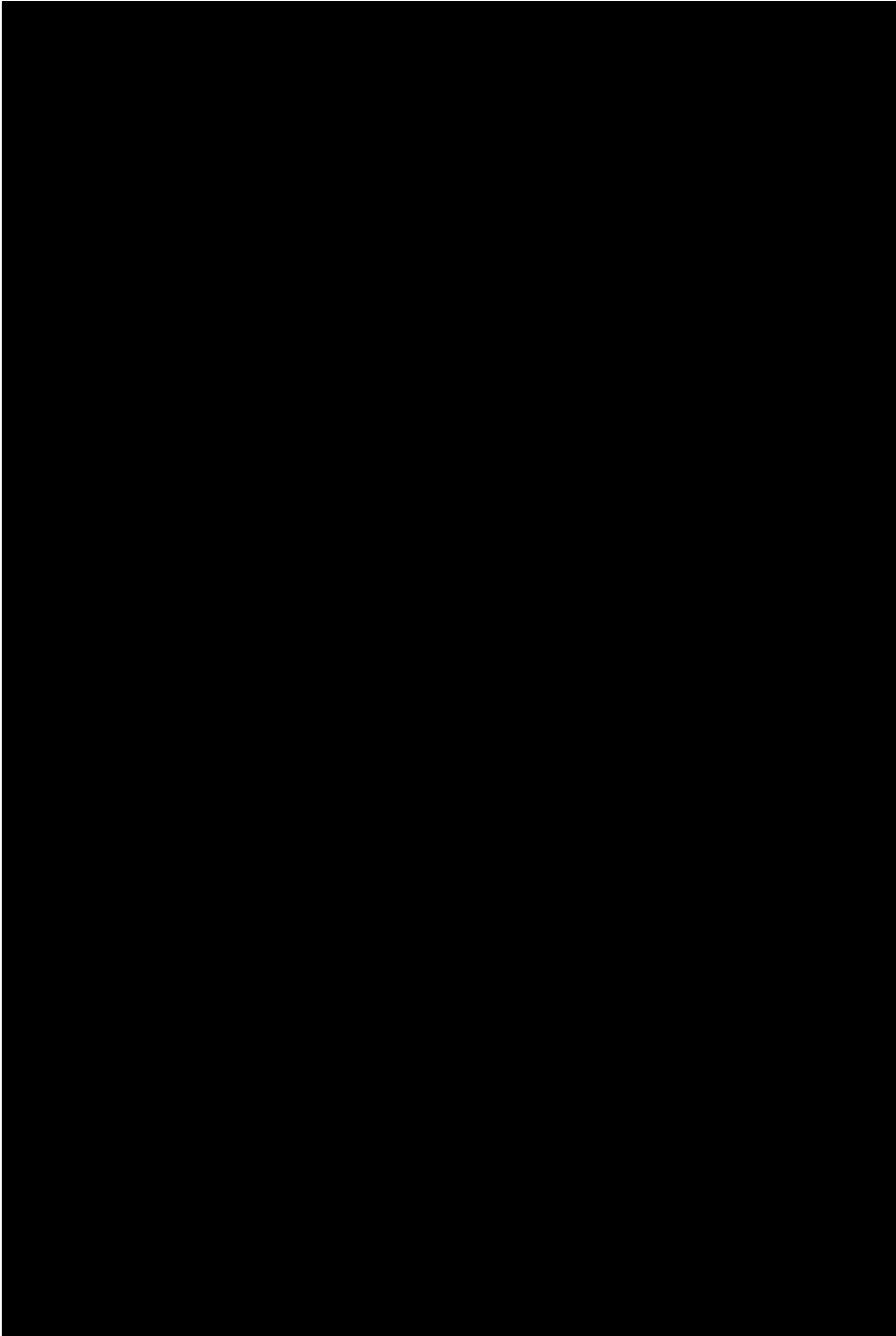


Figure XIX. Advertising in 1932 : Philips.

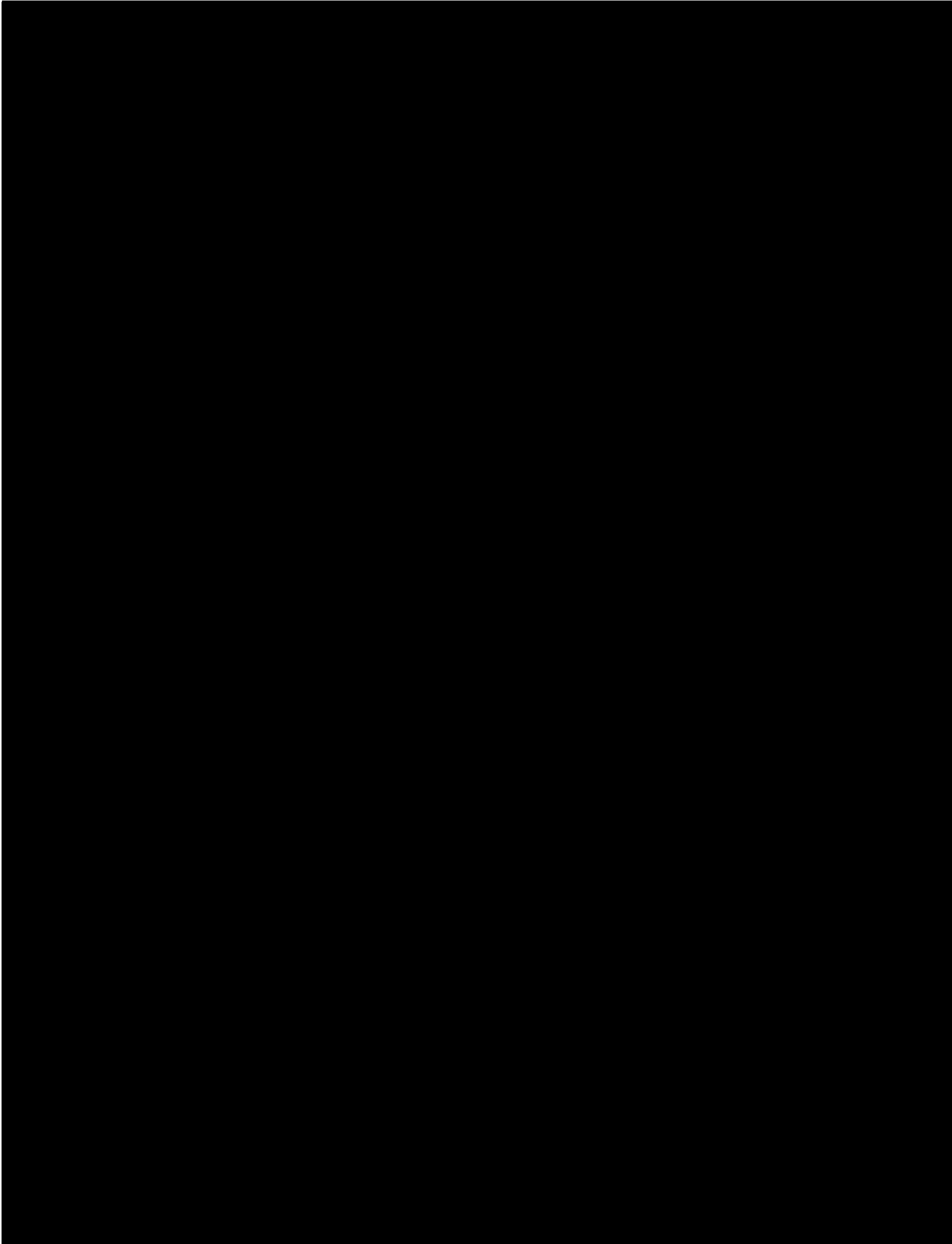


Figure XIX (contd.)

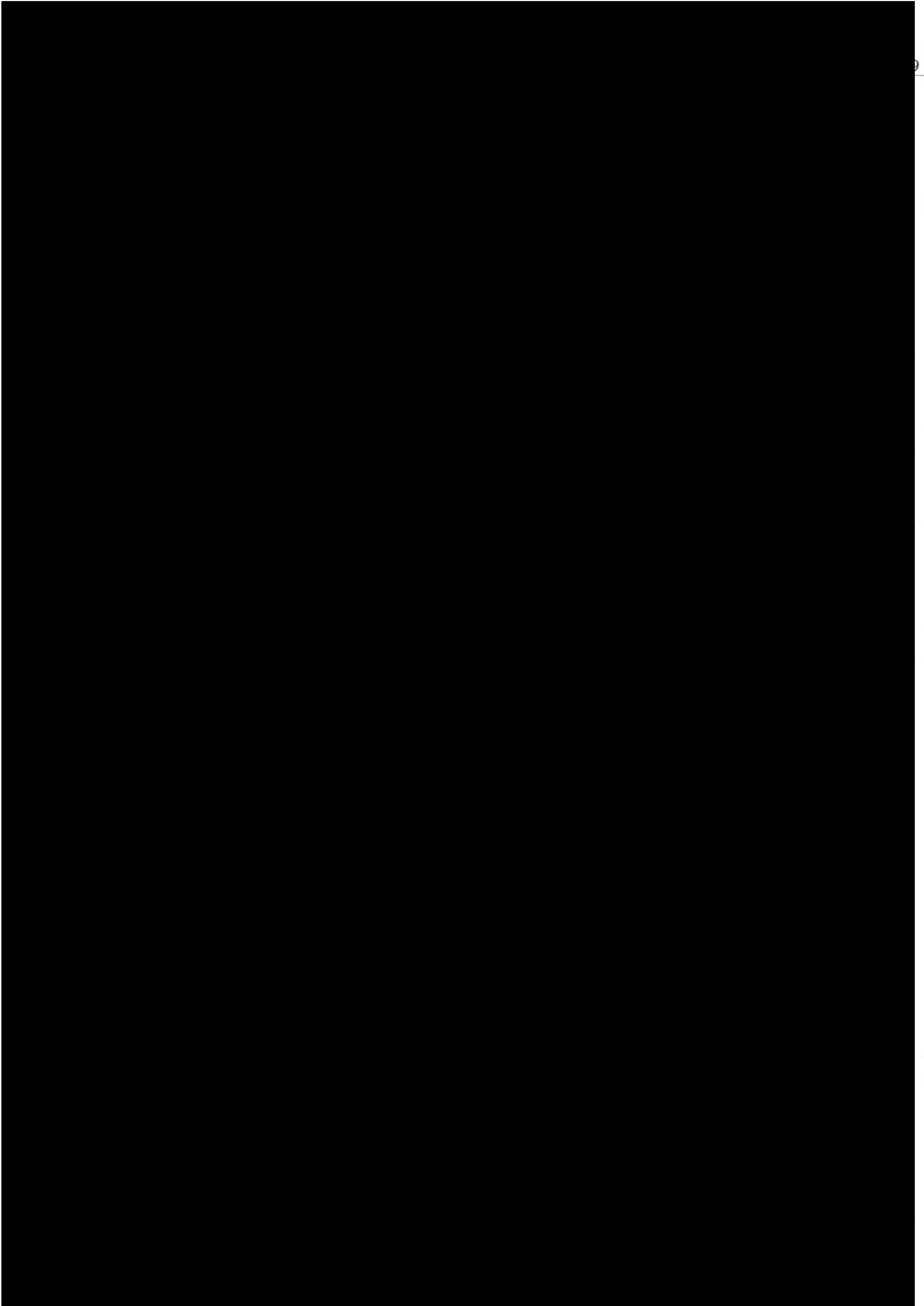
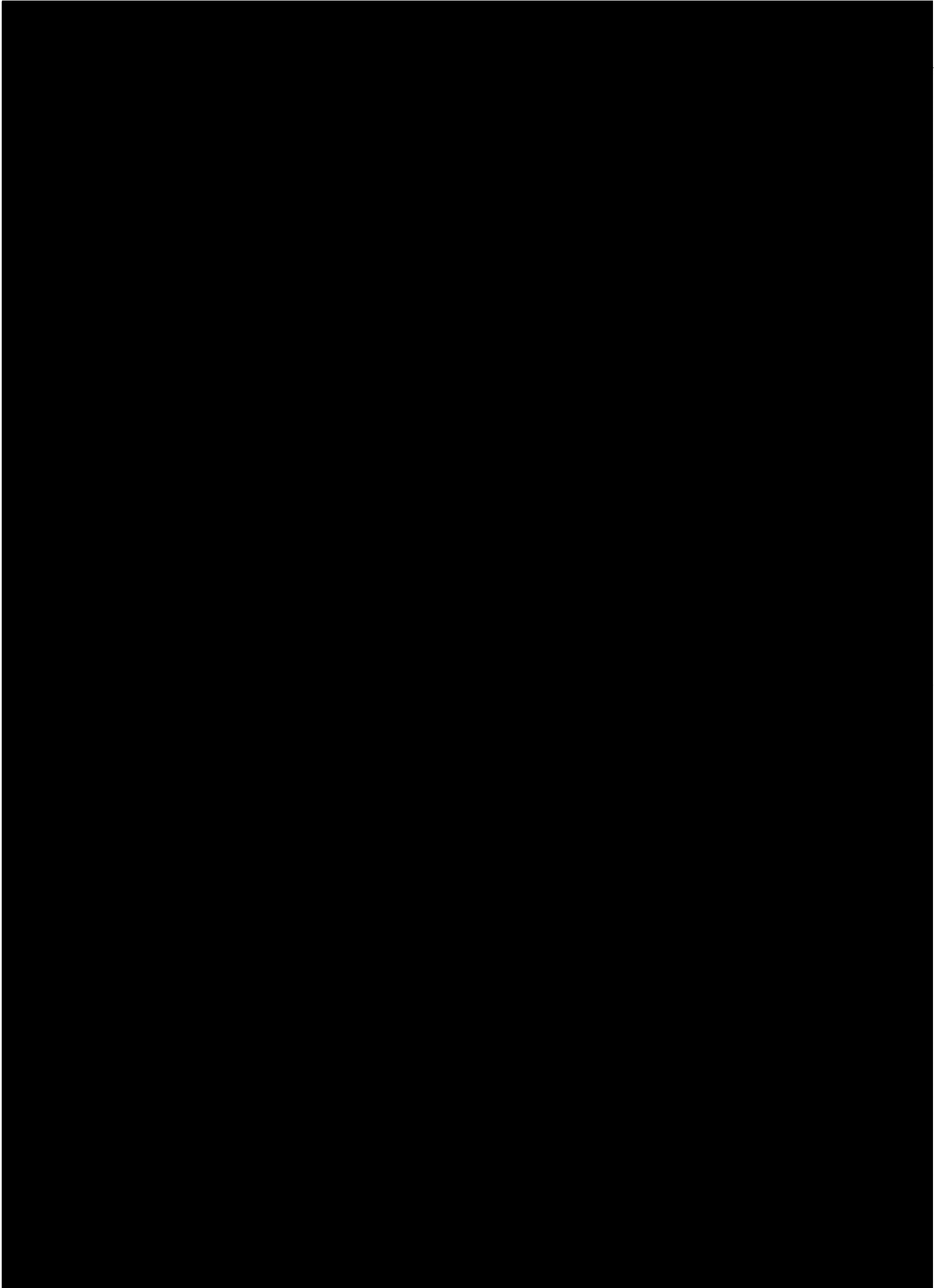


Figure XX . Advertising in 1932 : Ultra.



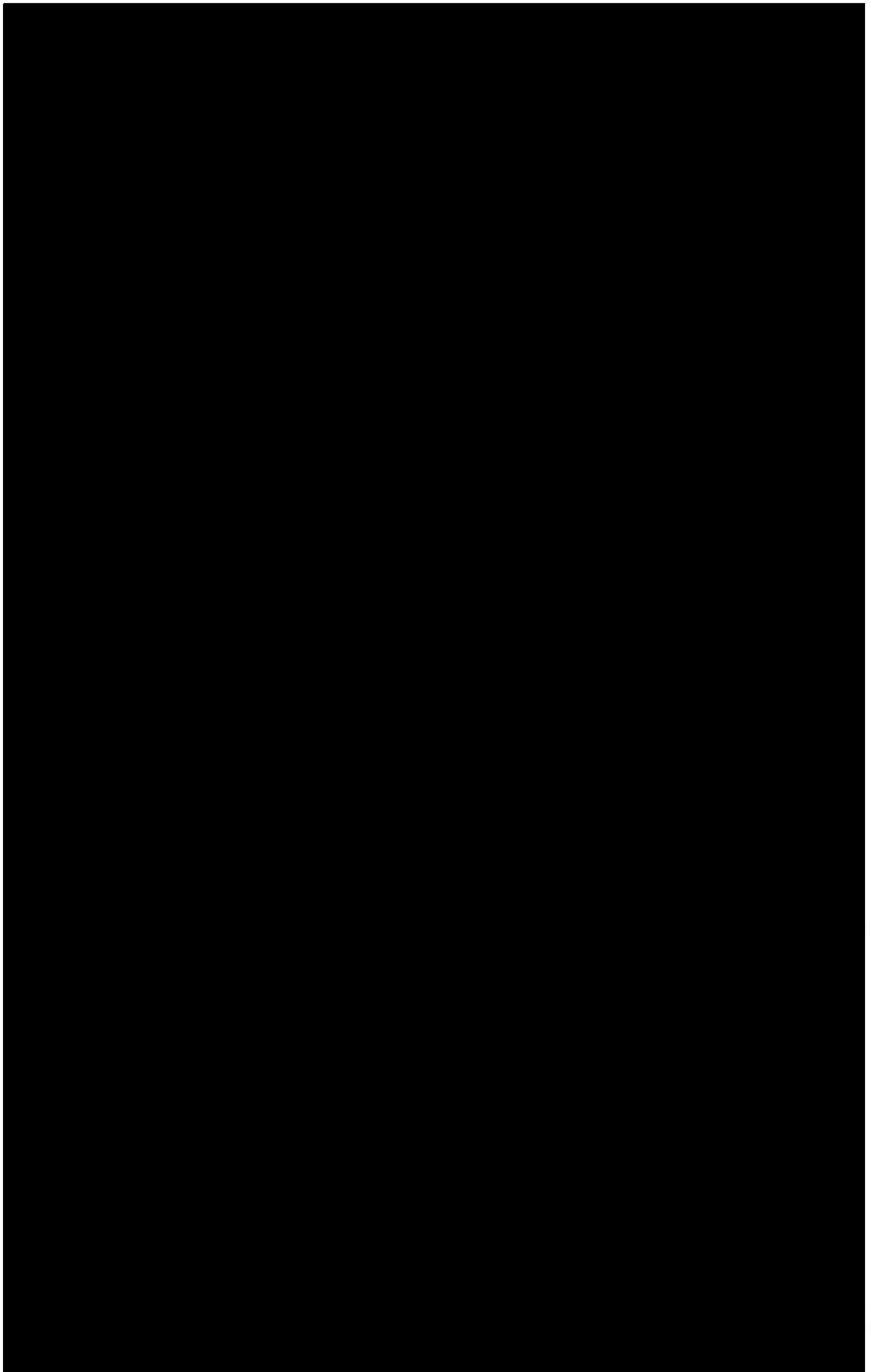
Another method used to persuade the customer to replace his or her set, or to coax the suspicious individual into purchasing a set for the first time, was to emphasise the technical advances in new models. New types of valves, mains adaptors, portability, direct mains sets, super-heterodynes and radio gramophones were all displayed prominently as attractive advances, combinations or variations which would make the set more useful to the customer.

As has been implied, advertising could be more than a source for observing the attempts made to guide customers towards the products offered; some advertisements were 'works of art' in their own right. Radio advertising did not reach the heights of some other industrial products or alcohol and tobacco but there were some interesting artistic and photographic achievements. Obviously a visually attractive advertisement might boost sales by drawing a potential consumer to look more attentively at the details and consequently this aspect must be considered to be another influence on consumer choice. (see Figures XVIII - XXI).

A subsidiary aspect of this form of advertising was set design. Crystal set design was normally entirely functional. Very few sets developed beyond this stage of easily accessible control features and attachments. The exceptions were, therefore, all the more remarkable. One set of 1922 was a classic: the Grafton China Figure in the shape of a gentleman wearing a top hat. The bow-tie served as the crystal, the watch chain was the cat's whisker, the base was fitted with the headphone connections and the top hat served as the coil.¹⁰⁸ Another set appeared as a book called appropriately the 'Listener' by 'E.R. Fone'.¹⁰⁹ (See Figure XXI)

It was with the valve sets that competition became fierce enough for manufacturers to employ designers to improve the aesthetic appearance of the set. With the very early valve sets the main intention was to disguise the equipment as a piece of furniture. The cabinet 'Wootophone' by F.E. Wootten Limited of Oxford was typical of the type. With the introduction of more manageable sets, particularly those without the cumbersome accumulators, it became

Figure XXI . Advertisement : E.R.Fone Set. ¹⁰⁷



sensible to treat the design of the set as a way of asserting radio's individual quality. In the competition for markets, particularly in the late thirties when the rate of growth in licence holding declined, the aesthetically pleasing as well as the practical set would win over the consumer. At first, design was limited to the improvement of control facilities, such as clearer tuning dials with illuminated panels listing the main stations and their wavelengths.¹¹⁰ From then on firms decided to give designers their head. Using traditional materials or, more often, exploiting the flexibility of new materials like Bakelite, a whole new vista was revealed. Murphy employed a furniture designer, Gordon Russell, whilst E.K. Cole (Ecko) employed architects, Serge Chermayeff, Wells Coates and Misha Black.¹¹¹ Some illustrations will have to suffice in giving some idea of the type of set produced by the leading companies. (Figure XVII).

It is pertinent to outline some of the consequences of these ventures into set design. The aesthetically pleasing set sold well and hence radio firms continued to search for new designs to use on their latest model.¹¹² Inevitably this stimulated the design industry - a process helped by similar moves throughout the electrical appliance industry. Sales in the set replacement market were also boosted. The period 1930-1939 marked the heyday of the valve market. Lacking the attraction of any of the really major technical advances which had characterised the earlier days of radio, sets simply had to sell by appearance as much as by performance. Pevsner reflected on this important consideration when he analysed Serge Chermayeff's design for Ecko in 1933 as an example of industrial art:

'The shape of it was something completely new, nothing comparable existed, either in England or abroad. It was the result of a careful study of function and a genuinely artistic imagination. The firm is thus breaking away from all traditions, took a great risk, and some opposition within the firm had to be met. If sales did not exceed 10,000 sets in the first year, it would be a serious failure. What happened remains as an immense credit to the English public. The new cabinet, so uncompromisingly functional in appearance became exceedingly popular almost from the first month. About 100 per cent more sets were sold in the 1933-34 season than in the previous season.' 113

A contributory factor in this success was radio's increasing acceptance as an aural centre piece in the home. It fulfilled a human psychological need for this sound to emerge from what was also a satisfactory focal point: something which had a pleasing character of its own.¹¹⁴ Set design began as a commercial operation but its success and perpetuation pointed to some important changes in social attitudes. The wireless set was no longer a magical box owned by some technically minded fanatic. Now it was an essential household commodity, separated from other consumer durables by the cultural contribution which it could make. The public demand for attractive sets thus emphasised the prominence which wireless had gained in domestic life and particularly leisure.

'Radiolympia' was another method of boosting sales which had some important social consequences. Olympia was first chosen to hold a radio exhibition in 1926.¹¹⁵ It attracted an enormous amount of publicity and very quickly it became essential for manufacturers to produce a new model in time for the show, held in the autumn of each year. At its peak, between the mid-twenties and the late thirties, when radio was eclipsed by television, 'Radiolympia' was a major social occasion.¹¹⁶ It attracted large crowds from the public as well as from the retail trade and generated a good deal of free publicity for radio in the press. The BBC not only had a stand but also put on a special performance at the show for the benefit of the visitors.¹¹⁷ Normally the event was seized upon as an excuse for the national and local newspapers to produce an article examining the state of the wireless industry at the time and introduce potential listeners to the delights which could be enjoyed.¹¹⁸

This kind of publicity certainly contributed to the eventual saturation of the market. Non-listeners were constantly reminded of the presence of radio and many were probably persuaded to buy a set when, in reality, the extra expense was beyond their means. This inducement of irrational behaviour was a further example of the varied influences on the potential radio listener.

Fundamental economic and technical barriers were often distorted in this way.

In fact, the really resourceful listener did not need to meet all the economic and technical constraints of broadcasting. By changing the principles of broadcast reception it was possible to overcome even these substantial limitations.

3.4 Relay Exchanges

An alternative method of listening to radio was by relay. The relay exchange is similar to a large radio set to which cables are attached, leading to loudspeakers in the homes of subscribers. By this means a very efficient high quality set can be installed at a central point and the cost of running it can be shared amongst as many as can be conveniently connected to its loudspeaker terminals.¹¹⁹

This would seem to have important social implications. The normal method of payment for such a service would be by weekly rental. This could be seen as an incentive for working class individuals who wanted to listen by renting a relay service rather than by buying a set - even with the increasing availability of hire purchase.¹²⁰ There was no need to have a domestic electricity supply or to run a battery power pack to be able to listen to a relay loudspeaker and this could be an advantage when mains electricity supply was by no means universal.¹²¹ Aerial wires were unnecessary. In urban areas a relay set was a useful defence against local interference from trams or domestic electrical appliances.¹²² The relay system offered solace to the technically backward.

As the then former Chief Engineer of the BBC., Peter Eckersley, remarked:

'The listener has no bother either in operating and maintaining a complicated wireless set which, to women especially, is often frightening and mysterious. It is the reliability, simplicity and cheapness of rediffusion which makes it so popular.'¹²³

The system had other advantages over normal radio listening. In many areas the poor quality of reception from the transmitter facilities provided by the BBC due to a weak signal or shipping interference, could be considerably

enhanced by the use of relay.

There were some disadvantages. The subscriber was obliged to listen to the programmes which the relay exchange proprietor and his representatives chose to broadcast. In some cases only a single channel was provided, although the average was a choice of two channels and in a few cases there were three. Normally the channels would be made up of BBC programmes but it was, of course, possible to make up the service with the best programmes broadcast by foreign stations, including the commercial stations.

Apart from this limitation on the freedom of choice, there was also the physical confinement of relay exchanges to densely populated areas. The cable connections would not be a practical proposition for rural areas, given the distance needed to be covered and the resultant cost. Moreover, for all subscribers there was the denial of portability - the loudspeaker had to be kept at home. For poorer subscribers there was still the compulsory annual payment of ten shillings for the broadcast licence to consider.

Relay exchanges were introduced commercially in Southampton during 1924. A.W. Maton charged 1s. 6d. per week and had extended the service to twenty subscribers by August 1926. From these small beginnings the number of exchanges and subscribers grew at a steady but limited rate before 1939 - with only minor fluctuations. ¹²⁵ Considering the alleged advantages of relay exchanges this rate of growth was not very impressive. By 1931, for instance, there were as many as 132 exchanges with 43,889 subscribers. This meant only 1.01% of licence holders used this method for listening. By 1935 the number of exchanges has risen to 343, with 233,554 subscribers, but this was only 3.15% of licence holders. (Table VII)

In absolute terms the number of listeners was not inconsiderable. Between 1935 and 1939 the number of listeners rose from 0.95 million to over a million, assuming the normal multiplier of persons per private family. This gives a more accurate picture of listening but even this was, nonetheless, disappointing for the relay companies and demands some further explanation.

Table VII: The Growth of Relay Exchanges, 1927-1939.

Date	Exchanges	Relay Subscribers	Subscribers Multiplied by PPPF.*	% Subscribers to Licence Holders
Sept 1927	10	446	1,784	0.02
Dec 1928	23	2,430	9,720	0.09
Dec 1929	34	8,592	34,368	0.29
Dec 1930	86	21,677	86,708	0.64
Dec 1931	132	43,889	165,462	1.01
Dec 1932	194	82,690	311,741	1.57
Dec 1933	265	130,998	493,862	2.19
Dec 1934	318	192,707	726,505	2.84
Dec 1935	343	233,554	955,899	3.15
Dec 1936	333	250,978	958,736	3.15
Dec 1937	331	255,236	975,002	3.01
Dec 1938	325	256,294	979,043	2.89
Dec 1939	284	270,596	1,033,677	3.04

* For assumptions used in this calculation see Chapter 2, Table I.

The pattern of relay exchange distribution was very uneven and some areas did take up relay exchanges on a substantial scale. Looking at the twenty largest exchanges, there is a clear concentration in areas such as the South West, the South coast, the North East coast, Humberside and the North West.¹²⁶ All of these areas had a poor provision of conventional radio facilities - such as the North East - or were subject to very high levels of coastal interference such as Plymouth, Brighton and Hull.¹²⁷ Most relays were found in urban areas - London having twenty-two exchanges, four of them having over a thousand subscribers.

Throughout the rest of the country concentrations of subscribers could still be found - popular zones were blocks of flats and new council estates with large working class populations.¹²⁹

A BBC investigation of relays revealed many of the obvious advantages to subscribers - such as ease of operation and better reception - and also quantified the economics of relay subscription. This useful, additional source of information showed that the average payment was £4 per annum or 1s.6d. per week. This was only a minimal advantage over the terms offered by a typical hire purchase method of acquiring a set. Of course, the subscriber would be spared extra costs such as an outlay on an aerial or a battery and maintenance costs would probably be less. But the subscriber to a relay exchange would need to pay continuously rather than for a limited period. Thus the flexibility of radio would probably be preferred to the relay set where costs were equivalent and no special listening conditions applied. There were, inevitably, some cheaper relays and those operating at thirty shillings per annum or seven pence per week were clearly good value.¹³⁰

Besides the economic inferiority of relays, where operating conditions were good, the relay also denied the freedom of choice for the consumer. This denial occurred because the selection of programmes was made at the exchange usually on the basis of known operating loads acquired from power consumption meters fitted to the exchanges. Thus, there was normally a bias towards programmes of majority interest; any other choice would have been commercial nonsense.¹³¹

Table VIII: Wireless Exchanges with more than 1,300
Subscribers (at 31st March 1936). 128

No.	Exchange	Subscribers
1	Hull	17,870
2	Newcastle-on-Tyne	10,853
3	Burnley	9,678
4	Nottingham	7,929
5	Brighton	5,441
6	Plymouth	5,138
7	Southwark	4,517
8	Broadstairs/Margate	3,483
9	Rhondda	3,434
10	Lincoln	3,294
11	Bootle and Waterloo	3,207
12	Swansea	3,163
13	Swindon	3,162
14	Barry	2,792
15	Blackpool	2,634
16	Barrow-in-Furness	2,416
17	York	2,168
18	Lancaster/Morecambe	2,091
19	Norwich	1,921
20	Llanelli	1,858
21	Merthyr Tydfil	1,771
22	Darlington	1,717
23	Luton	1,687
24	Pontypridd/Caerphilly	1,663
25	Chatham/Gillingham	1,644
26	Keighley	1,626
27	Newport (Mon)	1,597
28	Maesteg	1,590
29	Bargoed	1,537
30	Battersea	1,526
31	Rotherham	1,511
32	Mansfield	1,495
33	Castleford	1,444
34	Nelson	1,425
35	Northampton	1,395
36	St. Helens	1,389
37	Scarborough	1,385
38	Portsmouth/Gosport	1,379
39	Gt. Yarmouth	1,374
40	Tredegar	1,352
41	Rochdale	1,342
42	Exeter	1,342
43	Braintree	1,339
44	Wolverhampton	1,308

In poor reception areas there would be an advantage since choice would already be effectively denied. But in many areas the real gain would be in listening to overseas broadcasts. Not only would it open up the opportunity to listen to foreign programmes in poor reception areas but it would assist those in relatively good reception areas who could otherwise only afford a cheap conventional set which could not compare with the quality of reception for long distance broadcasts achieved by the set at the relay exchange. That people desired to listen to foreign stations is made clear by Rowntree's study of listening to the relay exchange in York¹³² and, in more general terms, by the BBC's own listener research information which pointed to the higher levels of listening, particularly on Sundays, by all types of listeners.¹³³

Garry Allighan, for instance, had used the meter readings of the seven leading relay exchanges to show that the percentage of listening to the BBC varied from 10% to 35% compared with 40% to 80% for continental stations on Sundays.¹³⁴ The BBC also found that the Mansfield relay station showed some interesting loadings on weekdays. The morning peak showed that 50% of the listening was to foreign broadcasts of light music, with only 25% listening to the BBC. At 7.30 p.m. 30% of listening went to foreign programmes, with 50% listening to the National programme. Only after 8.00 p.m. did the BBC, in this case with variety on the Regional programme, pick up 95% of listening at that time.¹³⁵ Such statistics may be unreliable - for example, the calculation of listening levels from electrical loadings on a meter may be suspect - but wanting alternatives the evidence assumes value through scarcity.

The slow growth of relay exchanges is not fully explained in terms of the increasing competitiveness of hire purchase agreements or a lack of flexibility for this form of listening. Other influential limitations applied. The most obvious practical restriction was offered by the local authorities. If a relay company wished to establish an exchange in an area it had to seek local authority permission. Sometimes companies vied with each other to offer the best payment to the authority in return for permission to erect the necessary cables.¹³⁶

Where permission was granted, then the relay company could begin to connect houses to the exchange, but where the balance of interests on the town council ran against the relay company, then permission was refused and the residents of that area were unable to enjoy a relay service even if a significant number so desired.

Normally the objection was based on the unsightliness of the cables which were required for the service. This argument had a slightly feeble ring to it when urban areas were increasingly acquiring trolley bus cables, electric cables and telephone cables throughout the period. The real reason probably lay in the resistance of local interests in radio and electrical retailing, which would evidently have been adversely effected by the intrusion of relay exchanges.

The most serious barriers were, however, presented by the GPO and the BBC. The political decisions which confined the activities of the relay companies have been well examined by R.H. Coase,¹³⁷ and Asa Briggs¹³⁸. But as the effect on the public of the struggle between these interested groups is important, the controversy does need some consideration. Briefly, the BBC desired to extend its control over the relay companies because it felt that the companies, by allowing foreign programmes to be broadcast, disrupted the programme balance produced by the BBC.¹³⁹ This was broadly the case presented by the Corporation to Ullswater on this issue. The GPO., which retained licensing control over the companies, blocked attempts to apply this policy as early as October 1931, when the BBC reached agreement with two large relay companies to rediffuse only BBC programmes. The Postmaster-General refused to countenance the deal on the grounds that this would be an unfair extension of the monopoly to listeners who would be denied the right, held by conventional licence holders, to listen to other, non-BBC programmes.¹⁴⁰

The Ullswater Committee on broadcasting provided a further opportunity for the relay companies to challenge the restrictions on their position. Through their representative body, the Relay Services Association of Great Britain (R.S.A.G.B.) the relay exchanges gave verbal evidence and generated printed memoranda in an attempt to remove the restrictions which were placed on them and avert further limitations of their powers.¹⁴¹ The R.S.A.G.B. was ably assisted by the former

Chief Engineer of the BBC, P.P. Eckersley, representing British Insulated Cables Limited, (B.I.C.L.).¹⁴²

These efforts were unrewarded. The BBC¹⁴³ assisted in its turn by the Radio Manufacturers' Association¹⁴⁴ resisted this attempt and the Ullswater Committee did not suggest any relaxation of controls on relay exchanges. Rather the committee recommended that the GPO should take over the ownership and operation of the relay exchanges¹⁴⁵ having been convinced, apart from one dissenting voice,¹⁴⁶ by the public service and programme policy arguments of the BBC.¹⁴⁷

The future for the exchanges was less clear when the government produced its response to the recommendations of Ullswater. The White Paper of June 1936 delayed the final decision still further. The threat of compulsory purchase continued but the GPO licences were extended for three years whilst the Post Office undertook experiments to improve the quality of rediffusion. The exchanges were allowed to continue their relays of commercial and other foreign broadcasts, but where a choice of channels was provided, then one channel had to be confined entirely to BBC programmes.¹⁴⁸

This was important for the listener because it placed the relay subscriber or potential subscriber in a state of almost complete uncertainty. Before Ullswater the exchanges had been continuously at the mercy of the GPO since they were dependent on the GPO for a licence. With the capital commitment of an exchange, greater security was essential if an efficient service was to be provided. The original novelty of the relay exchange had meant that the first formal licence was only conceded hurriedly in 1926.¹⁴⁹ Thereafter the licence terms were restricted, first in 1930¹⁵⁰, then in 1932¹⁵¹ and finally with the publication of the White Paper, still further restrictions were proposed. Each change in the licence, each brief extension, left the exchanges and their subscribers in a state of further uncertainty. An expensive commitment could be lost over-night and potential subscribers lacked confidence in the service because it might cease to trade at any moment. After Ullswater the trade stagnated and equipment was not renewed, thus creating a deteriorating, poorer quality service.¹⁵² Certainly the number of exchanges fell.

Furthermore, the GPO research to develop the service was a failure. Experiments were attempted in the Southampton area and these were severely hampered by a combination of technical difficulties and the resistance of the local council to the extensive excavations needed to provide the proposed underground cable system.¹⁵³ These experiments were important because they pointed towards the other area where public interest in relays was checked. The most effective use of the system was not allowed. Listeners were barred by the GPO licence for the relay exchanges from hearing their own local programmes - such as the broadcasting of local civic events. Exchanges could not provide their own programmes nor could they receive any form of sponsorship in return for relaying a particular programme.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the full technological potential of rediffusion was never exploited. The GPO experiments were also devoted to a suggestion supported by the Ullswater Committee that telephone or electricity wires should be used to carry signals from relay exchanges. This would have saved the enormous expense of a separate cable network and would have reduced the unsightly proliferation of overhead wires.¹⁵⁵ The resultant saving in cost would have made relays more competitive and simultaneously reduced the number of local authorities which resisted the provision of a relay service.

Peter Eckersley had suggested such a course as early as the mid-twenties. His book, The Power Behind the Microphone, was virtually a crusade for this cause.¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately the Electric Lighting Act of 1882 and the Telegraph Act of 1869 effectively combined to prohibit the use of such cables for this purpose. The relay was counted as a telegram by the GPO and the electricity companies were not permitted to supply electricity to the relay exchanges if electric or telephonic cables were employed because this would be complicity in breaking the GPO monopoly on this service. Attempts to reform this legislative quirk were defeated in Parliament.¹⁵⁷

The reluctance to reach a firm decision on the application of the technological developments in relays reduced Eckersley to sheer frustration. After Ullswater, B.I.C.L. cancelled its research and there was no further progress in applying

relay technology before the outbreak of war. Eckersley's vision of an audible spectrum, free of interference, at first supplementing the existing system and then superseding it completely, was totally shattered.¹⁵⁸

As a consequence, relay exchanges never fulfilled their promise of the cheap and efficient reception of radio programmes. With only 3% of licence holders using rediffusion, this service was clearly a minority concern. Potential listeners were discouraged by the indifference or active hostility of national and local authorities. Further, the BBC had very effectively demolished the reputation of relay exchanges. Their commercial controllers were compared very unfavourably with the Corporation's own programme controllers. The high levels of listening to commercial stations showed that the listening public did not entirely accept the view that all commercial station controllers were charlatans or that a single public monopoly necessarily produced the best programmes. But in the case of relays, such public preferences were not allowed to check an area of broadcasting over which the BBC had considerably more influence and control. The opprobrium poured upon the relay exchanges by the various authorities is nowhere summarised more effectively than by a Times leader printed during the debate on the White Paper of 1936:

'What is certain about the relay system is that, under present conditions, it will spread both widely and rapidly among the poorer classes of the population; and this country will not for long be able to congratulate itself on a broadcasting system under which, while broadcasting is controlled with enlightenment and impartiality by a responsible public corporation, the listening is controlled by Tom, Dick and Harry.' 159

Table IX Wireless Exchanges in 1936.¹⁵⁰

Town	No. of Subscribers on 31.3.36.	Town	No. of Subscribers on 31.3.36.
Abercynon (Glam.)	139	Clacton-on-Sea	1015
Aberdare	1113	Clayton-le-Moors	599
Aberdeen	200	Cleethorpes	1013
Abergavenny	204	Clipstone	370
Aberkenfig	514	Coatbridge	21
Abertillery	1118	Colne	624
Abersychen	976	Consett	714
Accrington	364	Coppull	119
Addingham (Yorks.)	100	Cornholme	195
Ammanford	261	Coventry	1163
Ashton-under-Lyne	201	Cowling (Yorks)	73
Atherton (Lancs)	285	Crawshawbooth (Lancs)	123
Bacup	699	Cross Roads (Yorks)	230
Bangor (Co. Down)	780	Cross Hills (Yorks)	219
Bargoed	1537	Cwmaman	160
Barnoldswick	677	Cwmcarn (Mon.)	425
Barrow-in-Furness	2416	Dalton-in-Furness	178
Barrowford	328	Darlington	1717
Barry	2792	Darwen	(728
Barton-on-Humber	178		(796
Basingstoke	567	Dewsbury	69
Bathgate	119	Dorchester	393
Bodlington	171	Douglas	54
Berwick-on-Tweed	218	Dudley	506
Beverley	751	Earby	(74
Bingley	157		(76
Birstall	63	East Dereham	37
Blackburn	1180	Eastleigh	990
Blackpool	2634	Ebbw Vale	385
Blaina	483	Elland	118
Blaenavon	594	Ely	296
Blyth	350	Evesham	86
Bognor Regis	845	Exeter	1342
Bootle and Waterloo	3207	Faversham	557
Bradford	1095	Fawley (Hants.)	106
Bradford-on-Avon	75	Fishguard	97
Braintree	1339	Folkestone	309
Bridgend	336	Foulridge (Lancs)	37
Brierfield	1292	Frinton-on-Sea	114
Brighouse	797	Galashiels	1096
Brighton	916	Glynneath	198
Broadstairs, Margate and Ramsgate	3483	Glossop	216
Brynmawr	395	Glyncorrwg (Glam.)	255
Burgess Hill	155	Godalming	211
Burnham-on-Sea	156	Goole	376
Burnley	9678	Gravesend	443
Burry Fort	114	Great Driffield	292
Bury St. Edmunds	329	Great Harwood	890
Camberley	183	Great Yarmouth	1374
Carmarthen	265	Greetland (Yorks)	220
Castleford	1444	Halifax	594
Chadderton	124	Halstead	16
Chatburn	53	Hartlepool	365
Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham	1644	Haslingden	495
Chelmsford	813	Haverfordwest	295
Chesham	70	Hawick	740
Chorley	205	Haworth	174
Church	8	Heacham	17
		Heanor	330
		Hebden Bridge	316

Table IX contd.

Town	No. of Subscribers on 31.3.36.	Town	No. of Subscribers on 31.3.36.
Herne Bay	866	Hemsworth	203
Hessle	386	Hereford	156
Hetton-le-Hole	284	Louth	617
Heywood	355	Longridge (Lancs)	44
Hornchurch	198	Lowestoft	541
Hornsea	266	Luton	1687
Horsforth	324	Lymington	140
Horsham	123	Lytham St. Annes	375
Horwich	380	Maesteg	1590
Howden	24	Maidenhead	417
Hull	17870	Maidstone	752
Huntingdon	251	Maldon	118
Hythe (Southampton)	107	Mansfield	1495
Irthlingborough	86	March	243
Johnstone	137	Merthyr Tydfil	1771
Keighley	1626	Middlestown (Yorks)	79
Kendal	1002	Middleton	179
Kenfig Mill	591	Mildenhall	241
Kettering	1108	Milford Haven	109
Kilmarnock	419	Mountain Ash	510
Kings Lynn	179	Musselburgh	61
Kirkburton	328	Mytholmroyd	40
Kirkby-in-Ashfield	173	Neath	1249
Kirkham	266	Nelson	(1072 (1425
Lancaster and Morecambe	2091	Newbridge (Mon.)	295
Layton (Blackpool)	212	Newcastle-on-Tyne	10853
Leeds	1695	Newhaven	554
Leigh (Lancs.)	1031	Newport (Mon.)	1597
Lepton (Huddersfield)	136	Newton-le-Willows	197
Leyland	105	Neyland	62
Lincoln	3294	Northampton	1395
Littleport	72	Norwich	1921
Little Lever (Lancs.)	161	Nottingham	7929
Llanelly	1858	Ogmore and Garw (Glam.)	1023
Llanhilleth	247	Ossett	366
Llwchwr (Glam.)	289	Oswaldtwistle	753
London (Acton)	496	Otley	226
London (Battersea)	1526	Oxford	733
(")	27	Padiham	669
(Bethnal Green)	695	Panteg (Mon)	107
(Stepney)	207	Pembroke Dock	299
(Camberwell)	321	Pencoed (Glam.)	122
(")	612	Plymouth	5138
(Forest Gate)	353	Pocklington	121
(Fulham)	453	Pontardawe	(591 (100
(Holborn and St. Pancras)	383	Pontypool	650
(Islington)	1259	Pontypridd and Caerphilly	1663
(")	662	Portsdown	374
(Islington and St. Pancras)	531	Porthcawl	561
(Kennington)	671	Port Glasgow	170
(Paddington)	1217	Portsmouth, Gosport and Southsea	(1379 (347 (2
(Southwark)	4517	Port Talbot	995
(Wandsworth)	72	Poulton-le-Fylde	49
(West Brompton)	873	Pudsey	235

Table IX contd.

Town	No. of Subscribers on 31.3.36.	Town	No. of Subscribers on 31.3.36.
(London)			
Willesden	479	Queensbury	180
Wimbledon	491	Ramsbottom	452
Wood Green	628	Rawtenstall	1077
Cranmer Court, S.W.3.	166	Redcar	356
Retford	814	Stockport	880
Rhymney (Mon.)	386	Stretford and Prestiwch	792
Rhondda	3434	Swansea	3163
Ripon	44	Swindon	3162
Risca (Mon)	449	Thetford	86
Rishton (Lancs.)	380	Thirsk	18
Rochdale (Smallbridge)	1342	Thorne	106
Rochester	707	Todmorden	834
Romsey (Hants)	157	Totton (Hants.)	43
Rotherham	1511	Trawden (Lancs.)	204
Royton	70	Tredegar	1352
Rugby	137	Trowbridge	380
Rusholme	82	Wakefield	807
St. Helens	1389	Wallasey	1021
St. Mellons	18	Walsden (Lancs.)	292
St. Neots	450	Walton-le-Dale	508
Scarborough	1385	Washington (Co. Durham)	379
Selby	408	Wellingborough	1104
Settle	165	Wembley	1029
Shipley	178	Weston-super-Mare	486
Shoreham-by-Sea	108	Whitby	138
Silden, (Yorks)	401	Whitehaven	403
Sittingbourne	1041	Wigan	1216
Skewen (Glam)	36	Withernsea	220
Skipton	45	Wolverhampton	1308
South Elmsall	479	Worcester	1089
Southall	652	Worksop	195
Sowerby Bridge	610	Worthing and Lanning	1062
Standish (Lancs.)	119	Yeaden	545
Stevenston	67	York	2168
		Yetradgynlais	39

Total No. of Exchanges ... 344
 Total No. of Subscribers ... 238,271

PART 2

The Responses

Chapter 4

Wireless Organisations

4.1 Introduction

As broadcasting developed, several organisations were created to further the cause of this new technology and began to press for the creation of a regular public service. Several of these organisations emerged to represent the specific needs of wireless users and listeners. Whereas other groups with an interest in broadcasting had some other specialist field as a common basis for action, such as music, drama or journalism, these specialist wireless organisations usually had no point of contact or common interest other than broadcasting itself. These wireless organisations provide useful information about the audience response towards broadcasting, both before and after the foundation of the British Broadcasting Company. Because their primary purpose was to influence wireless telephony and broadcasting activities, these organisations were often the leading, and most informed critics of the new company. Hence they provided a useful guide to wider public attitudes because of their effectiveness as opinion leaders. They initiated well organised campaigns to satisfy widely shared grievances, and contributed to public knowledge about broadcasting: by their practical example and by the effective way in which they publicised their criticisms and actions. Consequently, these organisations merit a detailed investigation into their development, structure, methods and policies. This will reveal any significant social effects produced by their actions and demonstrate whether such an analysis can shed more light on the evolving opinions of the radio audience.

Wireless organisations fell into two main categories. There were those which catered for individuals interested in the technical aspects of radio, such as the building of sets or the participation in transmission techniques, and normally some level of technical proficiency or certainly some aptitude would be required. For the non-scientific, wireless united an extremely disparate group of people into general listener organisations. Normally their aim was to formulate critiques of programme policy and present them collectively to the BBC and the public. Often these societies provided some form of protection for the technically ignorant through the provision of technical advice services which

arranged for visits to the member's home and the offer of wireless set insurance schemes.

Otherwise the two types of society had many similarities of aims and interests. Each society developed some theory of control for the broadcasting system. Usually this meant more representation for audience interests in the programme planning stage. This aim was not purely selfish in origin; the societies wanted the representation of many interests - not simply their own. Nor did they recklessly seek to break the autocracy implicit in the structure of the existing British Broadcasting Company merely to replace the fetters with anarchy. There was a general appreciation of the technical complexities and a realisation, derived from the example of conditions in the United States, that a chaos of interference and jamming would result if some restrictions on civil liberty were not accepted.¹ The concept of a public service monopoly was grudgingly conceded, albeit never fully accepted, by all of the societies.²

On a more practical level the societies were active in publicising radio: to educate the public in the correct use of wireless sets and encourage a more informed appreciation of the full potential of broadcasting. In addition, societies took voluntary action to allay some public fears of exploitation by the registration of retailers in wireless equipment. Shops were given plaques to indicate that they were approved dealers.

There were conflicts between the societies. The introduction of a full broadcasting programme each day meant that there was a clash of interest between those members of non-specialist societies who wanted BBC programmes continuously, and those specialists who wanted silent periods to permit reception of their own transmissions. Conflict arose from the distaste which the non-specialist felt for the alleged snobbery of the technically minded cognoscenti and for the caricature image of manic enthusiasm which, it was popularly assumed, all amateurs possessed.³ In fact, the non-specialist societies owed their separate creation in part to the belief that the technical societies were too committed to their work to deal with other questions and because it was thought that they would be condescending in their relations with the uninitiated listener.⁴

4.2 Specialist Technical Organisations

The London Wireless Club was founded on the 5th July 1913.⁵ Essentially, there were two motives for founding such a society: to encourage the interchange of technical information amongst wireless enthusiasts⁶ and, secondly, to provide a basis for political lobbying to free wireless transmitters and receivers from government licencing controls and other similar restrictions on broadcasting. Other societies had been founded as early as 1911 but they had too few members and were too scattered geographically to be able to apply any serious political pressure. The London Wireless Club was closer to the reins of power - geographically if not otherwise - and had the potential to provide a proper nucleus for the co-ordination of an efficient lobby with a consequently greater chance of success.

In 1914 the outbreak of war and the introduction of the Defence of the Realm Act brought the activities of these societies to an abrupt end. Equipment was impounded and transmissions were forbidden.⁷ When hostilities ended most societies had to begin again completely from scratch. There had, however, been considerable pre-war gains. A line of communication with the authorities at the GPO had been opened. There had been some realisation of the need for coordinated action by the societies and each society had managed to contribute something to publicise the cause of wireless and broadcasting. What was lacking was a sufficient level of broad public contact. The societies were very much confined to the specialist and the technician. There was no trace of pressure for a national public broadcasting system and the lobbying had concerned itself wholly with grievances of interest to only a small band of enthusiasts. In August 1914, for instance, only 2,150 wireless licences were current.⁸

The war changed this basic deficiency in numbers and expanded the potential influence of the societies. At the outbreak of war and increasingly as the conflict proceeded, amateurs were in great demand as the backbone of the developing military use of wireless telegraphy.⁹ This use of wireless produced many more skilled technicians who, on leaving the armed services, sought to continue their professional experience as amateur experimenters or even broadcasters.

This potential was to be realised only slowly. Because of this massive expansion in wireless use by the military and the perpetuation of the full provisions of D.O.R.A. after the cessation of hostilities, the Government was extremely reluctant to lift its specific restrictions on any non-military uses of wireless.¹⁰ Wireless amateurs were trapped in a vicious circle. Well-organised wireless societies operating in conjunction with each other were needed to press for a relaxation of the legal constraints but the suppression of wireless activity had a debilitating effect on membership. The London Wireless Club, now renamed the Wireless Society of London, did not revive until October 1919 and by December 1921 the society had only added another 118 members to the pre-war level.

Nonetheless many interested non-members did not forget their war-time experience so easily. Quantification is difficult but there were many thousands who had worked in wireless communications during the war and some of them continued to show interest with varying degrees of commitment. Individuals operating alone could still have an influence even where it was confined to ad hoc guidance in the immediate locality. If societies lacked members, they could still organise themselves more effectively to make their views felt more strongly in government circles.

One method of coalescing the disparate, localised energies of the re-emerging societies was to create an affiliation scheme. The W.S.L. was the foundation stone and in January 1920¹¹ the society successfully approached several other societies. The first annual conference of wireless societies took place on 27th February 1920.¹² There were then just fifteen affiliated societies present but the conference achieved rapid success when Commander Loring of the GPO spoke to the assembly, and promised a rapid relaxation of some restrictions on wireless transmitting licences.¹³

The attendance of a GPO official was typical of the close relationship which the societies began to enjoy with government bodies, the press, armed services and manufacturers at this time. In fact it would be misleading to introduce the relationship in this way. Amateur enthusiasts were drawn from the ranks of M.P's, GPO employees, journalists, naval personnel and manufacturers.¹⁴

Common interests permitted an understanding of the technical questions involved and provided a means of applying more effective political pressure to resolve the grievances of wireless amateurs.

After the First World War the essential grievances of the amateurs concerned the restrictions on transmission and reception licences, the refusal of the GPO to permit the sale of thermionic valves and the limits placed on the use of simple equipment such as telephones and spark coils.¹⁵ Only when some concessions on these practical problems had been made could the enthusiasts appetite turn towards the provision of a public broadcasting service. The GPO objections were a function of fears held by the government communications service and the armed services. Both the GPO and the amateurs accepted that the proliferation of wireless meant some controls would still be needed, but the myths derived from wartime experience were not to be broken easily. Immensely tortuous bureaucratic barriers were raised against criticisms by the amateurs - the services feared for the secrecy of their transmissions, they worried about the jamming of important signals and considered that overcrowding of the aether would hamper the government should any new emergency arise.¹⁶

However, the GPO was prepared to lift the pettiest restrictions. Some equipment used in telegraphy was permitted to be sold freely although the widespread commercial use of such equipment had already made the regulations difficult to enforce.¹⁷ Receiving licences charged at ten shillings per annum were now issued to those using receiving sets, but aerials were limited to one hundred feet and valves could only be employed with special permission from the Postmaster-General.¹⁸

More consequential concessions came in April 1920 when, as promised, the GPO permitted the use of transmitters with various limitations on aerial length, wave-lengths, hours worked and total power emission limited to ten watts. Candidates had to be British citizens and be able to demonstrate their capacity for genuine scientific research. The W.S.L. received such a licence on 7th April 1920. Other individuals, pressing their claims as bona fide scientific researchers received rather more tardy attention. In November 1920, Wireless World could only discover

sixteen experimenters who had been successful in their applications. The actual figure was probably higher but the slow progress in vetting applications was symptomatic of the cautious official attitude. By March 1921, there were 150 transmitting licences and four thousand receiving licences.¹⁹

In the winter of 1920-21, therefore, the amateurs were able to begin serious experiment with telephony. They would now make proper tests by communicating with each other at the times allowed and on their own wavelengths - around 180 metres to avoid interference with official signals. There were some grounds for self-congratulation. Largely through their own efforts, the societies had freed wireless from many restrictions. They had broken down the pernicious control of D.O.R.A. and successfully challenged the myths propounded by the military concerning jamming and interference. Once amateur transmissions had begun it proved to be possible for the two sides to coexist. At that time there was only the faintest suspicion that an increase in the number of experimenters might also increase the amount of interference. By August 1921, for example, it had already become necessary to arrange a meeting of amateurs transmitting in the London area to prepare voluntary constraints on transmitting times to reduce interference.²⁰

Amateur activity showed that there was a market for wireless equipment. In lieu of adequate commercial supplies, amateurs were snapping up all kinds of surplus wartime equipment: the favourite being the short wave Mark III set, sold at between £4 and £5. A typical commercial set at the time, such as the Burndept or the B.T.H. two valve, could cost anything up to £35.²¹ Price was therefore a considerable disincentive to anyone thinking of taking up the hobby without the ability to build equipment.²² Eventually manufacturers were stimulated to increase production and reduce prices through the economies of large scale production needed to meet the growing market. Many amateurs became employees of such firms: others founded their own companies. John Scott Taggart entered valve manufacture and, moreover, had the initiative to move into the rising specialist wireless periodical market which emerged as a consequence of the growing interest in radio.

Another part of the amateur success came from their close identity with the

national press. At first, the press maintained its interest in a rather casual way: marking the main concessions from the GPO with ad hoc articles. Progress in wireless technology was described with considerable technical ignorance, sensationalising new steps as part of the conquest of the 'magical' medium.²³ For the specialist reader, the wireless societies succeeded in gaining access to column space in the English Mechanic, the Electrical Review and the authoritative wireless magazine, the Wireless World. Apart from the specialist ship telegraphy journals, such as Wireless Mail and Signal, there was no purely wireless journal other than Wireless World, hence its importance as a mouthpiece. The paper directly encouraged the formation of more societies and attempted to attract new members by publicising the activities of existing societies. There was also the useful provision of technical advice and lists of amateur transmitters and their wavelengths.²⁵ (See Table VI).

The wider implications of the work of the societies at this time were only slowly appreciated. The societies speeded the arrival of public broadcasting by their experimnt and development in telephony. Further, they contributed to the future success of broadcasting by demonstrating to the public that broadcasting was a practical proposition. Even if their sole achievement had been to keep up the pressure on the authorities and maintain interest in the science, then the contribution of the societies would still have been considerable. In fact they were able to contribute more than this, but it would be incorrect to see the societies purely as conscious agitators for the introduction of a public service broadcasting system. In the beginning, it took a strong imagination to foresee the full potential of radio in this role. It was only after research in Britain and the United States had developed new equipment that new vistas and prospects emerged.

Efficient organisation contributed to the success of the societies as a political lobby although their limited size and specialised membership made them distinctly élitist in appearance. Paradoxically this élitist image was matched by a heterogeneous social composition. The W.S.L. and all the other

societies drew their membership from the widest possible spectrum of society. In London, Admirals rubbed shoulders with factory workers but even the average society united solicitors and businessmen in a common cause with labourers and shop assistants. Perhaps this suggested that the machine dominated world of a technically sophisticated society could produce the conditions necessary for social harmony.

In the spring of 1921, the amateurs began again to translate their technical experience and enthusiasm for radio into political action. At the second Annual Conference of Wireless Societies held on 1st March 1921 the amateurs prepared a formal request for a regular telephonic transmission service.²⁶ In this instance the amateurs worked more closely with the manufacturers. The Marconi Company held a general licence to experiment in wireless telephony and during 1920 had successfully managed several tests. The most regular series had been held between 23rd February and 6th March 1920, when a half hour programme was broadcast daily.²⁷ However, the undoubted highlight of the test series was the Melba concert, broadcast on the 15th June 1920 from Chelmsford.²⁸ This use of a famous operatic singer attracted more attention to wireless than any previous telephonic test. It was important because it demonstrated the prospects for wireless as a public broadcasting system which could entertain as well as inform, and broke down the prevailing view of the uninitiated that wireless was a telegraphic medium of relevance only to armies, navies and shipping companies.²⁹

The amateurs had their part to play because only they could receive the test transmissions and pass on the news of their success to the rest of the public through the local and national press.³⁰ Indeed one of the functions of the tests was to prove to the GPO that a potential audience existed for such broadcasts. Despite the proof that one did, the GPO was more influenced by complaints about interference. As each broadcast required special permission, the number of these broadcasts was gradually reduced until, under pressure from the armed forces, the Postmaster-General banned them altogether.³¹ The amateurs had to fall back on the growing number of broadcasts from European stations such as Radio Paris, Eifel Tower,

or PCCG of the Hague, or muse wistfully about the more privileged position of listeners in the United States.

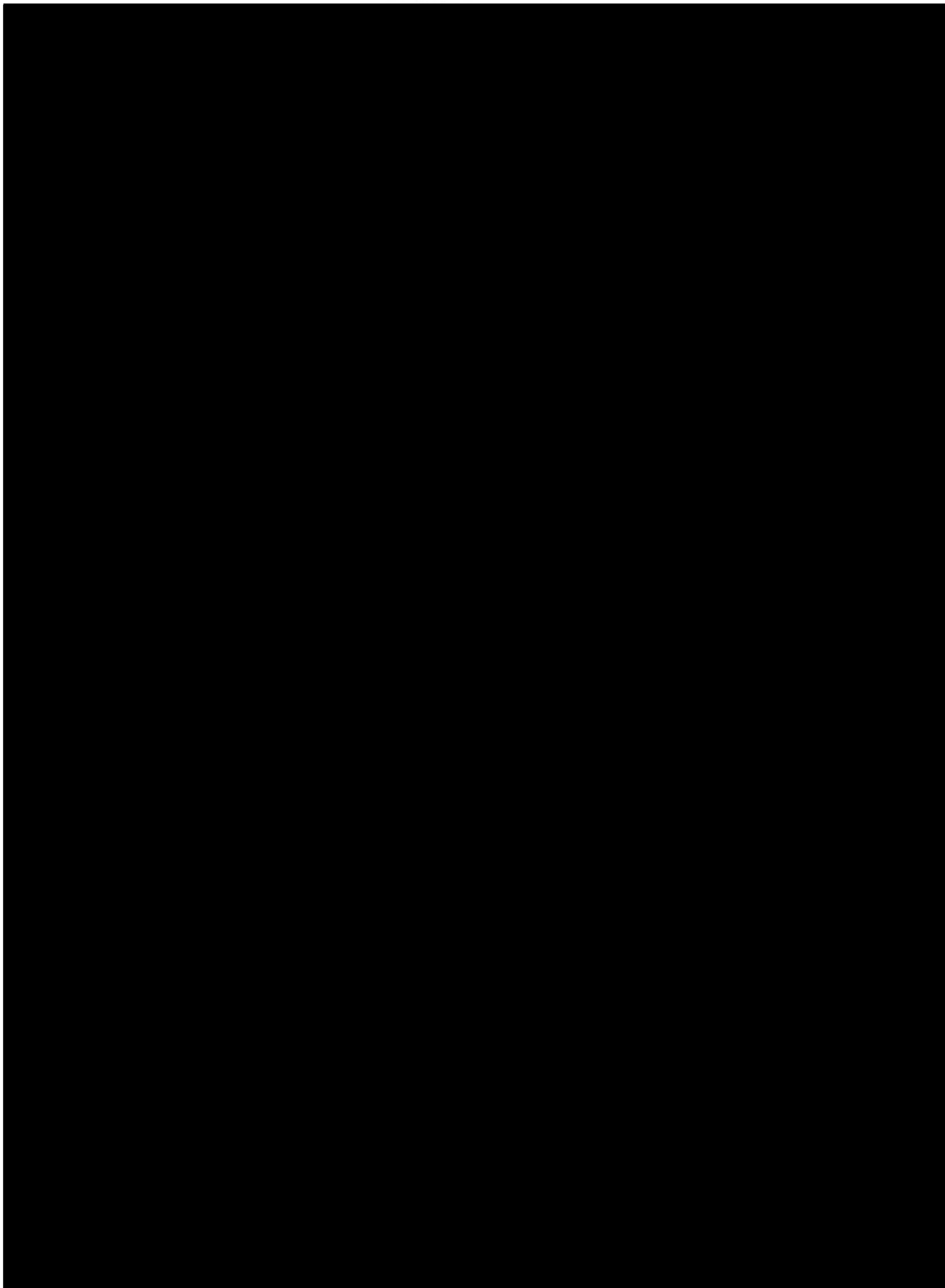
Marconi's were reduced to making telegraphic calibration signals and this increased the pressure from the amateurs for more telephonic broadcasts. They duly began to lobby the GPO. The response was icy. The Postmaster-General pointed to the example of the U.S.A. as a case of widespread interference caused by a lack of planning and control which, if repeated in Britain, could cause chaos. This fear was shared by the amateurs to a certain extent but was not regarded as an argument for preventing regular broadcasting altogether.³³

At the Second Annual Conference, the Post Office representative, Commander Loring, had spoken in reply to the demands of the participants:

'As to the possibility of regular telephony transmission, that will be favourably considered by the Post Office when it is put forward, but we do not altogether like it coming from the Marconi Company, as it puts us in rather an awkward position. It would come very much better from the Wireless Society. The Marconi Company's representatives will, I am sure, understand what I mean. The application will be much easier for us to deal with if it comes from an organisation like the Wireless Society than from a firm. We cannot give the Marconi Company preferential treatment over any other firm, so that if they asked for permission to send out for half an hour every week, half a dozen other companies could come along, and we should have to give them similar permission, whereas if the Wireless Society of London were to apply it would make it much easier for us.'³⁴

The wireless societies were therefore presented with an opportunity to force the pace simply because they were the only serious amateur representatives of the radio audience at that time. Unfortunately, the informal pressures suggested by Loring did not coax the GPO into concession particularly quickly, and a stronger, more public course of action was chosen. The societies reached the zenith of their influence with their petition to the Postmaster-General presented on 29th December 1921. The signatories to the document included sixty-five affiliated societies, representing 3,300 members out of an estimated 4,000 licence holders.³⁵ The geographical spread of the societies showed how interest in wireless had increased during 1920-1921.³⁶ (See Table I).

Table I. Petition to the Postmaster-General, 29 December 1921.



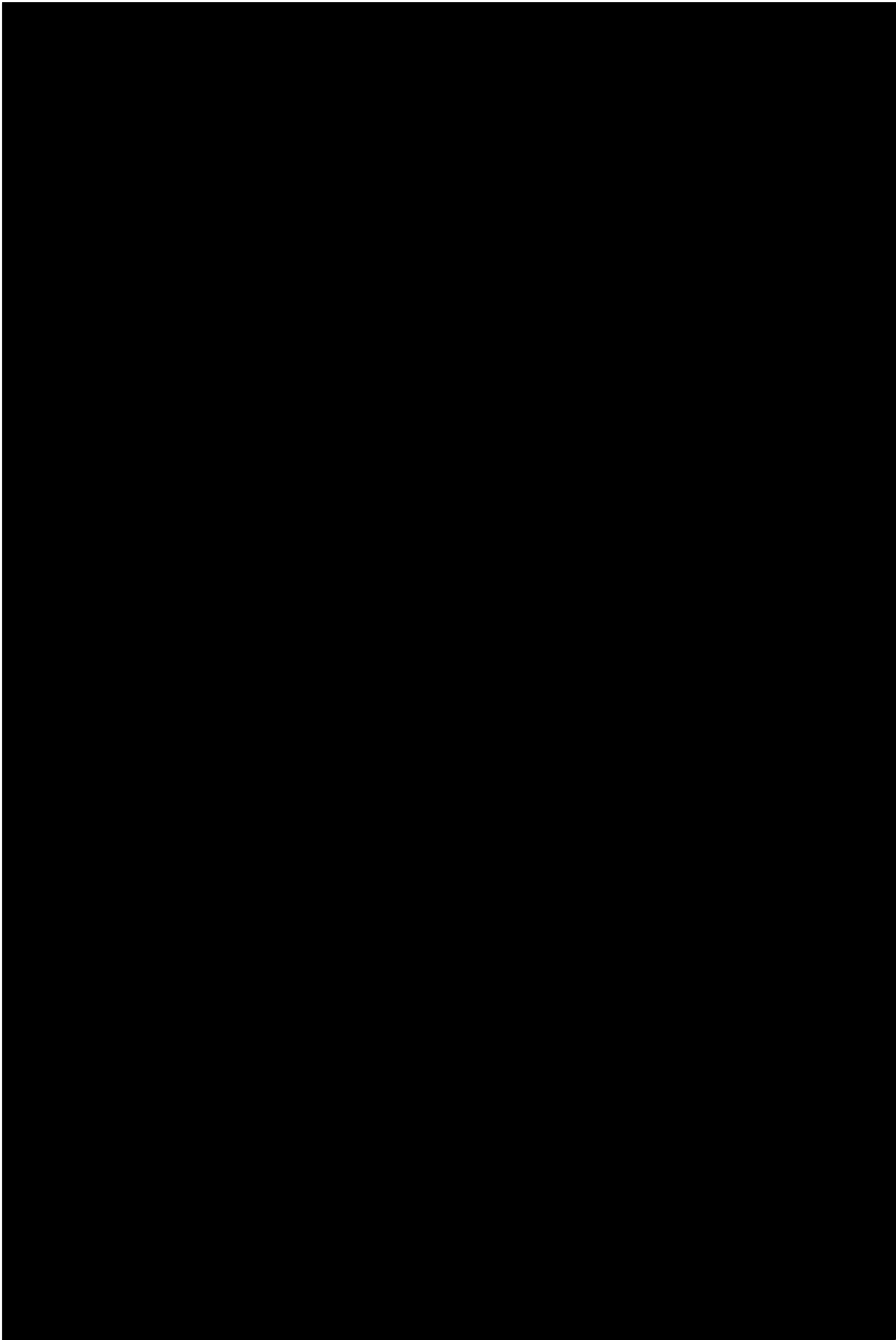


Figure I. Writtle Advertisement.

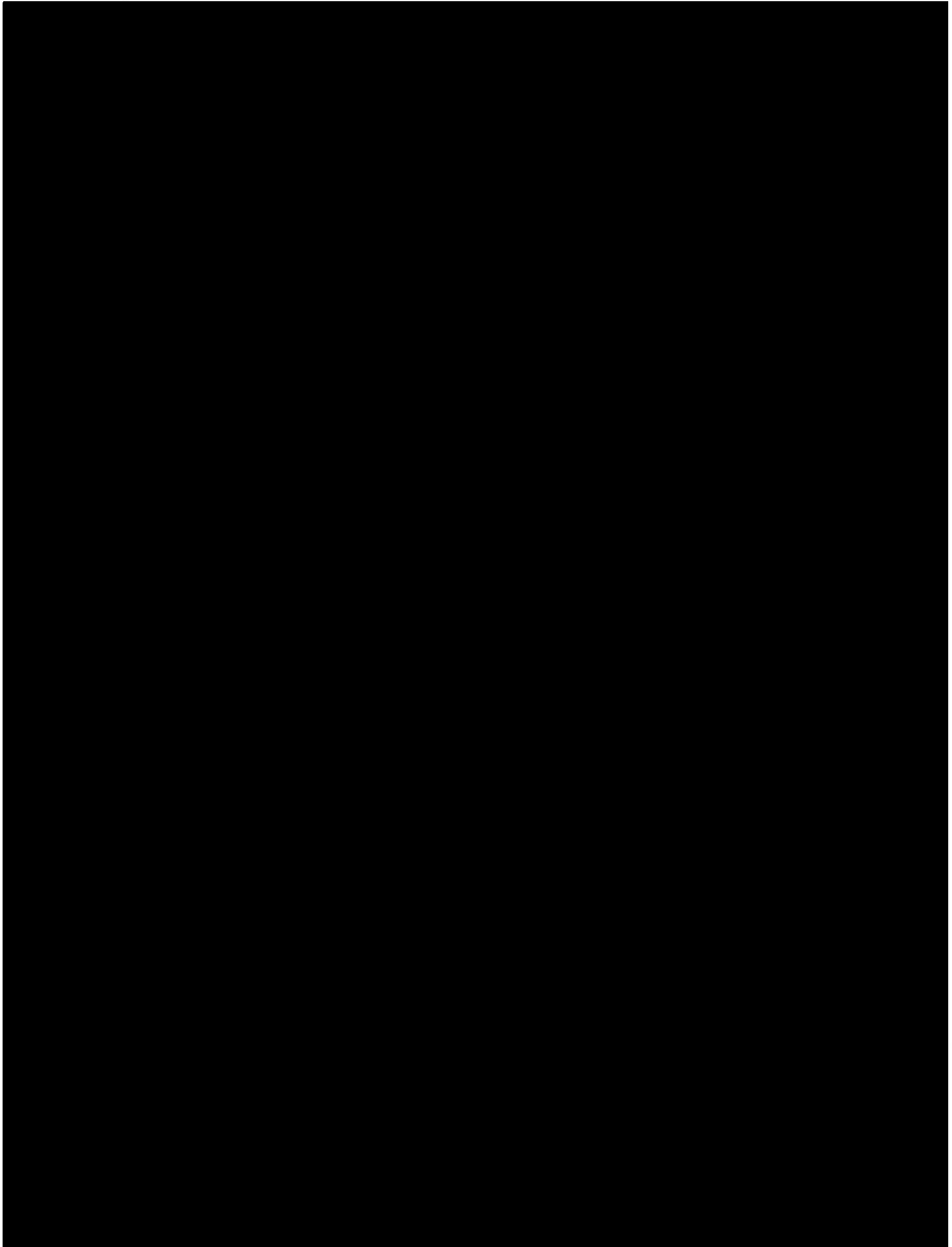
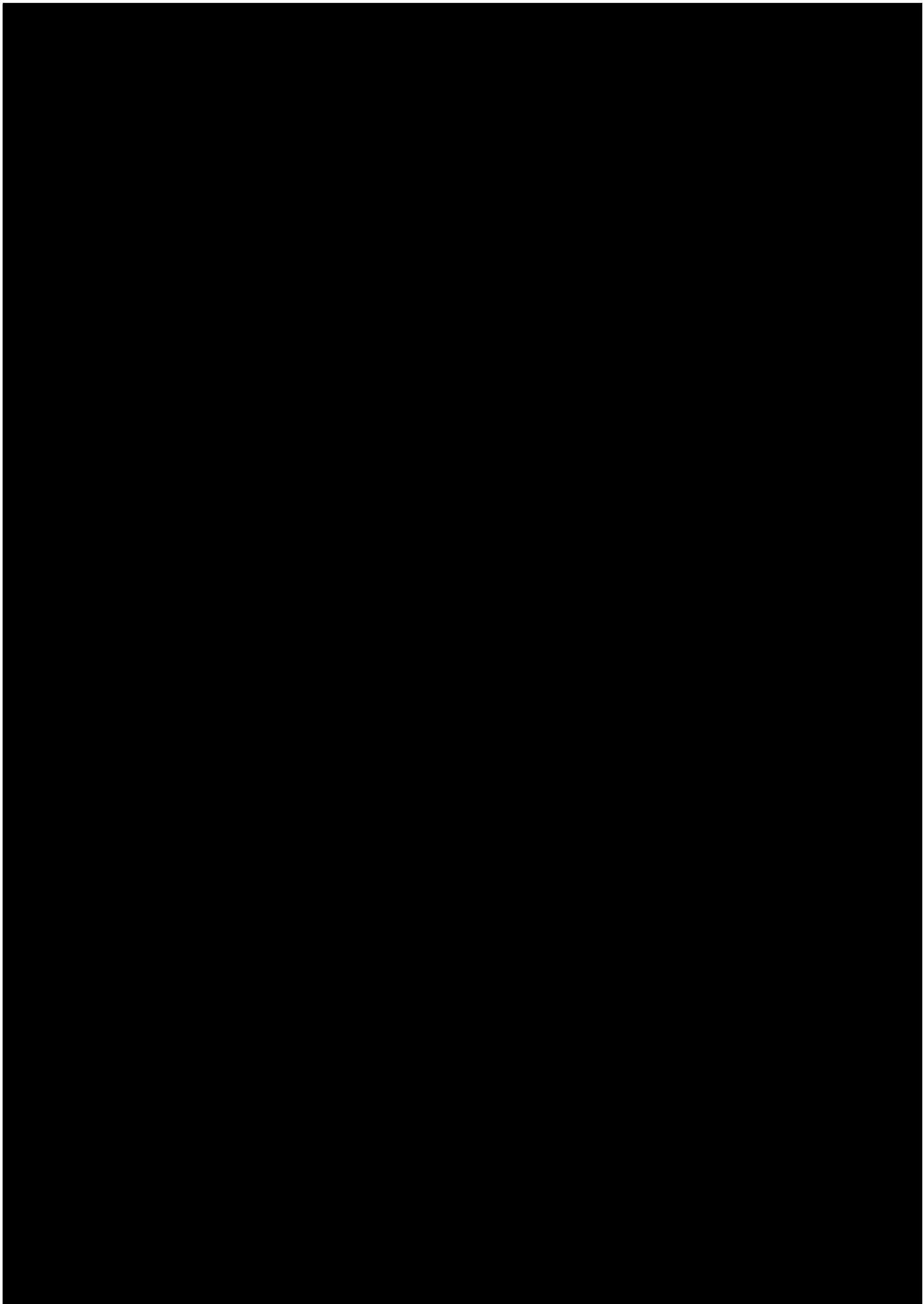


Figure II. Brittle Advertisement.



Concession was now more rapid and at the Third Annual Conference of Affiliated Societies on 25th January 1922 it was announced that the Marconi Company had been authorised by the GPO to begin telephony programmes for half an hour each week.³⁷ Thus, 2MT Writtle began operating on 14th February 1922.³⁸ Writtle was a victory for the amateurs but it also proved to be the final verification for the manufacturers that a regular broadcasting service would attract a commercially viable audience. Within weeks any residual fears were swept away and 'Two Emma Toc' became an institution for the rapidly growing amateur fraternity.³⁹

The Writtle experiment was dominated by Captain P.P. Eckersley. His programmes captured the imagination of all who listened and satisfied the demand for entertainment which had been so sadly missing from the airways (see Figures I and II). He and Noel Ashbridge had been amateur enthusiasts and both went on to become Chief Engineers at the BBC - an example of the assistance provided by the amateurs in supplying a pool of skilled technicians. Eckersley was, however, able to make a further contribution as an entertainer, establishing what might be possible if the system was adopted on a larger scale.

The net effect of the Writtle tests was to accelerate the arrival of public broadcasting. The prospect of the tests had been enough to boost receiving licence holding up to 6,986 at the beginning of February 1922.⁴⁰ The membership of radio societies also grew quickly as the Table overleaf shows quite clearly.

The amateurs had broken through an inertia barrier. Although the American experience was reasonably well known, through coverage in the press, the general awareness about the real prospects for broadcasting needed to be increased by the experience of wireless in Britain itself. The wireless amateurs were able to show through their reception of Writtle that public broadcasting was a practical possibility and not a scientific miracle of the future conjured from the pages of a novel by H.G. Wells.⁴² Without the practical demonstrations provided by the amateurs, many people would not have had the vaguest idea of the capacity of broadcasting: they could not know fully what they wanted from it until they had heard it for themselves.

Table II. Membership of the Radio Society of Great Britain.⁴¹

Date	Membership*	No. of Affiliated Societies	Total all Societies
Nov. 1913	162		
Sept. 1914	277		1,600
Oct. 1920	316	25	1,700
Dec. 1921	395	65	3,300
Dec. 1923	723	180	30,000?
Sept. 1924	778		
Sept. 1925	844	200	10,000
1928		15	
Jan. 1930	1,006		
Dec. 1931	1,537		
Dec. 1932	1,770		
Dec. 1933	1,978		
Dec. 1934	2,245		
Dec. 1935	2,587		
Dec. 1936	3,046		
Dec. 1937	3,341		
Dec. 1938	3,580	37	
Aug. 1939	3,600		
1978	17,823	370	

*Membership of Wireless Society of London to 1923, of the Radio Society of Great Britain thereafter.

The amateurs were barred from the negotiations on the creation of the public broadcasting system between the Postmaster-General and the six large manufacturers which began on 18th May 1922. There was a definite feeling of exclusion - suspicions about the motives of the negotiators were aroused. The only contact with the progress of the negotiations was derived from the public statements made by the negotiators.⁴³

During the protracted course of the negotiations, the amateurs kept broadcasting alive and found plenty to interest both themselves and the general public. Memberships of many societies were increasing rapidly.⁴⁴ A new publicity opportunity was created with the opening of the All British Wireless Exhibition and Convention held under the auspices of the W.S.L. at the Horticultural Hall, Westminster from 30th September - 7th October 1922.⁴⁵ However, the amateurs had to come to terms with their ambivalence towards public broadcasting now that it was an imminent reality. Many amateurs realised that a serious conflict of interest was in prospect - between the demands of amateur experimenters and the demands of the ordinary listener, content to listen passively to the public broadcasts. This new listener would have no interest in transmitting and, indeed, was likely to be positively hostile to any interruptions in his service necessary to permit experimental work.

Interference was already a serious problem. Amateur frequencies were changed from 1,000 metres which interfered with government installations to 150-200 metres and 400 metres in May 1922. Unfortunately this was only a temporary respite. It soon became clear that the public broadcasting system would jam the 440 metre band for many amateurs and confine them to wavelengths below the 200 metre band which were then considered to be useless for serious broadcasting.

Further it was clear as early as May 1922 that some distinction in the licensing arrangements would have to be made between the two types of listener. As Wireless World observed:

'No doubt full consideration has been given by the authorities to the possibility of serious interference if the wireless telephone receiving

sets supplied to the general public are of such a nature as to permit radiation. This point is still more important when we consider that the vast majority of those who will be installing wireless telephone receivers in the near future will be ignorant of the most elementary points of wireless theory, and will operate their sets entirely by rule of thumb. It would seem desirable that in issuing permits for the reception of telephony, that the Postmaster-General should make a very marked distinction between permits for experimental wireless and permits for the installation of a set where the user merely desires to avail himself of the broadcasting service.' 46

The GPO realised that the conflict of interest could not be resolved in favour of the experimenter, simply because of the disproportionate weight of numbers. The first action came with the creation of two distinct licences: an experimenter's licence and a broadcast receiving licence, by which means the GPO was able to reduce the opportunities for new listeners to take out experimental licences. Before November 1922, this had been a formality. Now strict criteria of technical knowledge and controls on set construction were to be introduced. E.H. Shaughnessy of the GPO personally warned the W.S.L. that strict controls would soon be essential. If the amateurs could not prevent interference from their sets when listening to Writtle, then the technically ignorant listener would cause chaos if allowed similar freedom.⁴⁷

Amateurs were very surprised at the rapidity of the changes brought about by the introduction of a full broadcasting service in November 1922. Many amateurs could not come to terms with the loss of their leadership of the wireless audience. The most obvious and irritating effect of broadcasting for the amateur was that experiments on the 440 metre band were effectively banned between the hours of 5.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. when the BBC was operating. Most amateurs could only work at that time and even those content only to receive would be hampered by the restriction on the use of 'reaction', introduced to try and prevent oscillation. Some amateurs, including Hugh Pocock, the editor of Wireless World accepted reality very quickly and prepared themselves to seek some form of compromise which would allow experiments to continue in the shadow of the public service.⁴⁸

All was not lost for the amateur cause. The seeds of a new conflict for the amateurs to fight were sown in the structure of the new licensing system.⁴⁹ Those

who built their own sets and avoided the BBC royalty, but could not demonstrate satisfactorily to the GPO that they had any experimental interests, fell into a twilight zone outside the licensing system. The amateurs now had a battle to fight as the leaders of a considerable body of listeners. The amateurs backed the GPO in its proposal for the introduction of a third type of licence to cover home constructors.

During the spring of 1923, the W.S.L. began to change its structure to meet the new demands. A change in nomenclature helped to reform the image of the society: the W.S.L. became the Radio Society of Great Britain.⁵⁰ The Society hoped to gain more strength by the use of a more precise description of its interest and by appearing to possess a proper national character. Status was acquired by adopting the Prince of Wales as patron⁵¹ and wider support attracted by the organisation through a more democratic system, incorporating members of affiliated societies on central committees for the first time.⁵²

The society was also aware that its selfish interest - in transmission hours, wavelengths and interference created by competition with the new public broadcasting - was being pushed aside by the unity of interest with the wider, less technically minded group of constructors. The R.S.G.B. formed a special committee in January 1923 when it appeared that the GPO and BBC had reached an impasse in their negotiations over the licence system. In April 1923, the society circulated the GPO with its own ideas for a solution to the royalty question. The R.S.G.B. report advocated the use of four licences to solve the problem: a simple broadcast licence, and an experimental licence, both charged at ten shillings, together with a constructor's licence at twenty shillings and a special licence for broadcasting in public places, charged at anything between £5 and £10.

When the Sykes Committee was established to look into the problem on 24th April 1923, the R.S.G.B. was strongly represented.⁵⁴ D.H. Eccles, President of the Society, and Sir Henry Norman MP., a member of the Society, were selected to serve. The R.S.G.B.'s evidence was presented on 7th June 1923 by A.A. Campbell Swinton.⁵⁵ He reiterated the R.S.G.B. plan for a new licensing system but also advocated a relaxation of the restrictions on the

experimenter's licence,⁵⁶ a thirty minute silent period each evening to facilitate tests⁵⁷ and the introduction of a scheme to educate listeners on the uses and abuses of wireless listening.⁵⁸ The royalty system was condemned as 'exploitation of the public', although the R.S.G.B. did not object to some restriction on imported components for their own proposed licensing scheme, including the constructor's licence.⁵⁹

Thus, at the height of its power and influence, the R.S.G.B. was an equivocal leader of the wireless audience. As it stood the proposal to break the grip of the royalty system was fully in accord with the interests of listeners but many of the R.S.G.B.'s other demands worked against the interests of the majority, who would only hold a broadcast licence. Other groups were producing more imaginative solutions to the whole question of control in the broadcasting system and the interests of listeners. The most perceptive solution was presented to the Committee by Herbert Morrison on behalf of the London Labour Party. This evidence advocated full public control and greater audience participation in the broadcasting system to replace the manufacturers' monopoly.⁶⁰ Much of this thinking was incorporated in the formation of the Corporation in 1927. The national press had also taken up the cudgels on behalf of the audience more than ever before. At last it had grasped the character of the medium and, provided that it could have safeguards for its own position,⁶¹ now deemed it worthwhile to encourage the audience and the leadership of the R.S.G.B. to challenge the injustices of the existing licensing system.⁶²

With circulations of millions at their disposal, the press barons possessed, potentially at least, a far greater capacity for leading opinions. The Daily Express, for instance, pursued a course of its own and led a campaign to challenge the monopoly per se. In its vociferous support for a 'Magna Carta of the amateurs who make sets',⁶³ the paper misunderstood the technical limitations of the medium and advocated the kind of wireless freedom current in the United States which few in the R.S.G.B. would have welcomed because of the fear of interference.⁶⁴

In the end, the solution to the licence problem followed the lines of the R.S.G.B. suggestions more closely than could have been expected. The Sykes Committee itself recommended a uniform licence fee of ten shillings but further pressure from the members of the Broadcasting Company persuaded the Postmaster-General to use a variation on the four-tier licensing system as an interim measure before the adoption of the Sykes recommendations in full.⁶⁵ If anything, the GPO was more disposed towards resisting the manufacturers than the R.S.G.B. and the suggested constructor's licence was eventually introduced at fifteen shillings.

Superficially, the eventual solution to the licence question appeared to be a victory for the R.S.G.B. However, the Postmaster-General was already pre-disposed to favour an end to the royalty payments and confine listening to the experimental licence and a broadcast licence, both charged at a uniform rate. As the Postmaster-General, Joynson-Hicks, remarked to the BBC Board,

'The home constructor will represent the less wealthy portion of the population, and it would be, in my view, ridiculous to charge the ten shilling licence to the man who may purchase from your Company a £100 receiving set, and the twenty shilling licence to the lad who desires to make at the lowest possible price a Crystal Set for his own use and experiment.'⁶⁶

Again the GPO had taken a firmer stance in defence of the audience than the R.S.G.B.

During the course of the licence campaign and particularly with its solution in September 1923, the R.S.G.B. lost considerable influence in the audience lobby. With the surge of new licence holders in October and November 1923,⁶⁷ the amateurs were well and truly swamped. They concerned themselves more and more with their own special problems, especially the shortage of free transmitter time. Indeed, despite the changes introduced to democratise the radio society, some provincial groups felt that the Society was not pressing their claims for better transmitter times and decided to set up their own Transmitter and Relay Society. Considerable coaxing proved to be necessary to quell the rebellion.⁶⁸ The ranks began to close again once their minority position within the audience was finally digested and begrudgingly accepted. As Hugh Pocock stressed:

'The experimenter should not lose sight of the fact that amongst users of wireless he may find that he is a minority, and unless a minority is well organised and determined it must eventually become subservient to the majority.' 69

This change in role had become quite apparent with the publication of the Crawford Committee's Report on Broadcasting in 1926.⁷⁰ The intervening years had exacerbated the trend towards peripheral involvement; the amateurs were no longer an élite, leading opinion, but simply a lesser power amongst many. Other specialist societies had grown up and taken their place alongside the R.S.G.B. to represent those whose interest in wireless was less technically involved.⁷¹

In fact the R.S.G.B. prevented the array of audience representatives from presenting a common front. The R.S.G.B. ran against the interests of all the other witnesses by requesting a silent period during peak listening times on weekday evenings.⁷² But, besides this important distinction, the R.S.G.B. shared the view of most of the other wireless organisations: that public control and greater audience participation were essential for the future of broadcasting.⁷³ As Sir Capel Holden stated when presenting the Society's evidence on 20th January 1926:

'The Society considered that the following features in the constitution of the BBC were anomalous: (1) That there is no representation on the directorate of the public, who supply all the revenue, and (2) that the directorate consists solely of representatives of manufacturing interests which are thereby in a position to dominate the direction of wireless development in this country Seeing that broadcasting is or may be used as a powerful weapon for propaganda of any sort, the Society is strongly of the opinion that it should not be entrusted to the hands of a private Limited Liability Company.' 74

This was no more than what proved to be the prevailing orthodoxy. The contribution from Reith and the BBC proved to be far more decisive in winning over the Committee.⁷⁵

The founding of the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1927 seemed to augur well for the R.S.G.B. Continuous consultation appeared to be possible through the Wireless Organisations' Advisory Committee. Unfortunately the Committee possessed no real influence during the course of its short existence.⁷⁶ The influence of the R.S.G.B. rapidly fell away. It was now marked off from the

rest of the audience by the barrier of the technical language which its members spoke and by the increasingly sophisticated knowledge of radio which was required of participating members.

By 1935, when the Ullswater Committee met to review the BBC's Charter, the R.S.G.B. had so little to say about public broadcasting that it was no longer amongst the list of those giving evidence.⁷⁷ The weakness of the amateurs led them to resume the role they had held in the era between 1918 and 1921. They returned to the area of experimental radio research, examining the capacity of radio waves over long distances and at various frequencies, particularly in the short wave bands. The work was useful in that it covered areas neglected by the public sector but which was to have immense value for it in the post-war years when the very high frequency radio system was introduced for public broadcasting. The amateurs were first to prove that it was possible to use such frequencies successfully.

The only direct beneficiaries of this work before 1939 were listeners overseas. In the earliest days, the work of the radio amateurs had possessed a clear international character.⁷⁸ But the amateurs were also keen to extend their own active contribution to long distance reception and transmission. Public imagination was soon captured by the seemingly spectacular feats of listening to American stations such as KDKA Pittsburgh or WJZ New Jersey, purely because of the sheer distance involved and the possible implications for international communications.⁷⁹ For amateur transmissions, the first transatlantic contact was made on the night of 8-9th December 1921, when a test held under the auspices of the W.S.L. was a great success, thanks mainly to the efforts of an American, Paul Godley. From then on rapid progress was made and two-way telephony achieved in the 'Transatlantic Test' held during December 1923.⁸⁰

With this success it was only a matter of time before telephonic experiments extended the repertoire of those broadcasting in the short wave bands. On 1st September 1927, G.N. Marcuse, an amateur based in Caterham,

Surrey, began broadcasting to many parts of the world. His station, G2NM, was heard as far away as Australia. He was only permitted to do this under the terms of a special licence granted by the GPO.⁸¹ The BBC pressed by this example, began their own tests in November 1927 with station G5SW at Chelmsford.⁸² The amateurs frequently claimed that it was only through their pressure that BBC Empire broadcasting began at all. Certainly the BBC did appear to procrastinate excessively since regular broadcasting to the Empire only finally commenced from Daventry in December 1932.⁸³ On the other hand, the BBC delayed because it lacked political and financial support from the government. When the final decision was made to go ahead with the scheme, a considerable financial burden had to be borne by the BBC solely from its existing income.⁸⁴

The primacy of the technical organisations was brief. Their influence was greatest in the period 1922-1926 when broadcasting was in flux, both institutionally and technically. At that time the nascent audience was uncertain and turned to such knowledgeable individuals and organisations for advice. The amateurs provided the nucleus for an expanding interest in radio; helping many to build sets or to purchase suitable equipment. Credit has to be given to the catalyst which they contributed to the early growth of the audience.

After this initial stimulation, the BBC's authority was more effectively exerted and certain technical trends made the advice of amateurs largely superfluous. Sets became more complex, more efficient and more reliable. The cheaper, ready-made product rendered home construction unnecessary. This was matched by the increasing complexity of sets, particularly following the demise of crystal sets, which severely reduced the ability of many to handle the components. Manufacturers could now genuinely offer a viable commercial product which would not require any skill to operate and could be marketed in the same way as any other consumer durable. There was little room for the amateur here.

Moreover, after three or four years of broadcasting the audience began to consider the programme content rather more, especially since it was unfettered by the earlier obsessions with the sheer logistics of listening. The R.S.G.B. was wholly unsuited to commenting on programme content and hence other pressure groups, the press and other kinds of wireless organisation assumed a more important role in demonstrating audience interest in broadcasting. The amateurs reverted to their original form as a small, cohesive lobby of specialists and professional engineers committed to communications research.

4.3 Listener Organisations

In August 1922 another wireless organisation was founded in an attempt to bridge the gap between the broadcasting authorities and the technically unskilled listener - interested rather more in programme content than in the complexities of advanced wireless technology.⁸⁵ This organisation, the Radio Association, was founded in the first instance to lobby for the introduction of a regular public broadcasting service.⁸⁶ Once this service was created, the Association was joined by several analogous organisations which emerged to represent those listening to the new British Broadcasting Company.

In this sense such bodies were subordinate to the broadcasting system - in complete contrast to the R.S.G.B. which would have survived reasonably happily without the BBC. Typical members of these non-specialist organisations generally did not have the transmitter capability to sustain themselves if the public broadcasting system was discontinued. This was compensated by a keen devotion to broadcasting. For some this meant a concern for a new leisure activity - where the enthusiastic listener wanted some means of expressing his opinion on the quality, choice or arrangement of the output. Others, with varying degrees of commitment, were conscious of radio broadcasting as a basis for forming a pressure group. In both cases there was considerable

frustration at the lack of representation for listeners at the BBC in whatever form. The failure of the BBC to meet this emerging audience requirement stimulated the growth of these organisations.⁸⁷ Many were conscious of the grip which the manufacturers held on public transmissions and desired the balanced representation of other interests on the board of control. There was general suspicion, too, of the power of monopoly when it was held by a private company, even with the considerable level of public control held by the GPO.⁸⁸

The two latter views were held most strongly from 1922-1927 when the nascent broadcasting system was seeking to establish itself. It was an experimental period with some uncertainty about the future course of broadcasting. It was in this period when the non-technical type of wireless organisation was born, reached its prime and began to wither.⁸⁹ The Radio Association was reasonably typical. Under the chairmanship of Lieutenant-Commander J.M. Kenworthy M.P., it grew slowly to a maximum strength of 3,000 members in 1925.⁹⁰ It claimed to have 41 provincial and 12 metropolitan branches.⁹¹ Essentially it provided a service for ordinary non-technical members but had some unrequited aspirations to become the main professional association for wireless engineers and technicians.⁹²

The Wireless League was an altogether larger affair, with a better eye for mass support and publicity. Originally it was a product of Lord Beaverbrook's fertile brain. Certainly it was meant to further his ambition to break the BBC monopoly and enter broadcasting himself by establishing his own radio station. But Beaverbrook changed his mind. By July 1925, the League was largely independent of the Daily Express and under the chairmanship of Sir Arthur Stanley. It now adopted a rather less hostile approach to the youthful BBC, supporting the public service character of broadcasting and cordially presenting its criticisms to the Managing Director.⁹³

The Wireless League had a more extensive national network.⁹⁴ At the end of 1925, the Wireless League claimed 80,000 members and 150 branches.⁹⁵ Socially, it was probably rather middle class, having a membership fee of two

shillings per annum. However, this did not make it necessarily more articulate or exclusive. One leader, Professor A.M. Low was anxious to deflect such criticisms:

'A large proportion of our members use the crystal set and they do not, as a class, express their opinions by letter to the BBC'. 96

The other contemporary organisation was much smaller and less important. This was the Wireless Association of Great Britain formed under the chairmanship of Lord Drogheda. It was founded as a Limited Company on 21st January 1926,⁹⁷ and claimed 1,000 members at the time of its unsuccessful bid to submit oral evidence in support of a rather grandiose memorandum to the Crawford Committee.⁹⁸ Its organisation was rather more restrictive than the others, confined as it was to members able to pay for the £1 share in the company. Its aims seemed to be directed as much towards the interests of manufacturers as to listeners at large.

The only other wireless related organisation not mentioned so far was a charity: the British Wireless for the Blind Fund. It does merit attention, however, since it was an example of social concern which the existence of radio had created. The organisation was founded in 1929. Following the efforts of Captain Ian Fraser, the licence fee was waived in the case of blind listeners but the expense of a set was a considerable barrier before that privilege could be enjoyed.⁹⁹ The most successful mode of appeal was through the means of radio itself. Many charities were permitted to appear through the means of radio but the Blind Fund had the privilege of Christmas Day appeals which began in 1929, with Winston Churchill as the speaker. By 1931, £37,000 had been raised and 17,000 sets supplied to blind listeners.¹⁰⁰ Most blind listeners soon had a set with the help of the scheme, although Christmas Day appeals continued throughout the thirties and as late as 1938, Lord Southwood broke the record for a radio charities' appeal when £40,000 was raised for the Fund in response to his broadcast. This was a tremendous success for this specialised radio lobby.

Table III: Free Broadcast Licences for the Blind
Royal Assent granted 31st March 1926.

Year 31 March	Number
1927	5,750
1928	12,234
1929	14,505
1930	16,496
1931	21,304
1932	31,513
1933	35,850
1934	39,224
1935	41,868
1936	44,380
1937	46,475
1938	49,730
1939	52,621

Table IV: Money raised by Christmas Charity Appeals on behalf of
the British Wireless for the Blind Fund.

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Year	£
1929-30	37,000
1934	9,813
1936	18,600
1937	22,100
1938	40,000

The lack of a clear two-way channel of communication with the BBC was an obvious frustration for listeners. The existence of the listener organisations owed a great deal to the public need to express their views on broadcasting - and receive a reciprocal response from the BBC. As Sir Arthur Stanley remarked:

'I accepted the Chairmanship of the [Wireless] League because I believe that it is essential for the efficiency of broadcasting that there should be some independent body representing the listeners; to focus their opinions, wishes and complaints; and to co-operate with the Broadcasting Authority by supplying useful criticisms and suggestions for the improvement of the Service. The need for some such body is the more pressing by the very nature of broadcasting. There is no effective method of communication by which the listener can express his approval or disapproval, except by means of a letter addressed to the BBC which is a much too cumbersome process to be useful.' 102

But that was a high-flown ideal when compared to the useful work done by the organisations to satisfy more mundane needs in the early, uncertain days of radio. All the societies offered some form of wireless set insurance in return for part of the membership fee. They also offered set maintenance advice to members - vitally necessary advice at a time when sets were still delicate and temperamental, and where, for financial reasons, home construction was common amongst those lacking technical knowledge. Further action was undertaken by the Radio Association and jointly by the wireless League and R.S.G.B. to register radio dealers.¹⁰³ This served some purpose since large numbers of unskilled people were moving into the business of selling sets. Registration helped to allay public fears that low trading standards would predominate in this new retail sector.

The local branch of the Wireless League or the Radio Association also fulfilled an important social need. Meetings were important ways of gathering knowledge about listener ideas or criticisms and in stimulating a sense of collective action.¹⁰⁴ Their distribution throughout England was reasonably broad but, as the Crawford Committee observed, most branches were in large towns, leaving rural areas largely unrepresented.¹⁰⁵ As with any other pressure group or society, local branch meetings allowed members to let off steam, vent frustrations and, more constructively, prepare courses of action through discussion. Much of the Wireless League evidence to Crawford was generated through ideas developed from this form of debate. Items discussed included demands for more

local programmes, the value of educational programmes and the possibility of using direct local action to prevent the dreaded 'oscillator'.¹⁰⁶ Branch meetings also provided a valuable educative function. Men such as Professor Low toured the country, lecturing on broadcasting to many societies and organisations. This served to alleviate many listening problems and served to attract local attention towards radio, publicising its value to non-listeners as well as listeners.¹⁰⁷

The collection of members' opinions was a totally useless process unless it was matched by some effective means of expressing such views coherently to the organisation which it was wished to influence and change. One method of applying pressure was to seek publicity for the cause. Of the three original organisations, the Wireless League, with its Daily Express antecedents, was most adept at applying this form of action. The Wireless League's activities were more widely reported in the national press and for two years between 1926 - 1928 the League produced a monthly four page supplement to the influential Wireless World.¹⁰⁸ All the organisations produced pamphlets and prospectuses to inform the public of their aims; they took stands at wireless exhibitions and both the Wireless League and the Radio Association produced their own handbooks.¹⁰⁹ The much maligned BBC also demonstrated some goodwill towards the organisations. In its Handbooks between 1928 and 1934, in a period when the wireless organisations were in decline, it continued to print their details.¹¹⁰

Nonetheless, the organisations relied heavily on the reputation of their leaders to strengthen their political presence. Important patrons were sought and noted critics of radio such as Ian Fraser and Filson Young were enlisted to add certain professional respectability to the cause. These leaders remained in power until January 1936 when there was a mass resignation.¹¹¹ At the BBC, Gladstone Murray was assigned the task of arranging personal contacts with the leaders. Relations were normally rather cordial, as he remarked to Stanley, 'your direct contact with us is so close and continuous that it is worth a dozen committees.'¹¹²

Another means of applying influence was through the GPO's ill-fated Programme Board. However the Board only met on six occasions between 9th April and 8th July 1924. It was formally wound up on 1st January 1927.¹¹³ In 1926 the Postmaster General argued that:

'the service has recently been working so smoothly and the questions submitted to the Post Office have been so few that it has not been necessary for some time past to call the Board together for its advice.'¹¹⁴

In accordance with the Crawford Committee's recommendations the successor to the Board was the BBC's Wireless Organisations' Advisory Committee. This had an equally brief and inauspicious career despite the high hopes for success at the outset. The brief for the Committee stated:

'The members of the Committee should prepare, through the machinery of the organisations which they represent, analytical reports based on the views of listeners regarding the composition of broadcast programmes.'¹¹⁵

At first, Reith reported the discussions of the committee on issues to the Control Board but the tone of his reports soon became very dismissive and the Committee's recommendations were totally ignored.¹¹⁶ In the face of this uncompromising resistance, the wireless groups lacked the resources and strength to apply firmer pressure. The W.O.A.C. faded away; meeting less and less, eventually ceasing to meet at all after 1931.¹¹⁷

The main opportunity for presenting the views of the listeners was provided by the Committees of Inquiry on Broadcasting. The Sykes Committee came too early for the listener organisations. Only the Radio Association gave evidence and the R.S.G.B. dominated the representation of listener interests during the licence 'war' and its aftermath in 1923. The period when the Crawford Committee was taking evidence during the winter of 1925-1926 marked the zenith of the organisations' influence. The Wireless League and Radio Association gave verbal evidence whilst all three listener organisations provided memoranda for the committee to examine.

All the organisations wanted to extend the representation of bodies such as their own in the decision making processes of broadcasting. A Whiggish theory of representation was advocated; where as many interests as possible could be

incorporated in both a governing and advisory role. The present system was not condemned because it was a monopoly, indeed this was accepted by all the groups as necessary to avoid chaos, but because the broadcasting monopoly allowed a private company to exclude other influences from the control of broadcasting.

The reforms suggested by the organisations specifically excluded direct state control but advocated, instead, some form of governing board for the monopoly, representing the interests of many groups besides the listeners and manufacturers. The Wireless League provided the most detailed and imaginative proposals along these lines. It suggested the creation of a British Broadcasting Commission to consist of ten members comprising: a chairman, a chief commissioner to represent M.P's and a commissioner to represent each of: the GPO, the radio manufacturers, science, education, the arts, with two to represent the listeners.¹¹⁸ Each representative was to be in some way a nominee of the groups concerned. The added twist to the Wireless League evidence was the provision of a Programme Advisory Committee. This would have represented the whole gamut of activity: education, the press, music, the stage, music halls, sport, commerce, industry and, of course, the Wireless League itself.¹¹⁹

In the shape of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the organisations got what they wanted in terms of a monopoly independent of state or private interests. Where they really failed was in democratising the BBC Governing Board. The Governors were purely political nominees and did not, therefore, necessarily have to represent the various interests. It was not easy for the various interests to apply more than the most tenuous and indirect pressure to ensure that a political nominee for one of the five places on the Board might share any of the collective views of, for instance, the listeners' organisations. The Crawford Committee's report was therefore a tremendous rebuff for the organisations. They could not even claim credit for the creation of the Corporation, since this was a response to a clear consensus of opinion amongst most witnesses giving evidence before the Committee.

It would be unfair, however, to suggest that the wireless organisations had served no useful purpose in the consultative process. The organisations made the views of their members known on many issues which were soon recognised by many other listeners to be of major importance. The poor provision of news broadcasts was one aspect raised. All the societies were anxious to see an extension of news programmes beyond the simple headline, news agency form; thus, implicitly, they were eager to break the grip of the press on news output.¹²⁰ In the thirties such opinions were commonplace but the societies were the first to articulate listener concern on the question.

They also wanted more alternative programmes. The Wireless League suggested a choice in favour of more popular programmes¹²¹ but it also advocated the introduction of more localised programmes for areas then only able to receive Daventry¹²² and the creation of a special network for the sole provision of educational material.¹²³ There was also a consensus amongst the societies about the importance of raising public consciousness in the area of set maintenance and construction. This, it was asserted, would reduce the nuisance of oscillation very quickly and was, conveniently enough, just the kind of task which the organisations could undertake.¹²⁴

The efforts of the BBC were not always adversely criticised. The general standard of programmes was broadly liked and the work done by the BBC in many output areas complimented.¹²⁵ Moreover, there was general contempt for the Post Office levy on licence revenue. The Wireless League and the Wireless Association of Great Britain soundly condemned the existing practice of extracting this money. In their opinion, the provision of a successful broadcasting system was significantly dependent on adequate financial support and, therefore, all the revenue should accrue to the BBC.¹²⁶

This surge of involvement and the attainment of some influence was all too ephemeral. During the meetings of the Ullswater Committee, the sole gesture from the listeners' organisations was a letter, lamely urging:

'that the new Charter should retain the clause whereby the British Broadcasting Corporation are recommended to co-operate with listeners' organisations.'¹²⁷

This request was denied.¹²⁸

Table V: Guide to Listener Organisations

Organisation	Founded	Ended	Size	Other Details
Radio Association	August 1922	October 1936	3,000 in 1925	41 Provincial and 12 Metropolitan branches. Gave evidence to Sykes & Crawford. See BBC Yearbook 1933 p.73.
Wireless League	March 1925	October 1936. In January 1936, Dorgheda, Stanley and Fraser resigned	40,000 in June '25 80,000 in Dec 1925	150 Branches. Independent from <u>Daily Express</u> on 1 July 1925. Evidence to Crawford. See BBC Yearbook 1933 p.74.
Wireless Association of Great Britain	January 1926	1928. Amalgamated with the Wireless League.	1,000 in 1926	Memorandum to Crawford only.
Listeners' Assn.	1932	October 1936	?	Suggested in <u>Spectator</u> 23rd January 1932
Listeners' League	July 1936	31st December 1938	25,000 in 1939	Incorporated all the others. The Listeners' League was taken over by the Wireless Retailers' Association as the Listeners' Service Branch.
British Wireless for the Blind Fund	1929	Continued post-War	-	See Appendix F for details

In July 1936 the remnants of four organisations merged into the newly formed Listeners' League. There were only approximately 25,000 members remaining and whether many of these were active is doubtful.¹²⁹ (See Table V) The Listeners' League was suspected by the BBC to be no more than a thinly disguised lobby for radio advertisers or the relay exchanges.¹³⁰ However, pressed by the BBC,¹³¹ the GPO investigated the League and discovered that it was little different in aims and structure to its predecessors.¹³²

The demise of the component organisations in the League can be seen to have several causes. In the period 1927-1934 the BBC attempted to satisfy many of the grievances raised during the course of the proceedings of the Crawford Committee, thus undermining the main purpose of the organisations. The news service was extended, albeit slowly until 1935; eyewitness accounts of major sporting and other national events were successfully included, there were more educational programmes, and, most importantly, the expanding Regional Scheme provided a better geographical coverage and a choice of programme for many more listeners, although this did not exactly answer the demand for 'local' programmes specifically. The BBC also tried to usurp the role of the listener organisations by gathering its own information on listener opinion. It continued to operate the Programme Correspondence Section and maintained many other advisory committees to deal with special parts of the programme output, such as music.¹³³ In 1934 this was extended with the creation of the General Advisory Council. This body closely accorded with suggestions made to Crawford but it was really a shadow of the idea since members were selected informally in a system very much under BBC control rather than through any semblance of proper democratic consultation with interested parties.¹³⁴ The G.A.C. could also serve as a useful means of involving potentially dangerous critics rather than excluding them from the BBC framework, where they might become involved in reviving the flagging listener societies. Of course the creation of the G.A.C. did at least imply a further acceptance by the BBC that the views of listeners were integral with the building of a successful broadcasting system. This in itself was significant.

Yet the G.A.C. took seven years to create. Its existence might seem to be owed, from a cynical point of view at least, more to a desire to put the BBC shop window in order for the eyes of Ullswater than because of any undue audience pressure for involvement. Where the audience was concerned, increased apathy or, more precisely, resigned acceptance of the existence of the Corporation seemed to grow when the initial excitement of its formation had faded. The failure of the organisations to extract any substantial concessions through the work of the W.O.A.C. seems to have led quickly to disillusionment and a sense of powerlessness. Certainly the BBC did introduce some changes to answer its critics but it did so in its own time and on its own terms. It was difficult to see the BBC under Reith racing towards reforms at the insistence of listeners - in whatever form such pressure was applied.

There were other reasons for the inability to apply pressure successfully. Membership was always limited. A maximum of 100,000 in a listening population for 1927 of around nine million is respectable but not large and quite possibly unrepresentative. The Crawford Committee was not slow to notice this in the case of both the Wireless League and the Radio Association.¹³⁵ Landman, the secretary of the Radio Association had to admit that:

'As a rule the membership consists of keener people, people who are keen enough to take interest and pay a subscription.'¹³⁶

This need not have made them unrepresentative in opinion, only in the force with which their opinions were articulated.

Quite simply, the membership never really 'took off'. The Wireless League had to admit that it had not managed to win any more support once its initial membership drive was over.¹³⁷ Perhaps members felt that the organisations were too élitist and did not permit more than an illusion of democratic influence through their leaderships at the BBC. The essential weakness lay in the central idea of the societies. Wireless was a bad choice if it was to be used as the rallying point for a collective movement. There were too many disparate opinions and views on broadcasting to be represented adequately in one organisation. Views about programme content and programme

balances could not be easily presented in a common front by a society with such a fragile rationale for its existence. Personal taste could not be represented in this way with any degree of unanimity.

The idea of the unaligned consumer consorting with similarly minded individuals to provide a common front proved to be unworkable. The listeners' societies and specialist technical societies were replaced by groups rooted in some other vocation or interest. Usually these lobbies had a much stronger interest in participation in programme production and transmission. If the listener wanted to express his views on programme policy he had to display his activism in one of these other groups. For instance, the Crawford Committee took evidence from musicians, music publishers, actors, theatre owners, the Performing Right Society, the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, the British National Opera Company and the London orchestras.¹³⁸ All clamoured for some share of control on broadcasting. Moreover, they were attempting to challenge the grip of other interests: the manufacturers, the press, press agencies and the state through its agent, the GPO. With all these powerful forces at work, it was clear that the listener organisations would be swamped by much more cohesive and influential interests unless they obtained quite considerable support. The list of those giving evidence to the Ullswater Committee satisfied this prophecy.

In the end the inheritor of the rump of the listener organisations, the Listeners' League, itself suffered the humiliation of being absorbed in turn by the Wireless Retailers' Association, not because it had any political impact, but because, 'it represents a very formidable buying power'.¹³⁹ This more than anything else demonstrated the weakness of the organisations - that they were relegated to the role of a customer relations department for the radio industry. Their demise was complete.

(i) Journals (in order of year of publication)

Title	Dates of Publication	Publisher	Price	Frequency			Comments
				Weekly(W)	Monthly(M)	Quarterly(Q)	
<u>Marconiograph</u>	1911-1913	Wireless Press		M			Marconiograph became <u>Wireless World</u>
<u>Q.S.T.</u>	1915-	ARRL	?	M			American Radio Relay League
<u>Wireless World</u>	1913-	Marconi	7d.	M & W(1923)			
<u>The Radio Review</u>	1920-1922	Wireless Press	?	M			Merged with <u>Wireless World</u>
<u>Popular Wireless</u>	1922-1936	Radio Press	3d.	W			For amateurs
<u>Amateur Wireless</u>	1922-1935	Cassell	2d.	W			For constructors
<u>The Broadcaster</u>	1922-1936	Odhams	?	M			
<u>Modern Wireless</u>	1923-1933	Radio Press	1s.	W			
<u>Wireless Weekly</u>	1923-1926	W.Southern	6d.	W			
<u>Radio Times</u>	1923-	BBC & Newnes	2d.	W			First issue
<u>Wireless Trader</u>	1923-?	Trader Pub.Co.Ltd.	8s. per an.	M			For trade only
<u>Wireless & Allied Trades Review</u>	1923-?	Wireless Press	?	W			
<u>Wireless Review & Science Weekly</u>	1923-1924	Amalgamated Press	3d.	W			Amalgamated with <u>Popular Wireless</u>
<u>Experimental Wireless</u>	1923-1931	P.Marshall & Co.Ltd.	1s.	M			
<u>Irish Radio Journal</u>	1923-?	Radio Assn of Ireland	3d.	Bi-M			
<u>Radio Trader</u>	1923-?	Mayfair Press	3d.	M			
<u>Wireless Bulletin</u>	1923-?	G. Davenport Ltd.	3d.	M			
<u>Wireless Mart & Exchange</u>	1923-?	Mayfair Press	1d.	W			
<u>Radio</u>	1924-1925	Radio Intelligence Ltd	6d.	Q			
<u>Irish Radio Trader</u>	1924-1926	B.J.Brennan	?	M			
<u>Wireless Constructor</u>	1924-1934	Radio Press	6d.	M			November 1924
<u>Wireless</u>	1925-	Radio Press		W			15th September 1925
<u>Amplion Magazine</u>	1925-1927	A.Graham & Co.	1s.	M			
<u>Wireless League Gazette</u>	1925 only	?	?	M			Later supplement to <u>Wireless World</u>

Table VI (continued)

Title	Dates of Publication	Publisher	Price	Frequency			Comments
				Weekly (W)	Monthly (M)	Quarterly (Q)	
<u>Wireless Magazine</u>	1925-1936	Cassell	1s.	M			
<u>Wireless Export Trader</u>	1925-?	Trader Pub. Co. Ltd.	10s. p.a.	M			
<u>Brighter Wireless</u>	1925-1928	Press Exclusives	2d.	M			
<u>Irish Radio Review</u>	1925-?	?	4d.	M			
<u>Radio Trade Journal</u>	1925-1928	T. Want	10s. p.a.	W			
<u>Wireless Times</u>	1925-1927	Dunlop & Co.	4d.	M			
<u>T & R Bulletin</u>	1925-1942	RSGB	1s. 6d.	M			Later RSGB Bulletin & Radio Communication.
<u>Irish Radio News</u>	1925-?	Brunswick Press	2d.	W			
<u>World Radio</u>	1926-?	BBC & Newnes	2d.	W			Previously Radio Supplement 1925 price 2d.
<u>Journal for the Inst. of Wireless Technology</u>	1926-	Institute	5s.	Q			
<u>Radio for the Million</u>	1926-	Arks Publicity Ltd.	3d.	Q			
<u>Radio Communication</u>	1927-	?	?	?			
<u>Television</u>	1928-	Television Press Ltd.	6d.	M			
<u>Scottish Radio Dealer</u>	1928-	MacNaughton & Sinclair	3d.	M			
<u>Marconi Review</u>	1928-	Radio Intelligence Ltd.	1s.	M			
<u>Listener</u>	1929-	BBC	2d.	W			
<u>Vox</u>	1929-?	Vox Publications	6d.	W			
<u>Radio Intelligence</u>	1929-?	Radio Intelligence Ltd.		M			41,000 circulation
<u>British Radio Dealer</u>	1930-?	United Pub. Co.	6d.	M			
<u>Radio Trade Review</u>	1930-?	Trade Chronicles Ltd.	15s. p.a.	M			
<u>Practical Radio</u>	1931-?	Sydney Reeve Press	3d.	Q			30,000 circulation
<u>Wireless Engineer</u>	1931-	Iliffe	2s. 6d.	M			Formerly <u>Experimental Wireless</u>

Table VI (continued)

Title	Dates of Publication	Publisher	Price	Frequency		Comments
				Weekly (W) Monthly (M) Quarterly (Q)		
<u>Journal of the TV Society</u>	1931-	TV Society	5s.	3x p.a.		
<u>Wireless News</u>	1931-?	Wireless Press	?	?		
<u>Proceedings of Inst. of Wireless Technology</u>	1931-	Institute	5s.	Q		
<u>Practical Wireless</u>	1932-	Newnes	3d.	W		
<u>Radio Relay Review</u>	1932-	Padham Advertiser Ltd.	3d.	M		
<u>Radio Pictoral</u>	1934-	Bernard Jones Pub.Ltd.	2d.	W		
<u>Wireless & TV Review</u>	1934-1936	Amalgamated Press	1s.	M		<u>Incorporating Wireless Constructor</u>
<u>Kelly's Directory of Wireless & Allied Trades</u>	1934	-	25s.	Annual		
<u>Relay Association Journal</u>	1935	Relay Services Assn of Great Britain	Gratis	M		
<u>Wireless Retailer & Broadcaster</u>	1936-1939	Odhams	1s.	W		<u>Formerly Broadcaster</u>
<u>British Short Wave League Review</u>	1936-	The League	6d.	M		
<u>Short Wave Magazine</u>	1937	S.W. Magazines Ltd.	6d.	M		
<u>Radio Review and TV</u>	1937	?	1d.	?		
<u>Radio Fun</u>	1938	Amalgamated Press	2d.	W		
<u>Radio & Electrical Marketing</u>	1939	Odhams	1s.	W		<u>Formerly Wireless Retailer</u>

Table VI (continued)

(ii) Related Journals

Title	Dates of Publication	Publisher	Price	Frequency		Comments
				Weekly (W)	Monthly (M) Quarterly (Q)	
<u>Electrician</u>	1861-	Benn Bros.	6d.	W		
<u>English Mechanic</u>	1865-	Strand Newspaper Co.	3d.	W		
<u>Electrical Review</u>	1872-	Electrical Review Ltd.	6d.	W		
<u>Boy's Own Paper</u>	1879-	Rel. Tract. Society	1s.	M		
<u>Work</u>	1889	Cassell	1s. 3d.	M		
<u>Journal of I.E.E.</u>	1889	E&FN Span Ltd.	7s.	Bi-M		
<u>Electricity</u>	1890-	Rentell & Co.	2d.	W		
<u>Model Engineer</u>	1898-	P. Marshall & Co.	4d.	W		
<u>Electrical Times</u>	1901	Electrical Times Ltd.	3d.	W		
<u>Electrical Industries</u>	1901	?	2d.	W		
<u>Electrics</u>	1902	Electric Press Ltd.	4d.	M		
<u>Sound Wave</u>	1906	Dunlop & Co.	4d.	M		
<u>Zodiac</u>	1906	Zodiac Co.	1s.	M		Submarine Cable Service Paper
<u>Gramophone, Wireless and Talking Machine News</u>	1909	Albans Ltd.	3d.	M		
<u>Wireless Mail</u>	1913	Wireless Press	2½d.	W		Ocean Newspaper
<u>Telegraph & Telephone Journal</u>	1914	GPO	4d.	M		
<u>Conquest</u>	1919	Wireless Press	1s.	M		
<u>Signal</u>	1921	Wireless Press	1s.	M		Assn. of Wireless Cable Telegraphints

Chapter 5

Broadcasting and the Press

5.1. The Content Analysis

'A good many people, I am sure, were charmed when, on the first day of the first General Strike that this island has known, they turned to the wireless for news of what was happening to themselves and their civilisation and found themselves, having heard all the news that was fit to transmit, invited to listen to a talk on "holidays with ants and grasshoppers." Since Drake played out his game of bowls while the Armada was approaching, there have been few things more pleasantly characteristic of the English attitude to a crisis.' 1

Statements like this show the value of the press as a source of opinions on the importance of radio in society. Often there is no better commentary. In this case these remarks were probably a shrewd reflection of public attitudes towards the sense of normality which the BBC created by maintaining its normal output of music, entertainment and talks alongside the special news bulletins provided during the course of the strike. Moreover, the article encouraged those readers lucky enough to obtain one of the 12,000 copies which the New Statesman produced during the strike to think of radio more clearly as a valuable means of communication. The paralysis of the local and national press during the General Strike brought broadcasting to the attention of this paper for the first time. In fact when normal publication resumed there can have been few editors with lingering doubts that broadcasting was a good source of copy. Indeed, the press became more and more interested in broadcasting issues and the attempt to reflect or to lead public opinion of broadcasting can be exploited as a means of casting more light on the development of the radio audience.

To do this efficiently a practical method of investigation must be sought to evaluate the press comments on broadcasting. In this case, a range of newspapers will be chosen to represent the wide choice available to readers before 1939. These comments will be collected in a comprehensible form, using a content analysis, and then interpreted and explained. The selection of newspapers which are suitable for analysis does present certain problems. If the press is to be used as a guide to developments in the audience it is essential to adopt an approach which will yield information continuously over the whole period in question, in order that periods of maximum interest in broadcasting are placed in their overall context and thereby not granted undue attention.

On logistical grounds this virtually excludes the use of daily newspapers. The only method which could reasonably be adopted would be a sample of the coverage of two or three newspapers throughout the period. This technique certainly has possibilities but it would lack perspective since the balance of overall coverage would be lost and it would be difficult to pursue issues or campaigns over the longer term.²

Weekly newspapers and magazines do have advantages for this type of research. They can pause and reflect on the issues of the previous week. They can provide more analysis to flesh out the hard bones of straight reporting. Their role helps them to draw on more reasoned public reactions. Continuous assessment of their coverage permits the analysis of trends in broadcasting criticism rather more readily than would be possible through the intermittent observations possible from a sample of daily newspaper content. The problem of selecting the newspapers to use is resolved by balancing a number of important criteria. Primarily, the aim must be to choose papers which contain a good deal of intelligent criticism on broadcasting. But to place too much weight on this criterion would provide little or no guide to the variety of newspaper comment. Other factors such as the political persuasion of the paper and, more importantly, the composition and size of the readership must also be considered as essential contributions to a study of attempts by the press to lead or reflect public opinion. The aim is to encompass the broadest social spectrum of readers as possible. Whether this can be done accurately is another question, since this would require a level of readership composition analysis which is unavailable for the inter-war period.

The Spectator and the New Statesman certainly satisfy the requirement for detailed criticism of broadcasting. The former may be deemed to represent criticism from the conservative end of the political spectrum, the latter from the left or more radical end. In general, however, the labels were not always adhered to and their respective readerships had much in common. The appeal was to the more politically conscious, to the well educated reader and to the

Table I

Circulation Figures.
(Average New Weekly Sales.)⁴

The People

Date	Circulation
Mar 1925	300,000
Dec 1925	670,804
Dec 1926	1,041,189
Dec 1927	1,500,435
Dec 1928	1,850,000
Dec 1929	2,250,000
Aug 1930	2,500,000
Oct 1931	2,800,000
Mar 1932	3,000,000
1937	3,405,752

New Statesman

Date	Circulation
1929	10,000
1930	12,000
1931	14,500
1933	13,991
1934	18,033
1935	20,000
1936	24,000
Jul 1938	29,267
Jul 1939	30,781

Spectator

Date	Circulation
1939	27-28,000

intellectual. In broadcasting terms it might have been styled the 'highbrow' audience. Socially, their readerships leaned towards the middle classes and above. 27% of the Spectator's readership earned more than £1,000 per annum and 52% earned between £500 - £999. The relevant figures for the New Statesman were 11% and 38%.¹³ This compares with the average incomes for manual workers of from £75 - £140 per annum in the same period.³

Circulations were limited. The New Statesman's readership grew from 10,000 to 29,000 with the help of amalgamations. The Spectator's was slightly less. (Table 1). The appeal was unashamedly aimed towards an élite. This élite had influence in many sectors of artistic and political life. Consequently the indirect effect of any attempts to reflect or lead opinion could have had more far-reaching results than the limited readership might superficially suggest. The Webbs had in fact founded the New Statesman with express intention of permeating élite opinion and the organisations which they controlled. There seems no reason to believe that the editorial style in either paper could have been continuously at variance with the opinions and sympathies of the majority of their readers. Such a politically conscious readership would not have tolerated a serious lack of accord for long. Even if their influence on political opinion is difficult to measure, these two papers do have the considerable advantage of providing a good guide to the prominent issues in broadcasting and it is quite evident that, at the very least, their influence on readers in an informational sense must have been quite extensive.

The People presented a totally different facet of press reporting. At first, it was an extremely conservative paper with a circulation of 250,000: considerable in terms of the serious weeklies but small by mass circulation standards. After 1925 it was taken over by Odhams under the proprietorship of Julius Elias (Lord Southwood) and became increasingly independent, if anything moving to the left, to support its sister paper the Daily Herald. In this period it grew to the incredible size of 3.5 million copies - considerably in excess of daily newspaper circulations. This rising mass circulation meant that the People was capable of direct impact on a far larger number of individuals.

Table II

Distribution of Column Space

(All figures expressed as a percentage of average monthly issue)

Date	Editorial & Front Page	Articles	Letters	Art, Drama & Music	Books & Comps	City	Advertisements
<u>New Statesman</u>							
Jun 1926	10	22	3	11	25	2	27
Jun 1930	9	19	9	13	20	3	27
July 1935	9	19	9	13	27	3	20
Nov 1935	8	20	8	12	18	2	32
Jun 1939	9	25	8	13	23	3	19
Jun 1978	8	29	4	12	26	-	21
Average	8.8	22.2	6.8	12.3	23.1	2.6	24.2
<u>Spectator</u>							
Mar 1927	7	25	11	2	17	5	33
Jun 1930	6	18	8	10	14	4	40
Jun 1935	7	22	8	8	20	3	32
Jul 1939	7	30	7	4	15	4	33
Jun 1978	9	30	3	9	28	3	18
Average	7.2	25.0	7.4	6.6	18.8	3.8	31.2

<u>People</u> Date	General News	Editorial & Politics	Broad-cast-ing	Art, Drama, Enter-tainment	Advert-ise-ments	City	Sport
Jun 1924	21	5	1	15	33	2	23
Jun 1930	26	1	1	20	35	1	16
Nov 1935	22	6	1	17	38	1	15
Mar 1939	22	2	2	15	42	1	16
Average	22.8	3.5	1.2	16.8	37.0	1.2	17.5

The People is not strictly comparable with other weeklies. After 1975 the paper converted to tabloid size and no accurate modern comparison is possible.

As with all papers its actual readership could have been two to three times greater than its actual circulation. This enormous size was won by a series of advertising stunts, such as the provision of free insurance to its readers and, more importantly, through sensational reporting.⁵ This popular style of journalism, appealing to a predominantly working class readership, makes the People an interesting contrast to the style and appeal of the serious weeklies.⁶

A great deal of information can be extracted from a content analysis of a newspaper. The amount of column space applied to a subject can give an impression of the importance attributed to that subject, although it will not necessarily reflect the quality of criticism. This statistical method will provide a means of examining the proportion of column space allotted to the various broadcasting issues between 1922 and 1939. Information of indisputable value, such as the favourite topics for comment or the seasonal trends in broadcasting criticism, can only emerge from this approach. There are dangers in the use of this form of analysis. There is little available work of a similar nature to rely on for comparison.⁷ There is no blanket method which can be applied precisely to all cases - each analysis must be tailored to fit the demands which are placed upon it. Most existing content analyses, for instance, concentrate entirely on whole issue analysis and this would be irrelevant here. The variant used here is a guide only to general trends - a guide to areas where broadcasting was observed and the type of issues in broadcasting which the press supplied to its readers.⁸ In this case it is necessary to categorise the issues and this has meant applying judgements to decide whether a broadcasting issue described in an article, is, for instance, about the institution, the general programme structure or the issue of political broadcasting. Normally the dominant theme has been chosen as the description of the whole article.⁹

Content analysis also encounters serious technical problems. Sensational headlining in large type, for example, can fill up an enormous quantity of space, particularly on the front page, without actually containing

much material of any weight. This is consequently a serious distortion which may not be compensated by the importance which the headlining has obviously attached to that article. This problem is particularly relevant to a popular weekly such as the People. During the late thirties the competition of the newsreel and radio increased the quantity of picture images and sensational headlines, presumably on the basis that this would most nearly meet the challenge of the newsreel's visual image and radio's innate brevity of text for news through the spoken word. The change is all the more insidious because it occurred gradually and because it is so difficult to quantify.¹⁰

The relatively low levels of broadcasting comment when compared to the total output of newsprint each week can lead to serious misrepresentation in the statistics. One large article can give a spurious dominance to a particular season or year when total levels of comment were low. It is for this reason that the analysis only begins in the year when public broadcasting was introduced. In the case of the New Statesman a further four years passed before criticism of broadcasting was begun with any seriousness. This omission is in itself interesting but even in the years of relatively full coverage, the total quantity of comment is still low.

For instance, the maximum amount of column space devoted to broadcasting in the New Statesman is in the three month period from January to March 1934, when there were 344 column centimetres on broadcasting. The total amount of space in the thirteen issues during the period would have been 23,296 column centimetres, of which approximately 11,300 column centimetres would have been allotted to sections of the paper where broadcasting comment normally appeared. In other words, the period of maximum quantitative interest in the subject took up only 3% of the space available for such comment. One extra article could easily produce a significant variation thus emphasising that these figures must be used with caution.

Absolute measurements have been used throughout for the main analysis, this is because of the low proportion of broadcasting issues in each paper.

In any case, the amount of space made available for comments on broadcasting does not appear to have changed dramatically, thus a comparison by time is possible using absolute measurements. In Table II it is clear that there are minor variations in the allocation of space. The New Statesman and the Spectator are roughly comparable, in that broadcasting tended to appear in the editorial, main article and letter columns. The relatively small amount of broadcasting comment compared with the total means that it is not possible to express broadcasting as a separate category. The People is not strictly comparable as it contains quite different patterns of news and it is possible to extract broadcasting comment as a separate category. This comment tended to appear in the general news category, mostly as programme information, and this category remained reasonably static in size throughout the period.

There was also a considerable disparity in the size of each issue of the New Statesman or the Spectator when compared with the People. As the following table makes clear:

Table III. Average column centimetres used in each Issue.¹¹

Newspaper	Pages	Height of Page (cm)	Width of Page (cm)	Number of Columns per Page	Total of column cms (sq cms)	
					Per Page	Per Issue
<u>New Statesman</u> / <u>Spectator</u>	32	28	9	2	504	16,128
<u>People</u>	24	48	6	7	2,016	48,384

In other words the New Statesman and the Spectator print area was exactly equivalent to a third of the print area used in the People. For the sake of comparison, therefore, it is necessary to reduce the absolute figures for the People to one third.

Two main methods are used to interpret the statistics derived from content analysis. The first method, shown in Tables III - VII demonstrates the levels of criticism apportioned to a range of broadcasting topics. It must be accepted that content analysis can never be a precise guide to the

importance of an event or issue. In the coverage of the most important issues, factors such as a decline in the relative importance of the issue or an assumption of reader familiarity come into play. In a long running feature, reader knowledge is assumed and the quantity or the frequency of comment may decline, although the intrinsic importance of the issue may remain unchanged. Similarly the purely statistical approach cannot give guidance on the qualitative value of an article. For this reason this method must be supported by a further tool of analysis - a form of textural criticism is an essential addition to the content analysis.

The second approach, expressed in Tables VIII - XI will be a useful means of drawing together all the themes which should emerge. By examining the statistics cumulatively, a clearer impression should emerge of the annual and seasonal pattern of broadcasting comment and criticism.

First of all, the type of issue which interested the press, the types which appeared most frequently and the sort of comments which were made about them must be examined. From Tables IV to VII the pattern emerges very readily. The greatest coverage of broadcasting in terms of column centimetres is quite clearly advertising. In most years, advertising takes up more space than any other broadcasting topic. Indeed all except the New Statesman devoted considerable editorial space to subjects of commercial interest in broadcasting. Where other topics are concerned the picture is less clear. The BBC's programme policy and the content of programmes was generally the most popular subject for comment throughout the period. The institutional position of the BBC was also of great interest to the press and in all three papers it is a significant source of comment. Technical developments in broadcasting were also an agreed subject for regular comment - indeed the press was fascinated by the question throughout the twenties and thirties.

These four subjects apart, there was little consensus on the priorities for comment and the total level of comment on other subjects was considerably lower. The New Statesman was very interested in broadcast music criticism but otherwise the lower levels of space introduced a certain random element

Table IV. The New Statesman: Column Centimetres by Subject.

Date	Music	Education & Talks	Technical Aspects	BBC Programme Policy	BBC Personalities	The Radio Trade	The Institution	Political Broadcasting	Religious Broadcasting	Pronunciation	Advertising	TOTAL	Total without Advertising
1925	56	14	14	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	84	182	(98)
1926	126	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	-	-	-	182	(182)
1927	154	92	126	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	462	890	(428)
1928	6	84	118	14	-	-	-	6	-	8	434	670	(236)
1929	8	-	120	22	-	-	-	14	-	14	84	262	(178)
1930	152	84	84	84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	404	(404)
1931	70	70	-	98	8	-	70	37	-	-	-	363	(353)
1932	14	61	-	22	14	-	42	73	28	3	-	257	(257)
1933	22	31	48	98	44	-	112	62	-	-	24	441	(417)
1934	125	97	56	48	-	-	140	45	-	42	370	923	(553)
1935	132	14	56	36	67	-	36	68	14	6	88	517	(429)
1936	56	6	-	-	42	-	170	18	70	-	212	574	(362)
1937	54	14	42	70	-	-	14	22	-	-	140	356	(216)
1938	45	64	14	-	28	-	6	58	-	-	108	323	(215)
1939	101	20	22	148	-	-	6	100	-	-	38	435	(397)
	1121	651	700	696	203	-	596	573	112	73	2044	6769	

into the priorities for comment. Political broadcasting was of some interest to all the papers but the People was much more interested in broadcasting personalities than either of the other papers, whereas the New Statesman was interested in educational broadcasting when the subject was of hardly any interest to the others.

With the general pattern established, a more detailed analysis of the substance of the press comment can now proceed, to gain some idea of the reasons for the priorities which the press gave to topics and the attempts which were made to influence or openly dictate audience opinion.

Table V. The Spectator: Column Centimetres by Subject.

Date	Music	Education	Technical	BBC	BBC	The	The	Political	Religious	Pronun-	Advertis-	TOTAL	Total with-
	& Talks	Aspects	Programme	ities	Radio	Institu-	Broadcast-	Broadcast-	ciation	ing	ing		out Advertis-
			Policy		Trade	tion	ing	ing					sing.
1923	42	-	19	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	71	(71)
1924	60	24	12	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	154	265	(111)
1925	6	-	40	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	140	243	(103)
1926	12	-	76	-	-	27	-	29	1	-	378	558	(178)
1927	101	10	5	-	50	-	-	-	-	-	894	1163	(269)
1928	2	101	5	-	-	120	-	58	-	2	820	1169	(349)
1929	30	6	-	-	-	120	-	9	-	55	1048	1568	(220)
1930	90	64	113	-	4	111	-	-	10	8	782	1293	(511)
1931	-	71	6	9	-	150	-	9	-	-	-	402	(402)
1932	42	13	-	16	-	104	-	31	7	9	372	1111	(739)
1933	48	12	-	-	-	161	-	35	-	8	27	1121	(1094)
1934	66	-	-	22	15	57	-	124	22	80	656	2592	(1936)
1935	106	66	194	15	-	100	-	74	-	5	116	763	(647)
1936	84	10	108	44	-	220	-	32	19	-	56	620	(564)
1937	9	-	213	17	-	114	-	174	-	-	7	548	(541)
1938	-	-	101	16	-	7	-	175	-	-	17	412	(395)
1939	23	-	140	-	-	59	-	230	-	-	-	652	(652)
	721	377	1032	139	69	1395	980	59	167	5767	14549		

Table VI. The People: Column Centimetres by Subject.

Date	Music	Education	Technical	BBC	BBC	The	The	The	Political	Religious	Pronuncia-	Advertis-	TOTAL	Total
			and Talks	Programme	Personal-	Radio	Instit-	Instit-	Broadcast-	Broadcast-	tion	ing		with-
		Aspects	Policy	ities	Trade	ution	ing	ing	ing	tion	ing			Advert-
1922	-	10	96	-	-	43	139	57	-	-	-	-	345	345
1923	-	2	101	744	-	7	159	8	-	-	-	32	1053	1021
1924	5	15	74	831	21	67	57	33	9	48	48	20	1160	1140
1925	-	-	332	1214	7	-	58	12	5	-	-	891	2519	1628
1926	14	-	386	1154	5	6	23	-	21	-	-	322	1931	1609
1927	7	17	1020	1834	-	6	58	23	-	6	6	1137	4108	2971
1928	-	-	234	1260	9	36	27	13	-	-	-	1827	3406	1579
1929	28	8	302	1466	35	48	37	-	-	-	-	2467	4391	1924
1930	39	21	1060	1265	55	107	12	10	-	-	-	5063	7632	2569
1931	87	-	784	2091	197	169	221	32	10	6	6	5958	9555	3597
1932	20	6	280	3391	99	261	114	17	19	-	-	5561	9768	4207
1933	-	8	134	3227	88	54	8	59	-	16	-	2501	6095	3594
1934	-	15	155	3018	21	88	104	46	2	24	24	2904	6377	3473
1935	14	-	566	3683	45	72	30	46	3	-	-	2061	6520	4459
1936	22	-	378	2881	281	51	58	99	-	20	20	2437	6227	3790
1937	120	-	275	3079	75	51	86	96	-	-	-	2559	6341	3782
1938	140	-	356	3526	255	87	155	145	-	39	39	2097	6800	4703
1939	111	28	234	3383	123	108	126	705	-	-	-	962	5780	4818
607	130	6767	38047	1316	1261	1452	1401	69	159	38799	90008			

Table VII: The People (Adjusted to one third of total for comparison) Column Centimetres by Subject.

Date	Music	Education and Talks	Technical Aspects	BBC Programme Policy	BBC Personalities	The Radio Trade	The Institution	Political Broad-casting	Religious Broad-casting	Pronunciation	Advertising	TOTAL	Total with out advertising
1922	-	3.3	32	-	-	14.3	46.3	19	-	-	-	115	115
1923	-	0.6	33.6	248	-	2.3	53	2.6	-	-	10.6	351	340.3
1924	1.6	5	24.3	277	7	22.3	12.3	11	3	16	6.6	386.6	380
1925	-	-	110.6	404.6	2.3	-	19.3	4	1.6	-	297	839.6	542.6
1926	4.6	-	128.6	384.6	1.6	2	7.6	-	7	-	107.6	643.6	536.3
1927	2.3	5.6	340	611.3	-	2	19.3	7.6	-	2	379	1369.3	990.3
1928	-	-	78	420	3	12	9	4.6	-	-	609	1135.3	526.3
1929	9.3	2.6	100.6	488.6	11.6	16	12.3	-	-	-	822.3	1463.6	641.3
1930	13	7	353.3	421.6	18.6	35.6	4	3.3	-	-	1687.6	2544	856.3
1931	29	-	261.3	697	65.6	56.3	73.6	10.6	3.3	2	1986	3185	1199
1932	6.3	2	93.3	1130.3	33	87	38	5.6	6.3	-	1853.6	3256	1402.3
1933	-	2.6	44.6	1075.6	29.3	18	2.6	19.6	-	4.6	833.6	2031.6	1198
1934	-	5	51.6	1006	7	29.3	34.6	15.3	0.6	8	968	2125.6	1157.6
1935	4.6	-	188.6	1227.6	15	24	10	15.3	1	-	687	2173.3	1486.3
1936	7.3	-	126	960.3	93.6	17	19.3	33	-	6.6	812.3	2075.6	1263.3
1937	40	-	91.6	1026.3	25	17	28.6	32	-	-	853	2113.6	1260.6
1938	46.6	-	118.6	1175.3	85	29	51.6	48.3	-	13	699	2266.6	1567.6
1939	37	9.3	78	1127.6	41	36	42	235	-	-	320.6	1926.6	1606
202.3	43.3	2255.6	12682.3	438.6	420.3	484	467	23	53	12933	30002.6		

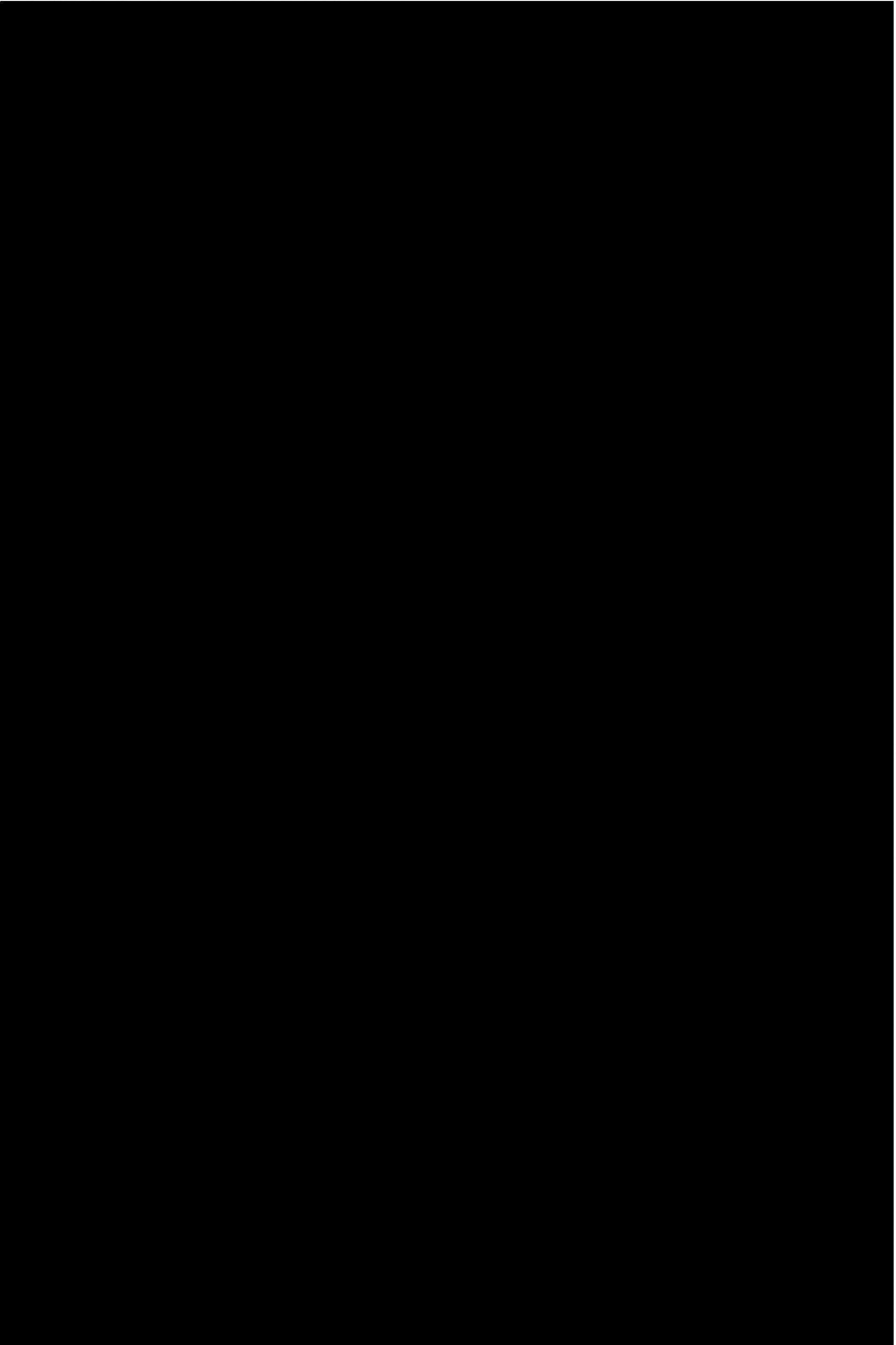
5.2. Radio Advertising

In all of the newspapers scrutinised, advertisements for radio sets were easily the most dominant feature of the references to broadcasting. This was true even for the New Statesman, where there was little advertising of radio sets except in the years 1927 - 1928 and 1934. The prevalence of advertising was hardly unexpected since advertisers were at least as important as readers where revenue was concerned. It is very easy to reject advertising as a source of information on press attitudes because it is normally independent of detailed editorial control but it is an essential part of any press study. As advertising forms such a large component of any newspaper it is clearly part of that paper's overall image. In this instance, the radio trade assumed that its advertisements would influence public behaviour favourably towards radio. An analysis will reveal something of the role of the press as the medium purveying the conception of radio which the industry wished to be seen and heard by the public.

In Tables IV - VII the advertising peaks show something about the years in which the pressure to influence was at its maximum and a detailed observation of the style of advertising should reveal something about the techniques which were used to attract readers towards radio.

The Spectator and New Statesman had much in common in the type of advertisements which appeared. The typical advertisement appealed unashamedly to the wealthy and offered an expensive, hand-built portable. The sets on offer in the advertisements were nearly always expensive. In the Spectator the price range was from 16 to 35 guineas for a Rees-Mace set.¹² The New Statesman advertisements had sets ranging from the fantastic £102.7s.0d,¹³ through £59.5s.0d.¹⁴ down to 18 guineas.¹⁵ These prices indicated the type of reader which the advertisers expected to be potential buyers.

The quantity of such advertising varied considerably by time and by magazine. The New Statesman had hardly any at all, the Spectator had considerably more, although there was a marked concentration in the periods 1926 - 1930 and in 1934. Yet this greater quantity of radio advertising made a much

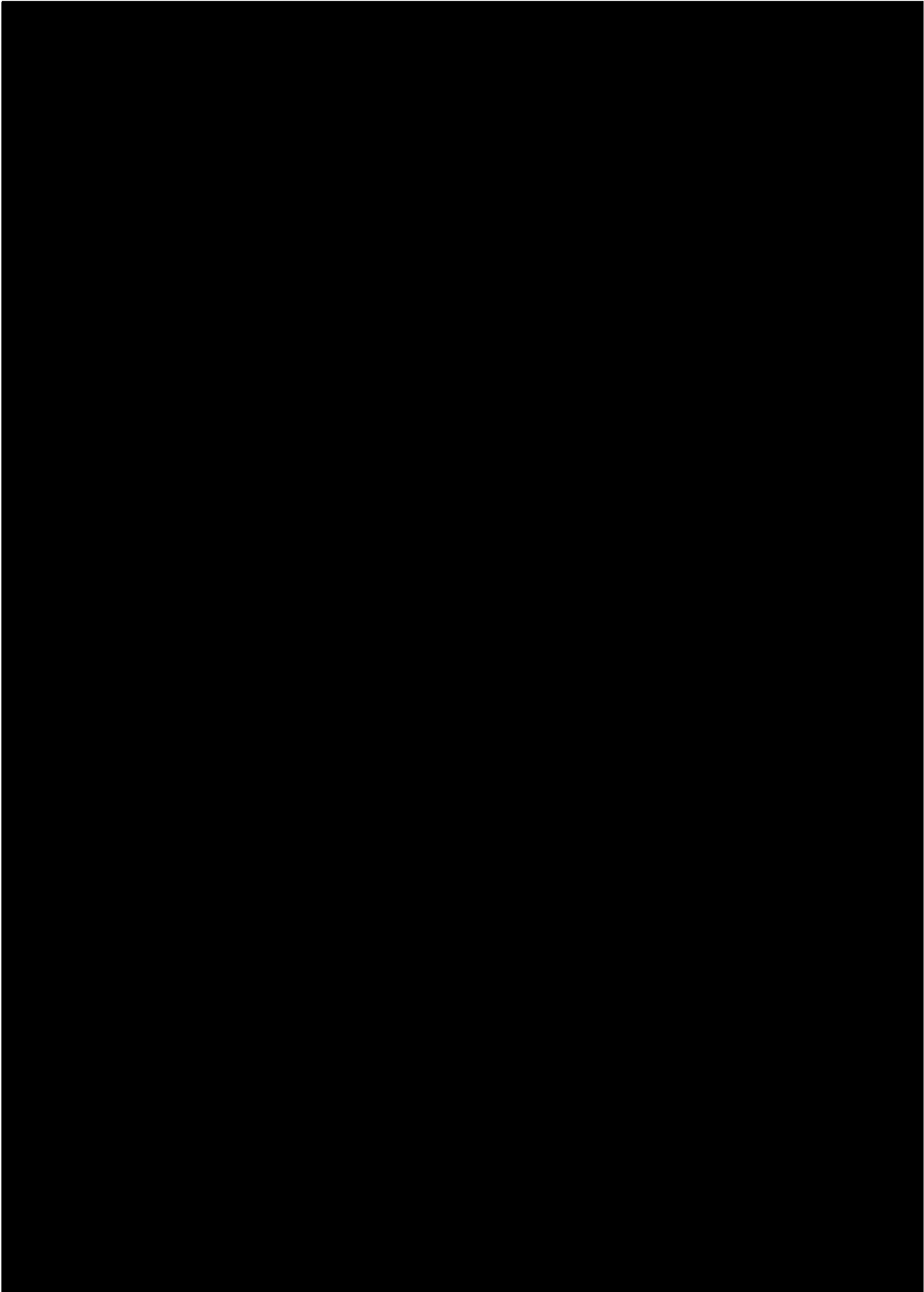


smaller contribution to revenue than the advertising of books, cars and tobacco. Radio was only one of many consumer goods on offer.

The style of the advertisements was generally unadorned factual comment accompanied by a prominent photograph of the set. Figures I and II are good examples of the genre. The earliest period of advertising was concentrated in the spring season with the portable set as the main subject of interest. As Figure I shows, the Rees-Mace advertisement frequently appeared on the front page of the Spectator and attempted to conjure an image of entertainment and pleasure in the outdoors. There were some lesser examples of advertising technique. One firm, Davey Radio, concentrated on the 'snob value' of possessing a hand built radio set, which, it claimed, avoided the poorer quality of mass produced sets for no extra cost.¹⁶ Otherwise, there was little occasion for any lapse from the factual approach. The art-deco advertisements which became so common in the thirties made but a brief appearance.¹⁷

Advertising in the People opened up an entirely new realm of technique and style. The whole gamut of advertising skills were employed: some offered competitions for purchasers to enter,¹⁸ others used attractive hire purchase down payments as prominent lures;¹⁹ radio personalities were employed to provide their stamp of approval,²⁰ whilst others concentrated on bargains through mail order,²¹ or kit-building sets.²² A considerable subsidiary type of advertising used the offer of radio sets or valves to be obtained through the collection of cigarette coupons²³ and one firm even offered cigarette cards depicting radio sets and parts.²⁴ This method of dual commodity advertising was extended to drinking chocolate and, in the guise of philanthropy, to the sales of newspapers themselves.²⁵ It was quite evident that the radio advertisers treated the readers of the People in a totally different way. Whether the assumption of a lack of sophistication was justified or not, advertisers considered People readers to be fair game for legerdemain on the grand scale - the prominent position of down payment prices and the small print of the total cost was a common ruse.

Figure II Advertisement: The New Statesman



The prices displayed varied considerably but were nearly always considerably lower than for the two political weeklies. Probably the most significant break-through was the introduction of the two-valve set at £2.10s.0d. in September 1930.²⁶ Even this was rather sly since the small print noted that the essential batteries and loudspeaker raised the price to £3.19s.0d. Otherwise a more typical price was in the range of 5 to 6 guineas - as for Philco's aptly named People's Set in 1936.²⁷ Besides advertisements for completed sets, there was also a considerable array of advertisements for components such as valves, batteries and battery eliminators. Despite the wide range of techniques used to draw attention to the advertisements, it was quite clear that features such as aesthetically pleasing designs, which were widely considered to boost sales, ultimately carried less weight than the price. In most cases the price was prominently placed and offers such as a small down payment or the complete absence of a deposit were clearly considered to be more crucial in attracting the custom of readers than qualities of design or portability.²⁸ The essential aim was thus rather predictable, despite all the elaborate paraphernalia of advertising techniques.

Closely related to advertising was the reporting of radio trade activities in the editorial sections of the People. The New Statesman had nothing to say about the trade - not even in a critical way - and the Spectator was content to analyse the radio company reports in its City pages. The People, however, had a much closer connection with its advertisers. Fairly frequently, firms placing large amounts of advertising matter with the paper succeeded in attracting adulatory articles within the main text of the papers.²⁹ At times the distinction between editorial and advertising matter became decidedly vague.³⁰ There was a further variation of this relationship - significant radio occasions such as 'Radiolympia' would provide the opportunity for a favourable commentary, thus encouraging radio firms to advertise.³¹ In fact, regardless of the quantity of advertising so attracted, the People always provided an alluring description of events; either in terms of the year's price reductions or the approval of new technological development.³²

This type of reporting was supposed to create an impression of radio's inexorable advance. Everyone else, it seemed by implication, was buying a radio set this year - the pressure was to be like everyone else and buy now. For those readers without a set this must have engendered some sense of exclusion and, quite possibly, there was an influence on decision-making which contributed to the expanding audience.

5.3 Programmes and Programme Policy

The lack of an editorial consensus on the weight of content covering the various issues in broadcasting was a most noticeable feature. For two newspapers the programmes and programme policies of the BBC attracted the most comment. The main explanation for this is that these newspapers both produced radio programme guides, thus ensuring that there would be at least some content on broadcasting in each issue. The Spectator began its guide in 1926.³³ Entitled: 'This Week's Special Broadcasts', its self-evident approach certainly demonstrated that broadcasting was now recognised well enough to merit special attention. But the column ceased rather quickly after March 1927.³⁴ From then on, such guides appeared intermittently under various titles such as, 'A Radio Review',³⁵ or 'A Broadcasting Calendar'.³⁶ There seems to have been some uncertainty as to the value of such a guide,³⁷ and finally, in 1934, a more decisive editorial line was taken to remove the guides altogether.

The People began its radio guide on 25 March 1923 and it was produced under various titles continuously before 1939. Unlike the Spectator it concentrated entirely on the programmes for that day and made no pointers to highlights in the coming week. The main point of interest was the emphasis given to programmes originating outside Britain. Beginning in October 1927, this section took up at least half of the space devoted to the guide and provided an extensive list of the best programmes from all over Europe. This format continued until the late thirties when it was severely abridged. Nonetheless, it was still clear that this coverage was as much a veiled criticism of BBC programme policy as it was a service for its readers. For Sunday listening, the guide demonstrated the strong international flavour which radio possessed at that time.³⁸

Criticism of the BBC's Sunday output was a regular feature in all newspapers during these years. It was a sure way of arousing reader sympathy if there was a shortage of hard news during the week. The New Statesman was disturbed at what it saw to be an abnegation of the BBC's responsibility to its licence holders. As Raymond Postgate observed, listeners turned instead to

commercial stations where the airtime was controlled by English manufacturers, operating outside the bounds of public control.³⁹ The 'London Diary' column remarked, too, that,

'the Sunday programmes of the BBC have long become something of a joke. It seemed to be thrusting religion upon one to have both the Regional and National wavelengths almost exclusively devoted to various brands of orthodoxy.'⁴⁰

So it was the religious content itself, not just the lack of alternative programmes, which aroused the ire of the paper. As the columnist 'Critic' tartly announced: 'I believe that the BBC has never yet invited anyone to broadcast a moral case for disbelief.'⁴¹

The Spectator had almost nothing to say on the issue but the People was rather more forthcoming in its comments. Although there were earlier rumblings, the first signs of vigorous protest were in 1931. In January, the paper bemoaned the prospect of more months of Bach cantatas.⁴² To be fair, the paper saw the attack on BBC programmes as part of a general campaign to relax the restrictions on Sunday entertainments.⁴³ The campaign for better Sunday programmes had two main features. One aim was to persuade the BBC to change by encouraging listeners to launch a full scale boycott of the Sunday programmes. The other policy was to lure listeners to the alternatives by supplementing the foreign stations guide with information to improve set performance for distant station reception.⁴⁴

The pressure for a change continued into 1932 when Sydney Moseley became an active leader of readers' pressure for change. In May 1932 he claimed a minor success in changing BBC policy towards these programmes.⁴⁵ With due modesty he claimed most of the credit but whether there was a casual connection with his work alone seems doubtful. The issue smouldered on and as late as 1936 the criticisms were still being made in strong terms:

'Most folks must especially find our Sunday programmes a nightmare, with their doleful contraltos, sopranos and chamber music. For my part, after putting in my dutiful attendance at church, I rush abroad to escape the doldrums of British stations.'⁴⁶

Moseley was a member of a growing circle of journalists who made their reputations out of broadcasting criticism and with the demise of the wireless organisations and technical press, these individuals assumed far more importance, alleging correctly or otherwise, that they closely represented public opinion on broadcasting.

The issue of Sunday programmes was a persistent theme, although the BBC had conceded to much of the pressure for change before 1939 by extending programme hours and programme alternatives. The other papers also deplored this style of religious orthodoxy. The best example of this was the BBC response to the death of George V in 1936. The Spectator and the New Statesman disapproved of the excessive suspension of programmes and the use of the National programme alone during the period of mourning. As W.J. Turner declared:

'The bleak blankness of the BBC during the period immediately after the King's death was reminiscent of nothing so much as a typical Scotch Sunday in the days of Sir John Reith's youth.'⁴⁷

Many of the other programme criticisms were petty and it is clear that few but the author would hold such a view. Some comments were met in part by reform: claims that there was inadequate choice were met by the implementation of the Regional Scheme.⁴⁸ Appeals for brighter programmes were rather indefinable in character. What was meant by the term? Did it mean more popular music, better speakers or a better balance of programmes? Did this kind of criticism do more than express the lack of consensus which inevitably accompanied such judgements, dependent as they were on individual taste? Certainly this confusion helped the BBC to deflect criticism and there is little point in scrutinising the press in search of co-ordinated comment.

In the New Statesman, for instance, there was disagreement amongst the contributors about the model for a programme balance. Leonard Woolf was in no doubt that his was the best policy to adopt:

'The staff of the BBC particularly those in charge of programmes, have obviously become aware of the dangerous dominance of these two psychological states of mind and have seen that they must choose between the Scylla of bad temper and the Charybdis of solemnity. They have quite rightly chosen the Charybdis - a slightly etherialised Charybdis, for the dominant note in the BBC, in its programmes, in the tone of its announcers' voices, in its music, and its talks, is cheerful uplift.'⁴⁹

Woolf's opinion was shared by commentators in the other papers. Captain Ian Fraser in the Spectator approved of the policy: 'The BBC has, rightly in my opinion, broadcast ever so slightly above the heads of its listeners.'⁵⁰ Even the People concurred on occasions: 'provided he gives us reasonable alternatives, I think Sir John is dead right to broadcast programmes that are a little above the popular standard.'⁵¹

Other critics at the New Statesman, such as Robert Byron, were less convinced of the validity of the 'cheerful uplift'. He regarded the policy as a form of bribery on the axiom that,

'the British public must be uplifted. At the same time it does not like being uplifted (who does?). Therefore it must be bribed. The bribery must be done with music and variety whose cultural standard is important only so far as it renders the bribe acceptable to the greatest number of listeners ... Then, the bribe having been accepted, uplift in the form of talks of an instructional or topical character, of debates, plays, readings, criticism and religious services, must be sandwiched in at intervals, in the pious hope that listeners will be too lazy to leave their chairs and switch their receivers on to something else.' ⁵²

The Spectator was, on the whole, less severely critical but its comments tended to follow a similar course to Byron's remarks - albeit in a more sympathetic vein,

'it the BBC has to cater for a vast diversity of tastes, and whereas the newspaper reader can turn at once to the items that interest him and cut out the rest, the wireless listener, apart from the opportunity which alternative programmes offer, has either to listen a good deal that he finds distasteful or dull or put his set out of action till the items that do interest him are due. Devotees of vaudeville are no more likely to appreciate lectures on philosophy than philosophers are to patronise vaudeville, but the BBC must clearly cater for both. These, however, are mere incidental difficulties, which cause no serious trouble and provoke no real dissatisfaction. They are, indeed, an evidence of catholicity ... ' ⁵³

More serious criticisms were launched against the output of light entertainment and light music which were considerably below the standards which the Spectator wished to see.⁵⁴ The rest of the output was normally complimented, particularly in comparison with the radio programmes produced by other countries.⁵⁵ The approach of the serious weeklies contrasted quite sharply with the view held by the People:

'There may be many people who are entranced by chamber music or thrilled to the core by a lecture on the life and habits of the boll weevil. On the other hand, there are others who yawn over the one and refuse to listen to the other.'

'One can't, of course, hope to please all the people all the time, but if the BBC were a business proposition instead of a Government monopoly, there isn't the slightest doubt that it would please most of them most of the time.' 56

As time passed, the discontent with the programme service became more insistent. Headlines spelt out the 'British Broadcasting Company' and editorials exclaimed, 'When is the BBC going to reform?' The kind of programme reform desired was, at first, only vaguely expounded. It appeared that readers of the People disliked talks and piano recitals. Instead they wanted more 'sparkle' and more dance music - in other words more light entertainment.⁵⁷ Letters from readers were printed to support the strong disapproval of the present output whilst also conveying various indecisive suggestions for replacements.⁵⁸ In 1932, the BBC imported some programmes from the U.S.A. and this led Sydney Moseley to put the position a little more precisely:

'At last the BBC seems to have wakened up to the fact that millions of listeners in this country want their radio to be a form of entertainment, and not so much an educational movement.' 59

Complaints continued throughout the period.⁶⁰ Despite the disparity in taste between the journals, there was unanimity in the proposals for structural changes to mitigate the conflict. All shared the belief that the 'pot pourri'⁶¹ of programmes on both the National and Regional programmes must end and be replaced by specialised programmes which would satisfy the various interests and needs of different sections of the community.⁶² The attempt to improve taste through the bribe of 'cheerful uplift' would consequently collapse since the different social groups would no longer be exposed to the full programme range. This was an anathema to Reith and it remained a frustrated cause until the Forces Programme was created in 1940.

The People pressed its cause hardest of all. It was the only paper to advocate the use of programme referendums as a means of keeping the BBC more closely in touch with its listeners. At first it was sceptical of their value, largely because it felt that the BBC would take no notice of them.⁶³ But later

the paper had a change of heart and became quite keen to see them applied.⁶⁴ It was, in any case, printing advertisements by the Daily Herald⁶⁵ and Vidor Batteries⁶⁶ which used radio programme ballots in their competitions. The news that the BBC was to introduce listener research was, therefore, heartily welcomed but with a serious misassumption, exemplified by the headline, 'Radio listeners to help pick ideal programme'⁶⁷ Of course, this was never the intention of the BBC. The significance of the criticism was the suggestion that the BBC's independence should be in the least contaminated by an expansion of public consultation.

News programmes were a specially sensitive area for newspapers to cover. Rivalry between the media was carefully excluded from much of the comment on the BBC's news coverage. It was only at a very late stage in the period that the press conceded defeat in the race for immediacy. The censorship of the conflict was particularly noticeable in the People. This led to undue attention to one sensational aspect of the news service at the expense of other more important facets. The People chose the S.O.S. messages sent out by the BBC because they offered the maximum of human interest and drama - the lifeblood of any front page sensational headline. On several occasions desperate searches or tragedies were covered in this way.⁶⁸ The other journals gave the news content more careful scrutiny but even then there was no discussion of the issues that forced the BBC to produce an inferior news service because of restrictions imposed by the press. The role of the news bulletins during the General Strike was commended in the New Statesman but, apart from this, little was said on the issue until the mid-thirties. The indifference to broadcast news was then transformed. The creation of a proper news department in the BBC was welcomed, with both journals welcoming Professor John Coatman's appointment as News Editor.⁶⁹ Indeed, the Spectator welcomed the extension of this news room to foreign news gathering, particularly in view of the importance of European news as political tension intensified.⁷⁰ Where news bulletins were mentioned, comment was generally favourable and fears for the standards of objectivity were soon assuaged. The New Statesman, for

instance, began to see the radio news as a leader of standards:

'Indeed assuming that the BBC would decline to compromise on its standard of taste and its sense of proportion in these matters, it is quite conceivable that eventually the public could be trained to demand something rather less silly and sensational than it nowadays gets in its morning and evening papers.' 71

The Spectator was more wary but not necessarily less optimistic. Like the New Statesman it compared the BBC very favourably with the press:

'The BBC as a non-political monopoly is under an obligation of honour to be scrupulously objective in its selection of its items of information and in the relative prominence it gives to each. In that, it differs fundamentally from the ordinary newspaper. No one would expect to find equal prominence given to Mr. Churchill's speeches in the Daily Mail and the News Chronicle but in that matter each paper is its own master. It gives what its editor or proprietors think fitting, and in each case it is likely to be broadly what its readers want. The BBC must be above all suspicion that it is leaning this way or that politically or grinding anyone's personal or party axe.' 72

Generally, the paper felt that the BBC did its job well, although the monopoly made bias easy to impart. The paper admitted that, 'to present objective truth honestly is one of the hardest tasks in the world'⁷³ but, as far as the paper was concerned the BBC usually managed to resist such infringements. The paper had little practical advice to offer. It suggested that the Governors be made more responsible by the inclusion of an obligation to objectivity in the Charter⁷⁴ and recommended that short talks and conjectual comments should be scrupulously separated from 'straight news' in the news bulletins.⁷⁵ By 1939, the paper was quite satisfied by the course taken, emphasising the complementary nature of the press and radio:

'The radio can disseminate as no other instrument can; with the Press lies the role of recapitulation, amplification, interpretation and comment - all such after-thinking as follows the first eager grasping of information ... For this reason the good journalist, who realises that the techniques of dissemination may vary, accepts the challenge of the radio and understands that its success accentuates the best side of his work, not the mere tele-printer aspect of it.' 76

With the coming of war in 1939, the news bulletin was highlighted more than it had been, even during the General Strike or, in the recent past, the Munich crisis. The Spectator praised the contribution of radio news above that of the press:

'whereas press news is imbibed singly, radio news is imbibed in groups. You can walk down a street and hear the same voice busy in every house. Thus radio news is community news: it is a united gesture of a society listening at the same time.' 77

Things were far from well in the other areas of BBC output during the first few days of the war. After a reasonably quiescent period, the newspapers returned to the attack. The target was the new single programme which, for security reasons, had replaced the old service. All the old conflicts on the best type of material for the programme broke out again. A debate in Parliament acted as a catalyst, particularly after Arthur Greenwood called the wireless programmes 'The Weeping Willies'.⁷⁸ Needless to say the People was bored by the lack of entertainment⁷⁹ whilst others, such as Rose Macaulay in the Spectator⁸⁰ and W.J. Turner in the New Statesman,⁸¹ deplored the lack of 'good' music. The solution did not arrive until 1940.

5.4 The Organisation and its Control

Another important area of interest was in the BBC as an institution. The idea of a monopoly was fairly readily accepted by the press. Convictions were gradually reinforced that this method of control was broadly correct and most of the early suspicions were largely dissipated,⁸² a view which the Spectator eventually came to share.⁸⁴ The New Statesman's columnist, 'Critic', was avowedly against any extension of commercial influence. In 1935, he declared that after listening to Radio Luxembourg, he now appreciated the high BBC programme standards and hoped that they would never be infiltrated by the advertisers.⁸⁵ Yet the paper also showed a lack of faith in the achievement of this potentially ideal broadcasting system. In 1938, Kingsley Martin was locked in argument with Professor Hogben in the columns of the paper over the creation of public corporations to rival and eventually conquer capitalist markets. Martin admitted the flaws that might emerge in his own argument: 'The BBC today although outside the profit making system has in the last few years been rendered strikingly safe for capitalism.'⁸⁶

The Spectator was less pessimistic. In 1933 it reviewed the progress of the monopoly:

'It was a bold experiment, for the few existing public utility undertakings of the kind, such as the Port of London Authority, were local in the scope of their operations and provided no real precedent for the application of that method to an institution whose voice was soon to be speaking in half the homes in the country.

After ten years there can be no question that the experiment has abundantly justified itself.' 87

So confident was the journal of its value that it proposed the extension of the system to industries such as the railways and coal mining and even to the GPO itself.⁸⁸

The People had remarkably little to say about its attitude towards the BBC monopoly. It merely listed the developments in a factual way, without any sign of protest or acceptance. The only sign of possible dispute came in the paper's persistent coverage of the licence question. From 1924 until 1934 almost every year produced reports on some new GPO activity to clamp down on licence evaders. In 1924-5 the bias of the reporting was certainly in favour of the evader. With the Ford case in November 1924, the paper described the attempt to discover and prosecute evaders under the title 'GPO Wireless Spies' and gave implicit support to Mr. Ford in his attempt to resist an alleged invasion of privacy.⁸⁹ In 1925 an attempt to provide a new Wireless Telegraphy Bill was also criticised:

'If the absorption in broadcasting is to be maintained at any lively level, it is felt that dictatorial new laws will antagonise rather than stimulate interest and that revenue may not increase so much as is anticipated.

The neglect to take out licences is due far more to forgetfulness than to fraud, but undoubtedly some listeners-in believe that the revenue of the BBC derived from sales of apparatus by its members is sufficient to pay for programmes of the prevailing quality.' 90

Thereafter, with the creation of the Corporation, interest in the licence evader faded and there is nothing to suggest anything other than acceptance of the BBC monopoly.

The acceptance of the broad principle of monopoly did not mean that all was sweetness and light where comments on the running of the organisation were concerned. The weakness of the Governors was a favourite target. The People

thought that the limitations of the Governors lay in their lack of practical experience over the whole range of broadcasting output:

'Business men would laugh at the idea of launching any enterprise except with the advice and under the control of experts. But is there a single personality of note in the entertainment world who has a seat on the BBC's Board of Control?' 91

Changes in personnel were always expected to produce new and better influences - as though one new Governor could energise the whole Corporation. Equally the Governors were held responsible for providing a lack of direction whenever things appeared to go wrong. The New Statesman thought that Lady Snowden was the 'only Governor with real energy and initiative', and dismissed a new Governor, Mr. Harold Brown, as a 'nonentity'. The Spectator was also critical of the 'Safety First' mentality of those who selected the Governors. Harold Nicolson had some hard things to say:

'With few exceptions these Governors are, I regret to state, a pack of ninnies. I repeat these wounding words. A pack of ninnies. And thank goodness at the end of this year four of them are due to retire. Will they be replaced by men and women of greater intelligence? I doubt it. For safety, in these unfortunate islands, comes always first.' 93

Leonard Woolf had some ideas about the ideal replacements and the role they should properly fill:

'The general policy of programme choosing must, of course, be influenced by the beliefs of those who make the choice. It is the more important that the ultimate responsibility for choosing should be in the right hands. The Board, in whom such responsibility rests, should, I suggest, consist of young, active, and open minded persons, in touch with the ideas and movements of the day, who will be able to show courage and independence.' 94

Beyond the power of their own articles, none of these commentators seemed to have had thoughts about how the Governors might be kept in closer contact with public needs. There was nothing to suggest an extension of democratic participation through the Advisory Council structure and only the implied suggestion in the People that listener research might be useful as an addition to the services of the BBC. The Spectator toyed briefly with the idea of a Minister for Broadcasting, a recommendation later found in the Ullswater Committee's report, as a means of increasing public accountability on broad policy issues.⁹⁵ This proposal, like the recommendation, was quickly rejected - much to the paper's regret. 96

There were several grievances which caused these journals to seek out the Governors as scapegoats. The New Statesman was vitriolic in its condemnation.

In an editorial during 1932 it stated:

'The BBC celebrated this week the tenth anniversary of British broadcasting. It is remarkable among the great wireless stations of the world for the imagination shown in its educational work and Sir John Reith is to be congratulated on preserving the BBC from commercial influences. It is a striking example of the success of a self-governing autonomous Corporation. Its weakness is cowardice in the fields of politics, religion and social ethics, where official and orthodox pressure are constantly permitted to keep out the expression of new ideas. The BBC has the power, if it has the will, to resist the timid authoritarianism which so easily besets a great national institution.' 97

Harold Nicholson concurred tersely: 'My sole criticism of the BBC is that they are terrified by shadows on the wall. They lack, if I may use such an expression, guts.'⁹⁸ At first sight the phrase 'timid authoritarianism' seems to imply two contradictory qualities. In his article in the Spectator, Nicholson went on to explain-with sardonic imagery-why he felt the BBC was timid:

'People, and especially clergymen, seldom write letters when they are pleased. The BBC for this reason receive more letters from the angered reverend than from the satisfied reverend. And by this they are profoundly perturbed ... the BBC will suffer more from the actively indignant than they will benefit for the passively pleased. They are thus obliged to follow the line of least resistance. Even though that line leads them to the Rectory sofa of 1887.' 99

Leonard Woolf explained the authoritarian quality in another New Statesman article:

'The danger of a dictatorship is imminent in both branches of the BBC's activities, not the crude sort of Herr Hitler or Signor Mussolini, of course - we would order the matter better in the land of Mr. Pecksniff - but a much more subtle variety which would conceal the iron of authority in the velvet glove of - shall we say - uplift. The foundation of dictatorship is absolute truth, a conviction that you are the depository of absolute truth with the divine authority to impose it on other people. That is the danger besetting the directors of the BBC and those who frame its programmes. They are perfectly right to believe that they know the truth, but it is essential, if they are not to establish a dictatorship, that they should sometimes act on the assumption that they may be wrong.' 100

Having the good fortune of access to the columns of both the Spectator and the New Statesman,¹⁰¹ what Woolf meant, in effect, was that views hostile to his own sympathy for progress were pusillanimously conceded by the BBC and the consequent programme output transmitted these opinions either directly to the audience or, indirectly, by emasculating any radical opinions which desired airtime.

The New Statesman and the Spectator were prepared to accept mitigating circumstances. In an article entitled 'The Freedom of the BBC' E.M. Forster pointed to the escalation of one species of criticism:

'Nemesis has descended, bringing all the powers of darkness in her train. For the easy days are over, brightness falls from the air, and the conflict has begun. The BBC because of its success and growing importance, is being constantly attacked, in the pulpit, in Parliament, in the Press, and the attack is on new and dangerous lines. The aim is suppression.' 102

Forster also called for the silent supporters of the Corporation to rally round and make their views known as a counterbalance to these critics. There was, therefore, some appreciation of the difficult task in standing alone against the pressures. In all the papers there is some gesture of this goodwill towards the BBC. The Spectator remarked:

'when we reflect on the British Broadcasting Corporation we are always astonished at how much better this institution is than we might have expected, or than, to judge from our other institutions, we deserve. Whatever its shortcomings, the BBC does attempt to maintain a level of good sense, decency, and broad-mindedness.' 103

That was typical of the kind of comment scattered throughout many of the articles on broadcasting - even the most critical. With the approach of the renewal date of the BBC Charter the newspapers had an excellent opportunity to convert their criticisms into practical recommendations for reform. Yet during the period of the Ullswater debate, there were precious few suggestions for any thoroughgoing reforms of the institution. This, in itself, paid the BBC a silent compliment.

The People remained remarkably reticent on the issue. Apart from the blunt 'If we pay the piper we ought to have some voice in calling the tune',¹⁰⁴ it had little to say except to approve of the renewal of the Charter provided, that is, it got its brighter programmes.¹⁰⁵ Apparently the People did not consider the internal politics of the BBC to be of much interest to its readers. With an interesting insight into this thinking the paper argued: 'Alleged dictatorship in Broadcasting House itself should be closely investigated, though it doesn't directly concern the ordinary listener.'¹⁰⁶

The Spectator saw little need for change.¹⁰⁷ Being content merely to see more accessibility for Parliamentary discussion without compromising the BBC's independence and the development of clearer aims and policies for the future: an extension of what it had earlier seen as a corrective to timidity. As it stated, 'the true line of safety for the BBC is reasonable boldness.'¹⁰⁸

The New Statesman had the former BBC Talks Director, Hilda Matheson, on hand for some more precise proposals. She recommended more informal contacts with M.P s although she also opposed any formal control by Parliament on the grounds that this would tighten the strait -jacket on the BBC. She recommended more listener research on the basis demonstrated by the LSE survey of Life and Labour in London. To answer the charges of 'metropolitanism' at the BBC, she proposed the creation of refresher courses for London based staff out in the provincial stations.¹⁰⁹

Other subordinate questions concerning the institution were also raised during the period. Bureaucratisation at the BBC was observed to be largely undesirable but essentially necessary. The New Statesman observed the 'Civil Service' mentality which had emerged at the BBC.¹¹⁰ The Spectator noted that the division of the staff between creative and administrative departments:

'was based on the justifiable assumption that most people who have ideas cannot be expected also to have business acumen and method, and the deduction that artists might show greater fertility when divorced from irksome detail',

instead the article continued :

'It has created barbed-wire entanglements of new rules and regulations which waste time and create unnecessary irritation for themselves - it has not really cleared the way for creators at all.'¹¹¹

An interesting conflict between the broadcasting institution and the press arose over the publication of the Listener in 1929. The New Statesman was whole-hearted in its condemnation of the publication. The grounds stated for the attack were not that it would necessarily enter into unfair competition with the existing weeklies, rather that the Corporation should not be allowed to extend its power of publicity and influence any further.¹¹² The Spectator

was rather less polemical in its comments. It welcomed the printing of more broadcast lectures and educational programmes as useful contributions to intelligent listening. As far as the Spectator was concerned, provided that the content was germane to broadcasting, there was no ground for complaint. The weeklies would only have a grievance if the pages of the Listener were used for wider literary topics or if comment was passed on contemporary public issues.¹¹³ The New Statesman continued to protest at the publication but in the end it had to resign itself to certain guarantees of future conduct negotiated between the Newspaper Proprietors' Association and the Corporation.¹¹⁴

5.5. Broadcasting Politics

In the broadcasting of political opinions many of the arguments about democratic control, timidity and censorship were still applicable. Indeed the distinction was often hard to make: outrage at the contents of a political broadcast or a series of broadcast political statements was usually aimed at the institution which permitted them to take place rather than at those who actually made the political utterances.

In the early days the BBC was under strict instructions from the Postmaster-General not to allow any kind of politically controversial material to appear on the airways. The political weeklies were quick to defend the BBC's reluctance to accept the ruling. The New Statesman argued:

'Either let us give up the practice of broadcasting speeches on public questions, or let us abandon the pretence that they can be non-controversial, and try to give each section a chance.' 115

In the following year, the statement was developed:

'In the long run, we believe that it is neither possible nor desirable to prevent the broadcasting of controversial matter; but it is of great importance that this should be done only under the auspices of an authority pledged to give scope to conflicting views, and to prevent the wireless from becoming the propagandist adjunct of any particular group or party.' 116

The Spectator concurred that the ban was unrealistic and applauded the removal of formal restrictions.¹¹⁷ It was with this concession that the real trouble started because the BBC was now responsible for ensuring a balanced

expression of political views: the criticisms of the BBC flew thick and fast. All the newspapers had differing views on the weight and direction of political bias but they did agree on the solution - the provision of spokesmen from both sides rather than the dilution or censorship of broadcasting on political issues. As Cecil Lewis put it:

'If your job is holding a balance, you can keep the pointer steady by putting nothing in either scale, but you can also keep it steady by putting a ton in either scale.'

E.M. Forster added,

'and an audience of adult listeners ought to vote for the heavier weights. Unless they do so, the talks in particular will become flimsy and tend to disappear.' 118

The Spectator had more confidence in the capacity of the BBC:

'In its objectivity in the treatment of public affairs the BBC has established a record that may be regarded with some national pride. At all costs that tradition must be preserved.' 119

Three cases stand out as examples of the extensive debate in the press about the BBC's policy for the broadcasting of public affairs. The first was the refusal of the BBC to allow Winston Churchill to broadcast on the question of India. The New Statesman was forced to come to the unlikely defence of this staunchly conservative politician in its efforts to break this brand of censorship:

'The right way of dealing with speakers as irritating and mischief-making as Mr. Churchill is to put them up against others of their own kind. Why not let Mr. Churchill broadcast, Mr. Saklatvala reply, and some sane person to sum up - all on the same occasion? It would be instructive and entertaining, and it would leave Mr. Churchill with no grievance.' 120

The man himself, of course, needed little assistance in expressing his views. He denounced the whole business as 'pontifical mugwumpery'.¹²¹

The People was singularly unadventurous - merely reporting the protests of Churchill without comment of its own. The Spectator was anxious to prevent Churchill from usurping the BBC's prerogative to choose its own speakers:

'The principle that public men, even of Mr. Churchill's distinction, should have the right of access to the microphone, and be justified in nursing a grievance if it is denied them is clearly inadmissible. The BBC is ultimately under public control, and if it misuses its great powers, means of dealing with the situation exist.' 122

The Ferrie case produced similar complaints from the opposite end of the political and social spectrum. A working man, William Ferrie, claimed that the BBC had attempted to censor his broadcast speech unfairly. The Spectator remained loyal to its previous approach. It backed the BBC's right to control what was said by reading Ferrie's script in advance. The other two newspapers were less convinced of the validity of this action. The People applauded Ferrie's good sense in making his views on the censorship known only when he was in front of the microphone. Whilst disapproving of his political views, as the editorial put it, 'I do not believe that Moscow is the halfway house on the road to economic paradise,' the paper went on to state:

'heavily censored opinions have no value. If Mr. Ferrie had not been a rebel we should have listened to him and imagined that we were getting a working man's views, whereas, actually, we should have been merely swallowing the usual cautious dope approved by the pundits as suitable food for a public of infants and invalids ...

Sir Herbert Austin had painted one picture of the working man's life in this age of machinery. William Ferrie painted another - a grim disturbing picture in the 'realist' school.

Scanty wages, robot toil for a relentless machine, high rentals and haunting fear of 'the sack' were in the foreground of the Ferrie picture.

The public might very well have been left to judge for itself which of these two pictures came nearer to the truth.' 123

The New Statesman showed a similar concern, extending the comments further:

'the BBC may have no class bias, but, if so, it has been singularly unfortunate lately in giving the impression that it has.'

The editorial added:

'Broadcasting House is more and more giving the impression that its talks ... must be confined strictly to what will give pleasure in the most conservative suburbs of London.' 124

The other issue extended this concern to other talks on public affairs.

The BBC came out of this rather better than it had done earlier in the year. This time the New Statesman¹²⁵ and the People applauded the series 'Time to Spare', where unemployed people talked of their lot, and denounced the critics instead. R.S. Hudson, M.P. made the mistake of casting doubts on the validity of the statements in the series. The People editorial was vitriolic in its defence of the BBC. Under the headline: 'Apology due to Workless Broadcasters', it went

into the attack:

'All is not right with the world and never can be while some two millions of our fellow countrymen are suffering poverty in enforced idleness.

And Mr. R.S. Hudson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, owes an apology to John Evans, the unemployed Birmingham mechanic, and to Mrs. Pallas, wife of the unemployed Sunderland riveter, for casting doubts upon the genuineness of their painfully truthful broadcasts.

Those doubts, if any of us shared them with Mr. Hudson, have been completely removed by the BBC itself. Now there is talk in one section of the Press of the need for a censorship of broadcasts of this kind. It is a monstrous suggestion put forward only because the comfortable half of the world is afraid to realise how the other half is living.' 126

So the BBC could do something right in the eyes of these newspapers and stand up to criticism of controversial programmes. However undue attention to adverse criticisms would give an unbalanced view of press attitudes towards the BBC. The tone was often exceedingly idealistic. Radio was seen as a great opportunity for increasing political awareness. On several occasions the comparison was made between the status of citizens in the Greek City State and the modern listener.¹²⁷ As the Spectator put it:

'the spoken word, which had dominated the small City-State of ancient Greece, was to come into its own again in the highly organised Nation-State.' 128

The approach of the BBC was favourably compared with the power of the press because of the effectiveness of its communication, particularly in illiterate societies such as India, and also the method of control - 'the popular press tends to fall into the hands of a few rich men whose capricious views masquerade as public opinion.'¹²⁹ Characteristically the People saw the power of political broadcasting in a more homely way. Reporting on a speech by the Postmaster-General, Mr. Kellaway, it:

'could foresee when, instead of addressing his constituents, he would sit at home comfortably and make his speech from an armchair, and his constituents would listen to it by their own fireside. If he became dull they would have only to put down the receiver.' 130

All the newspapers were in favour of expanding the principle of political broadcasts to include the broadcasting of Parliament on the grounds that this would restore the respect of the country for parliamentary institutions.¹³¹ The

extension, it was argued, would bring the people closer to Parliament by removing the intermediary barrier of the national press.

The BBC was also seen as a bulwark against fascism, both at home and overseas. At home it was the ideal institutional bulwark, always speaking in favour of democratic discussion and peace; overseas it was the means by which the Nazi and Fascist propaganda could be challenged. As the Spectator observed:

'Democracy having proceeded to its electoral culmination is now revealing some of the defects of its success. The disillusionment which is inevitable is causing those with an aptitude for panic or pessimism to say that democracy is already marked down for failure. We do not share that gloomy belief; we are confident that the democratic spirit, which is expressed in the usual sensible behaviour of the nation in an emergency will repair each defect which becomes intolerable. Nevertheless, many kinds of help will be needed for democracy and no particular help is likely to be more valuable than that of the BBC.' 132

The aim was to use broadcasting as an educative medium - in a political sense and in a broader informational sense, to enlighten listeners in every aspect of the output.

That was the ideal but there were doubts whether the BBC was fully equipped to provide this panacea for the ills of democracy. The Spectator appreciated that the centralised nature of the broadcast message and the acceptance of the monopoly meant that there was a greater danger of a dictator assuming the control of the medium and then exploiting the power of the microphone in order to rule with more assurance of authority. But its solution was simply that the public must show greater vigilance to ensure that partiality was kept out of radio broadcasting.¹³³ The New Statesman was more suspicious. Whilst supporting the Spectator's analysis of the value of broadcasting for the benefit of democracy, it doubted whether the BBC was capable of achieving a solid defence. Its rationale was this:

'Nineteenth-century liberalism was destroyed because it was betrayed by liberals who either had no real convictions or had not the courage of them. It is timidity or treachery of democrats which in the same way is destroying democracy. If Broadcasting House used broadcasting as the instrument, servant and instructor of an educated democracy, firmly based on complete freedom of discussion, the BBC would suddenly come alive again.'

134

The New Statesman continued its polemic:

'If the BBC is to perform this service, its present policy will need to be altered radically. That policy today suffers from being autocratic and personal instead of democratic and open-minded. The BBC is heavily class-biased, from the composition of its Board of Governors through its staff down to the censorship of its Talks and the tone of its entertainments. It is bourgeois both politically and culturally, in the worst sense of that much-abused word. From the point of view of democracy, that is a fatal defect at a moment when the class war is raging and the only hope for democracy is to show that it can be without class bias in the midst of such a war.' 135

In the face of fascism overseas, the newspapers were able to reach a consensus. Once again, the People had less to say on this question than the others. Its readers were only informed of statements made by foreign political leaders or the speeches of domestic politicians through the printing of edited texts.¹³⁶ Editorially it had little to add.

The paper did, however, join with the political weeklies in urging the BBC to launch broadcasts in foreign languages to counter the misleading propaganda broadcast from the fascist states.¹³⁷ The Spectator worried about black propaganda which might be broadcast into Britain.¹³⁸ On the whole, both the New Statesman and the Spectator applauded the BBC's efforts once the challenge was taken up. The broadcasts of news bulletins in German to Germany were generally considered to have had a consoling effect on German public opinion.¹³⁹

The power of radio in the hands of Goebbels and Hitler may have appalled the press,¹⁴⁰ but its use by British speakers for domestic consumption was of less morbid interest. The importance of party political broadcasts at election times was not lost on any of the journals. As early as 1922, the People was enthusing about their value.¹⁴¹ The attraction was the means of appealing to the new mass electorate, enfranchised by the Acts of 1918 and 1928. The full implications of the use of modern mass communications were only partially realised as the Spectator noted:

'Most formidable of these instruments, undoubtedly, is the BBC through which the leaders of the parties are able with their own voices to reach the whole of the electorate; and it is observed that to the democratic qualifications of a successful party leader, namely power of speaking on a platform and in Parliament, must be added another skill in broadcasting - a matter to which not all front bench politicians have given as much attention as they might do.' 142

The popular Sunday paper again paid little attention to the issue. Apart from the printing of the times of broadcast election speeches and some abstracts of broadcast statements, it had little to add. The paper simply did not believe that radio was of any value for influencing a British electorate. Remarking on Sir Thomas Inskip's assertion in 1936 that radio had helped to breed the dictator, the People observed:

'How right he is and how thankful we ought to be that we have not yet handed over the ether to the men who want the earth. Instead we use the mightiest instrument of communication to disseminate poppycock, unvaried variety, cautious controversy and dance music.' 143

On broadcasting performances the New Statesman and the Spectator held similar views about who was the best speaker and which were the best speeches. Snowden's 'Bolshevism run mad' speech in October 1931 was frequently considered to be the most influential political speech ever made.¹⁴⁴ The New Statesman blamed Professor Clay's broadcast on the dire consequences of leaving the Gold Standard as a significant reason for the success of the National Government in the 1931 General Election. Interestingly, the journal also saw Anthony Eden as the first radio politician - through radio, millions had heard his voice, thus allowing him to establish his fame and reputation throughout Britain and Europe at a much earlier stage of his career than might otherwise have been possible.¹⁴⁵

Of the party leaders only a little is said. Baldwin, naturally enough, was considered to be the best, Lloyd George and MacDonald were seen at a disadvantage, whilst Henderson was considered to be the worst of all.¹⁴⁶ Practice was considered to be valuable and by 1935 even MacDonald had improved from the days when he 'used to tear his beautiful baritone to bits by tub-thumping.'¹⁴⁷

As Harold Nicolson remarked:

'What! one says when one listens to Mr. MacDonald, 'a nice man!' And in saying so one is abundantly right. He is a nice man. And fortunately for him and for the National Party his niceness burrs in his very voice.

The BBC are aware of this strange power of the human voice. It frightens them. They know all too well that the regular broadcaster is apt to become a family friend. He attains a fireside manner.' 148

It is all rather tempting material. Did radio have an influence on the course of an election as early as 1931? The implication is that it did but the press could only make the point tentatively: perhaps, perhaps not.

5.6 Personalities in Broadcasting

The life blood of any contemporary popular newspaper is the scandal and rumour which surrounds the lives of national personalities. In the late twenties and early thirties, the People was in the process of converting from an older, rather detailed and sober style of reporting to the sensational headline approach. BBC personalities were also emerging at that time, simply because of the national recognition which the BBC system provided. Despite BBC efforts to render its personnel as anonymous as possible, these personalities grew and became a rather attractive feature for stories in the People.

The aim was to personalise the 'stars', gather their opinions on broadcasting issues and generally to provide more of the character behind the voice. This process began with early stars on the BBC staff such as Cecil Lewis,¹⁴⁹ Sir John Reith¹⁵⁰ - as the personification of the entire organisation - and continued up until the outbreak of war with people such as 'Uncle Mac' of Childrens' Hour¹⁵¹ and Carroll Leavis.¹⁵²

Many performers were mentioned but if there was any concentration on individuals these were usually exceptional figures like the Reverend Dick Sheppard¹⁵³ at one time voted the most popular radio personality, and the big dance band leaders like Jack Payne¹⁵⁴, Jack Hylton¹⁵⁵ and Henry Hall¹⁵⁶. The emphasis was on a short sharp paragraph for each individual, usually under a prominent headline. Such pieces were the staple diet of the paper and there was a continuous flow of them throughout the period.

The paper had little to say on the issue of BBC personnel policy. The only substantial comment followed the Lambert-Levita case when the paper argued in favour of the creation of a staff association.¹⁵⁷ This kind of article was normally too mundane to attract comment and the eccentric quality of this case was largely responsible for its inclusion. Besides the eccentric, the paper also had room for the romantic article. Headlines such as 'Radio Romance' or '2 LO-VE Calling'¹⁵⁸ were better guides to the real interests of the paper.

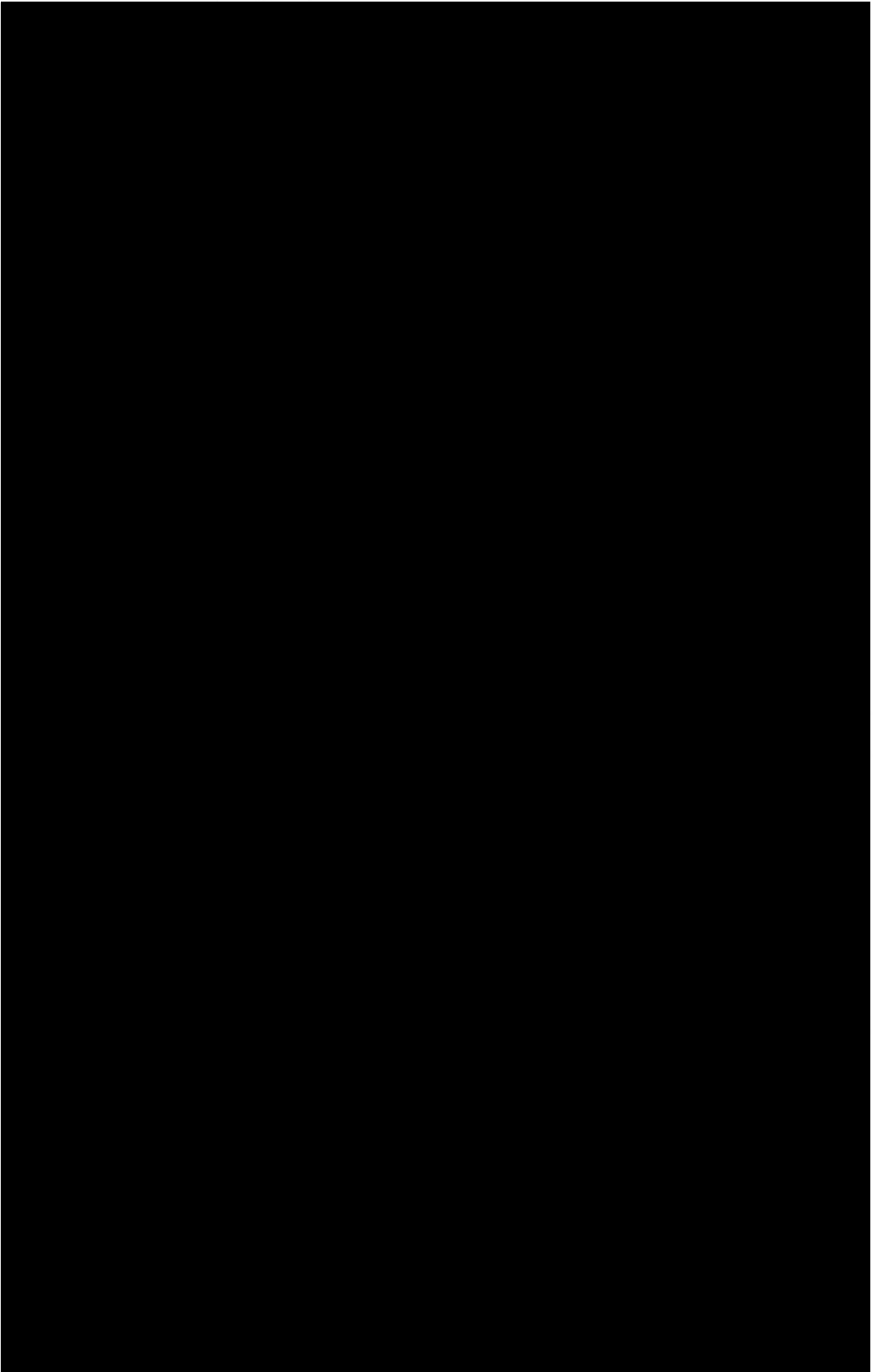
particularly in 1932, when the romance had led to the resignations of the staff concerned.¹⁵⁹ It was only later, in 1935, that the paper actually criticised such interventions by the BBC authorities into the private lives of its staff.¹⁶⁰

The political weeklies were also interested in staff matters. They were, for instance, concerned for better treatment of BBC staff and were in favour of the formation of a staff association.¹⁶¹ Their other interests were not in the 'star' performers but rather in some leading members of staff and in those giving radio talks. An identity of interests was based on the authorship of articles in the weeklies. New Statesman critics such as E.M. Forster, Leonard Woolf, Harold Nicolson and the editor, Kingsley Martin, also gave many radio talks. They were ably assisted by the BBC rebel, Hilda Matheson, after her resignation as Director of Talks. For the Spectator, Woolf and Nicolson also made contributions but the main body of invited authors came from amongst senior BBC staff - men such as Siepmann, Tallents, Stobart and even Reith himself. Most of their articles were panegyrics of the value of one aspect or another of BBC policy,¹⁶² but some such as Reith's own contribution, 'Broadcasting and a Better World' were important clarifications of past and future policy intentions.¹⁶³

Unfettered by this close relationship with the BBC, the New Statesman was much harder hitting on personnel issues. Two articles stand out as examples of the general flow of criticisms. The first was a lampoon on Reith accompanied by a Low cartoon (Figure III). Briefly it assailed his character on the grounds of philistinism, puritanism, excessive discipline and a lack of either imagination or education!¹⁶⁴ His only credits were that he had imported some spirit of independence and idealism to the BBC. As a consequence of this rather vigorous onslaught, Kingsley Martin thought that he had been placed on the BBC black list and thus forbidden to give radio talks.

The other article by Leonard Woolf was equally vigorous but was more typical of the paper's view of all the BBC staff. Entitled, 'The BBC and the Old School Tie', it introduced its remarks on the staff with a characteristic side-swipe at the Governors:

Figure III Sir John Reith by Low



'Shot at from every side, subjected to pressure from Government Department, foreign embassies and important personages of all sorts, the Governors have developed a terror of "dangerous thoughts", while Sir John Reith, whose disposition is naturally autocratic and suspicious, has surrounded himself with a hierarchy of immediate subordinates whose most conspicuous qualifications are their correct old-school-tie outlook and their remoteness from the feelings and opinions of the masses for whom the BBC, after all, primarily caters.' 166

This criticism of the social élitism resulting from the staffing policy at the BBC was a persistent theme in many articles and comments launched in the direction of the BBC before 1939. As Woolf concluded:

'the broadcasting service, with its statutory monopoly of the air, is and will remain, until the success of a social revolution, the organ of the British ruling class.'

5.7 Technical and Social Questions

The press devoted some attention to the technical development of radio and its more general social consequences. In this respect there was no sign of hostility to the growth of a potential rival, rather a sense of anticipation and excitement - characterised by the first articles on radio. Of the three newspapers, the New Statesman was by far the slowest to see the trends, and it is not until 1927 that any real attention was paid to the technical advances in radio.¹⁶⁷ The People was more aware and more systematic in its approach. It ran a regular feature on the technical problems of radio, a mundane but nonetheless valuable review of the typical problems such as oscillation, battery maintenance, technical improvements, the value of portables etc., and this ran intermittently until the early thirties. The other newspapers paid little attention to such features, the sole exception being a rather obscure series of three articles in the New Statesman during the autumn of 1928 by Bertrand Russell, which appeared to be the basis for a longer series but was abruptly curtailed.¹⁶⁸

The People also had a taste for the fantastic or the eccentric in radio development. Some articles concerned genuine achievements in radio technology

which received attention by virtue of their great innovatory quality. These included the first reception of transatlantic broadcasts,¹⁶⁹ the expansion of the GPO telecommunications chain (or 'beam stations' as they were more popularly known)¹⁷⁰ and the early experiments in short wave radio (V.H.F.)¹⁷¹. The public were kept in touch with lesser developments by a fairly regular flow of articles on the use of wireless by the police,¹⁷² the fitting of sets in LNER trains,¹⁷³ the work of the amateurs and, in a climax of articles each year, the details of the 'Radiolympia' exhibition.¹⁷⁴

Eccentric developments were always a favourite subject for comment. One of the first contributions was an editorial on:

'Signor Marconi's announcement of his intention to endeavour to elucidate the mystery of the "queer sounds and indications" recorded in 1920, which it is conjectured might have come from the planet Mars.'¹⁷⁵

The editorial speculated on the prospects of an exchange of messages. But other articles, frequently the stuff of front page headline sensations, tended to confuse radio broadcasting with other uses of the electromagnetic spectrum. The death ray machine was a favourite connection and a headline described such a machine as the 'BBC War Weapon'¹⁷⁶. Elsewhere audible radio wavelengths were confused with ultra-sonic scanners,¹⁷⁷ microwave cookers¹⁷⁸ and electricity transmission via high-frequency radiation.¹⁷⁹ All of these were to become scientific realities but the sensational style of reporting always gave the false impression that somehow these developments were no more than an extension of broadcasting itself.

Another major obsession was television. As early as May 1925, the People attended the first public demonstration by Baird and enthused at the potential of the device.¹⁸⁰ Thereafter there was a perpetual flow of articles on the development and potential of television. A peak was reached in 1928-1930 with Sydney Moseley, acting as Baird's aide de camp, filling his weekly column with polemics in a futile attempt to persuade the BBC to take up the invention.¹⁸¹

The political weeklies also succumbed to this infection. There was a false start when Lord Russell remarked:

'Even with such transmission as is now possible it is very difficult to see how anything like the broadcasting of pictures can effectively take place ... In fact, the public would be well advised to discount heavily the flamboyant anticipations that have appeared in the non-technical press on this subject,'¹⁸²

but the fever soon took over. Several articles welcoming the prospect of television were included in both journals.¹⁸³ Advertisements began to appear with sets on offer at prices as high as £105.¹⁸⁴ At least there was some caution and perspective in the tone of the articles in the serious weeklies - the People raised expectations excessively. Television was portrayed as a futuristic device. It captured the imagination but distracted readers away from the considerable but less sensational developments in radio sets. With the high price of a set, the introduction of a BBC television service still made viewing an unobtainable dream for most readers of the People.

The paper was full of what might be best described as 'snippets' of comment on the social implications of broadcasting. The emphasis was, however, again placed on the unusual or the atypical. 'Human interest' stories showed strongly amongst the varied comments. The spread of radio was only newsworthy when sets were used by what were then considered to be unexpected institutions such as public houses¹⁸⁵, schools¹⁸⁶ and workhouses.¹⁸⁷ Two of the three stages of life were seen in a wireless context. The paper could not discover a birth, which was completed with a wireless commentary but it did find a marriage¹⁸⁸ and a burial¹⁸⁹ which were. Radio was even held to be responsible for divorce.¹⁹⁰ Other eccentric uses recorded by the paper included a broadcast by the Psychical Research Society.¹⁹¹ Prominence was given to a psychic, Dr. Mansfield Robinson, when he persuaded the GPO to send a telegram from Rugby to Mars. The paper observed that:

'The Post Office has accepted the message as "ordinary business". The charge for five words will be 7s. 6d. - delivery not guaranteed.'¹⁹²

The weeklies attempted a slightly more analytical approach to the question. The New Statesman offered some reasons why the paper and its readers were so slow to recognise radio. As Robert Byron claimed:

' A good many rather "superior" people - of whom I am one - have hitherto been inclined to regard broadcasting for domestic consumption as at best a rather vulgar and stupid business, and at worst an intolerable nuisance.' 193

The Spectator was quicker to appreciate radio but it was also surprised at radio's rapid development. As Major Yeats-Brown observed in 1930, radio had made a great educational, enlightening contribution, although this was surprising:

'to some readers of the Spectator who still think, as I did until recently, that wireless is merely a way of hearing the Boat Race or Cup Final, or an occasional substitute for the evening paper.' 194

By 1937 things were quite different as the Spectator observed:

'There is, on the other hand, nothing like the same interest that there was in sound-broadcasting. We are grown blasé, entertainment of one sport or another is thrust upon us from every side, our receptive powers are glutted and one more method of killing our leisure hours is accepted without demur, almost without notice.' 195

Charity was another area of social influence for radio. The People paid some attention to the Christmas appeals for the blind which took place from 1930 onwards.¹⁹⁶ The Spectator engaged in direct social action. In 1937-1938 it ran a short campaign to raise money for the provision of wireless sets in prisons. Despite some unpopularity amongst its readers, the paper persevered and raised over £130.¹⁹⁷

In the context of social consequences it is worth paying some attention to press coverage of royal broadcasts and the broadcasting of royal occasions. The New Statesman was completely indifferent but the People and the Spectator thought that royal broadcasts had some social significance. The Spectator pointed out the obvious advantages of radio for the monarch and his subjects following a broadcast by George V during the Jubilee Celebration in 1935:

'The fact that it was on him and the Queen that the thoughts and anxieties of Britons everywhere were fixed, secured for him an audience such as no man on earth has ever enjoyed when his own words were carried at night into millions of homes by the marvellous invention brought to maturity during his reign.' 198

The People was similarly reverential but sought wider implications. It impressed on its readers the immensity of the King's audience whenever he broadcast to the Empire. An audience of 450 millions was the prospect foreseen as early as September 1927.¹⁹⁹ The paper also followed the Christmas broadcasts which began in 1932 but which first received real attention in 1934.²⁰⁰

A most important part of the social influence of radio was in education. Whenever this service was mentioned, usually in the most glowing terms, newspapers seemed to lapse into reams of rhetorical excess. In its educational role, radio was analysed in very broad terms, it was a: 'social revolution', a 'great force for enlightenment', the 'most important essential for an educated democracy', and so on. The educational contribution of broadcasting was an important adjunct to all the other idealistic proposals of the political weeklies. It could provide 'cultural uplift', help serve minorities and, most of all, it could serve to educate the public to support democracy and democratic institutions. As Stephen King-Hall remarked in the New Statesman, it was never too early to begin to stimulate political awareness:

'The school broadcast talk brings the child in the rural school into direct relationship with Mr. Baldwin defending democracy. It could - and if I had my way it would - bring that same child into a similar relationship with Mr. Lansbury on socialism and Sir Oswald Mosley defending fascism, and Mr. Pollitt or Mr. Tom Mann making the case for communism.'²⁰¹

This latter remark implied some criticism of the BBC but normally the institution rarely fell short of expectations in purely educational programmes. The main criticism from the New Statesman and the Spectator was aimed at the combination of timidity and authoritarianism in the general policy applied to talks. Since talks had wider audiences and since they were implicitly rather than overtly didactic, they formed an important supplement to the purely educational output.

All the papers were aware of the social groups which benefitted from educational programmes. The People was interested in the use of radio by schools, regularly reported the activities of Group Listening Leaders but was not unduly disturbed by the collapse of the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education in 1934, because it disapproved of the bureaucracy which it created rather than of its ultimate aims.²⁰² The political weeklies showed similar interest. In the early

idealistic days from 1928-1930 both papers gave full support to the organisations which grew out of educational broadcasting. Both hoped for the creation of a special educational wavelength.²⁰³ The Spectator approved of experiments in cooperation with rural community councils as a substantial contribution to the alleviation of rural isolation,²⁰⁴ whilst the New Statesman characteristically complimented the BBC on the work with the WEA, the unemployed and University Extra-Mural Departments.²⁰⁵

Unfortunately the initial optimism for broadcast education was not realised, except in schools, and the serious weeklies turned their attention more and more towards the general talks programmes during the thirties. The quality of these talks was not always approved but there was general acclaim for socially conscious programmes such as 'Time to Spare', 'The Changing World', and 'Changes in Everyday Life'. The People also welcomed such programmes although, if anything, it personalised the talks - giving more credit to individuals such as H.G. Wells, Sir Oliver Lodge and Walford Davies rather than to a particular series or to the BBC for organising them.²⁰⁶

Despite the suggestions of a lack of determination in selecting speakers or exciting subjects, the press was prepared to recognise the difficult course which the BBC needed to steer in the face of numerous and frequently contradictory criticism.²⁰⁷ As a social commentator, for instance, the BBC did occasionally break through the bourgeois image with which it was branded by the New Statesman. Even the People had leaped to the defence when Mr. Hudson had disputed William Ferrie's view of life. The paper was also moved to assail critics who disputed the social commentaries provided by some talks:

'Diehards have been indicting the BBC because some of its talks have exposed the evil conditions in which millions of our population dwell. They call it 'left propoganda'. It is merely truth.' 208

The paper was quick, too, to recognise the value of other programmes on social issues. It joined with the political weeklies in applauding Sir William Beveridge's investigation into one aspect of the social structure. His discoveries attracted favourable editorial comment because of the assistance they gave to rais-

ing public consciousness in a new domestic era:

'this BBC report makes it abundantly clear that what we may term "domestic opinion" has reformed our households.'

'Husbands and wives are regarding themselves as "pals"; the sham family loyalties that gave "respectability" to the Victorians have yielded place to real friendship and co-operation, while the grim, unhealthy barriers that made children strangers to their parents have been swept almost completely away'. 209

Obviously the impact of the programme had aroused the journalists at the People if not necessarily a considerable part of the audience. There was a word of caution from Harold Nicolson. Whilst supporting the People's general conclusion, he added:

'Sir William Beveridge, in his endeavour to reach the uneducated through a popular medium, has succeeded to an extent which must inspire our pessimists with a suspension of disbelief'

He continued in warning tones:

'Even a man such as Sir William Beveridge, even a front bench figure such as Dr. Dalton, find themselves obliged, when faced by that pendent dental pentagon, to clip the wings of their expression, to make gestures which are not their own. Instinctively they come to prefer the gentle to the ungentle term, the expected to the surprising. Do they gain in quantity what they lose in quality? Does the desire to get their message across justify the suppressions, the reticences, the alibis, by which alone that message can be rendered acceptable to the million? I think it does.'

He continued with two more warnings:

'The first is that it is dangerous to discuss very serious subjects upon the wireless. The second is that, in cold print, such discussions seem arid, superficial and insincere.' 210

The spoken word was another social issue which aroused some interest in the columns of the press. Pronunciation was an issue where the press had complete change of heart. At first there was support for the clarity of speech broadcast²¹¹ and an idealistic belief in the wider consequences of BBC pronunciation. Commenting on the publication by the BBC of the pamphlet, The BBC's Recommendations for Pronouncing Doubtful Words, the Spectator argued:

'Everything that makes our speech a conscious heritage and spreads this heritage as widely as possible is a communal good. In this way, too, the BBC can diffuse a high standard of culture, can assimilate classes and can help to provide equality of opportunity.' 212

This idealism quickly evaporated: indeed the uniform BBC pronunciation became a positively undesirable goal. The New Statesman launched its attack on

the grounds that monotony could be the only result.²¹³ There was also an element of resentment at the paternalistic tone used by the BBC. Robert Lynd, for instance, was outraged by the BBC advice as to the 'correct' pronunciation of 'Margarine':

'When the BBC takes upon itself to tell us how to pronounce the language that we have more or less mispronounced from the nursery, the blood mounts to our heads in indignation, and nothing short of a letter of protest to a newspaper can restore us to our accustomed calm.' 214

The volte-face by the Spectator was equally strenuously underlined:

'I cannot help viewing with distaste the day when every child from Land's End to John o'Groats speaks the same broadcast English.' 215

Rose Macaulay sardonically observed the rivers of blood that had flowed in the course of the 'Conduit Street' pronunciation war as a salutary lesson for those who sought to force the English to adopt a uniform pronunciation.²¹⁶ The preferred BBC pronunciation of this London street had attracted a torrent of impassioned correspondence from the public.

The People was no less keen to resist paternalistic advice of this kind. It, too, defended the dialects of Britain²¹⁷ but its main criticisms were aimed at the class bias implicit in the pronunciation used for the model BBC voice. One regular columnist, Cecil Hadley, launched a continuous attack on the accents of commentators. In parody of their efforts he chose to emphasise the phonetic spelling of their words. Thus there was 'Uxford and 'Keambridge'²¹⁸ at the Boat Race. The target was not just the tone of the voices but the whole social milieu which they stood for - the alleged obsession with varsity sports and old school tie acquaintances at the expense of the soccer or horse racing results which interested the common man.²¹⁹

The People also paid some attention to the influence of radio on church going. Except for a sensational account of those who listened to the BBC church services while drinking in a public house,²²⁰ the paper concentrated on more predictable issues. It noted the protests of clergymen at the emptying of the churches on Sundays and the blame they attributed to the BBC for the decline.²²¹ There was also a report on the rising star of Dick Sheppard and the success of the St. Martin-in-the-Fields broadcasts in appealing to a wider audience.²²²

The Spectator was more analytical and clearly more sympathetic towards the BBC:

'It is some consolation that masses of the people who seldom came to church are now within the unseen congregation of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. We do ill to deprecate this development as disastrous. We should rather assess the good in it and employ every gift to make it better. No other wireless in Europe is thus steadily at the service of the Christian religion.' 223

However, in the context of the seventeen years covered, the fate of religious belief in the face of radio broadcasting was never more than a very minor consideration.

5.8 The Music Critics

It was in the reporting of the changes which broadcasting had brought to music that the popular and the serious weeklies diverged most sharply in their tastes and judgements. There was but a brief period of consensus in the early days of broadcast music. All the papers paid some attention to early broadcasting tours de force in opera and symphonic music. Indeed music was often suggested as the earliest motive for paying any attention to broadcasting as a medium.²²⁴ Appreciation at that time was seemingly limitless. Even the People found space to applaud the standard of operatic performances and to express its excited anticipation of more to come.²²⁵

All the papers poured scorn on those such as Sir Hamilton Harty and Sir Thomas Beecham who criticised the value of music on the radio on the grounds that the sound was distorted or that the BBC had helped to put musicians out of work by discouraging live performances. Both individuals were soundly condemned for uttering such beliefs. Beecham was the first to suffer the lash for suggesting that the quality of radio music was abysmal. The People noted sarcastically:

'Millions of fools will be glad to learn that Sir Thomas Beecham, who is going to America, forgives them for thinking that the noise they hear on the broadcasting (sic) is music.

For years apparently, while we have been thinking how much pleasure radio has brought into so many lives and how greatly it must be advancing music, it has done nothing but bring a noise into being, and has brought to Sir Thomas Beecham the conviction that there is no future for music in this country.' 226

Sir Hamilton Harty was the next to be assailed. He was similarly critical of the quality of broadcast music but also joined with the music publishers and theatre managers in condemning the BBC's movement into the private sector. None of the papers could agree with his comments. The Spectator observed:

'he has gone badly astray and has, to put it bluntly, talked nonsense,' and added:

'let it be granted that the listener does not bear quite the true tone of music. He nevertheless becomes interested. The influence of the BBC in improving musical taste has in our judgement been incalculable'. 227

The theory was, therefore, that broadcasting quality was not everything.

As W.J. Turner remarked:

'What, after all, are these deficiencies compared with the monstrous distortions and perversions which music suffers daily at the hands of executants whom I regard - mostly with horror - in the concert hall?' 228

Moreover, the lesser quality was more than compensated by the increased knowledge and interest in music held by an immeasurably wider audience which might, in fact, be tempted to attend live performances as long as the quality of the actual performance itself was as good as many that were broadcast.

On the question of intervention in the commercial market, the papers were unanimous. The cause of lost jobs in the musical business was not just confined to the encroachment of radio:

'Many causes (not peculiar to this country alone) must have been at work: changes in the habits of the public, the modern multiplicity of possibilities of amusement, the coming of the gramophone and the sound-film, and so on - for which the BBC cannot be held responsible. While in so far as wireless has thrown musicians out of work it has done so purely and simply qua wireless. The same results would have followed if instead of the BBC we had the DEF or the XYZ.' 229

Furthermore, both the Spectator and the New Statesman felt that the purge of a labour force overcrowded with second rate musicians might actually have benefits for live audiences. Certainly there was praise for the standard set by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, partly because of the quality and extensive repertoire it was able to build up through its permanent status and partly because it prevented the old abuses of poor rehearsals and 'substitution'. 230

There was unanimity on the takeover of the Queen's Hall and the related fate of the Promenade Concerts. All the papers approved of the necessary inter-

vention by the BBC, even if it had in part been responsible for the economic crises which made such absorption virtually obligatory. 'The Proms' under BBC control were thereafter consistently praised.²³¹

Despite the gratitude for the purging of bad professional playing there was some faint residual sympathy for the amateur performer. The People hoped that once the novelty of radio had worn off, then children would return to playing,²³² whilst the Spectator thought that the BBC should offer some incentive by organising more amateur broadcasts and competitions.²³³

Although there was consensus on some issues, on the really important issue of musical taste, the views held were diametrically opposite. The real meat of the People's interest in broadcast music concerned dance music or jazz and the oddly named vernacularisms: 'plugging' and 'crooning'. Whenever programme comments were directly concerned with music it meant dance band music from a big band led by Jack Payne or Jack Hylton, music at the Cinema organ with someone like Reginald Foort or Jazz imported from the USA. Whenever there was a serious complaint about broadcasting it was normally about too much 'crooning' and 'plugging'. By 'crooning' was meant a style of singing. This was often raised and when readers' opinions were requested, it was a sure portent for a flood of letters denouncing the practice. In the late thirties such criticisms became virtually a standard weekly feature - snippets referring disdainfully or facetiously towards the practice.²³⁴ 'Plugging' was simply the self-advertised publicity which dance bands sought by playing their own pieces very frequently and by overt verbal introductions as to their source, particularly on their latest gramophone record. The People criticised this practice first in 1929 and was still hammering out the complaints until 1938.²³⁵

The attitude in the Spectator and especially the New Statesman was totally different. The Spectator demonstrated its interest calmly. It gave publicity to classical works and operatic performances which pleased it and showed its lack of interest in popular music by ignoring it. In its desire to raise public taste, the paper was content merely to coax the BBC into playing more music for the

'discriminating taste' in the belief that it would improve the tastes of all other listeners.²³⁶

The New Statesman was altogether more strident in its remarks. W.J. Turner was the music critic of the paper and he took until July 1925 before he broke silence to make his first comment on broadcasting in the paper. His remarks at that time characterised his attitude for the next fourteen years:

'Broadcasting, which at present is the hobby of the most illiterate and ignorant section of the public, will gradually cater for the connoisseur.'²³⁷

This tone, a mixture of prophecy and snobbery hardly changed.

Bitterly opposed as it was towards popularising or vulgarising music, this condescending attitude towards much of the population on the issue of musical taste was vastly different from the views held by the People. The New Statesman took the issue very seriously and broadcast music criticism formed a considerably greater portion of the comments and reports on broadcasting than in the other papers. Altogether, more vitriol and more blatant bourgeois prejudice was espoused for the cause of broadcast music than on any other of the paper's attacks - be they on the Governors, the standard of talks or the question of political bias.

For instance, Leonard Woolf's criticisms of 'timid authoritarianism' were aimed equally as much at the BBC's musical and cultural pretensions. The greatest danger of a broadcasting monopoly, it seemed, was not that it exposed the BBC to unscrupulous political control, rather that it imposed a dictatorship of taste upon the long suffering audience:

'A dictatorship of people who will only allow "light" music to be broadcast and eliminate all "serious" music (except religious of course) from the programmes - a process which seems to indeed to have begun already.'²³⁸

Turner was equally disillusioned but his analysis was quite different. After his initial optimism he gradually lost his faith in the BBC. In 1935 he could still refer to the, 'great civilising force of the BBC'²³⁹ but by 1936 he was already lamenting 'the decline' and accused the BBC of being defeatist:

'By having a "defeatist mentality" I mean that the BBC is inclined to abandon - if it has not already abandoned - the ambition to lead, and its directors are now to be found in the familiar and pitiable posture of demagogues, listening with their hands to their ears to catch any fleeting rumours of what the public wants.' 240

Not that Turner blamed the BBC entirely for this insidious tendency.

He frequently denounced the enemies of culture, as he saw them, who would reduce the BBC to the level of a mere public entertainer'.²⁴¹ He regarded the BBC's efforts to discover the tastes of listeners as the worst possible heresy, insisting that it was the task of the BBC to 'lead not be led', further asserting that,

'the public at large (and I refer to the public of every country) has no tastes, no preferences, but only habits - most of which are at present bad. Distinct tastes or preferences, if they have anything real behind them than mere lip service, are the mark of rare, highly developed individuals to think and feel for themselves.' 242

This view was, to say the least, élitist and contrasted strongly with some of the more democratic pronouncements in the political section of the paper. As Edward Hyams noted, editorial control over the Arts section of the paper was much weaker or even non-existent and this led to these inconsistencies.²⁴³ Turner liked the expansion of the audience which broadcasting generated but adhered strictly to the theory that 'serious' music, or his definition of 'serious' music, was a one-way process. He insisted that it would only remain good if the BBC resisted the proliferation of 'lesser' musical material - or the process of 'democratisation' as he termed it.²⁴⁴

Naturally, neither the views of Turner nor of Woolf would have met with much sympathy from working class socialists or liberals. They might join the paper in denouncing the musical output associated with sabbatarianism but they had a more definite preference for the very 'lowbrow' dance music and variety which the New Statesman attacked. It is true that the paper was fond of arguing that there was no such thing as a 'standard listener' but, though it pressed for alternative programmes to satisfy a wide range of tastes, it still gave the over-riding impression of disdain for the tastes of the people with which it attempted to ally politically.

5.9 The Patterns of Press Criticism

The pattern of broadcasting coverage by subject should now have emerged. It is clear that there are four major subjects which attracted a considerable amount of attention, regularly year by year throughout the period before 1939. It is equally obvious that a wide variety of other topics in broadcasting received the barest amount of attention in a haphazard way during the period. Important social questions such as the relationship between radio and the spoken word or the influence of broadcasting on religious observance received a paltry amount of comment on an apparently random basis. The reasons for this have not necessarily become any clearer. Possibly the press was accurate in reflecting a genuine indifference by its readership and the radio audience but certainly the press viewed the subject as one of little moment and the lack of coverage undoubtedly suggests that press comment on these issues could not have influenced the audience. Fortunately, the press was interested in the technical development of radio, in the constitutional position of the BBC, the programmes it produced and the personalities who performed in them. These subjects formed by far the greatest quantity of comment and, accompanied by the advertising, the total level of column space is sufficient for a further method of analysis.

If the statistics of content analysis are interpreted in aggregate it is possible to see the variations by year and by season. The results of this approach are expressed in Tables VIII-XI and Figures V-VI. The annual pattern of broadcasting is revealed very clearly. The serious weeklies took considerably longer to recognise broadcasting. The New Statesman did not realise the value of radio until 1925 and the Spectator was uncertain until 1924. The People was much quicker to understand the value of broadcasting as a source of copy. 1922 was the first year of substantial comment and from 1927 onwards the level of comment was significantly greater than in either of the two political weeklies. Table XI shows the predominance after the adjustment for total print area. The People was so interested in broadcasting that in 1922 it was already speculating about the practical prospects for a full broadcasting service before the creation of the

Table VIII: The New Statesman: Column Centimetres on Broadcasting, Quarterly and Annually.

Year	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total
1925	14	14	70	84	182
1926	14	42	-	126	182
1927	302	168	238	182	890
1928	94	322	130	124	670
1929	36	28	8	190	262
1930	168	90	62	84	404
1931	6	98	199	50	353
1932	84	14	92	67	257
1933	50	168	140	83	441
1934	344	157	232	190	923
1935	217	6	118	176	517
1936	126	56	144	248	574
1937	182	36	20	118	356
1938	69	83	42	129	323
1939	159	13	140	123	435

Table IX: The Spectator: Column Centimetres on Broadcasting, Quarterly and Annually.

Year	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total
1922	-	-	-	15	15
1923	61	6	-	4	71
1924	25	62	52	126	265
1925	72	-	97	74	243
1926	315	29	49	163	556
1927	508	278	143	234	1163
1928	270	397	176	326	1169
1929	599	387	239	333	1568
1930	298	241	297	457	1293
1931	157	8	15	222	402
1932	171	177	164	599	1111
1933	530	19	165	407	1121
1934	600	520	787	685	2592
1935	103	199	268	193	763
1936	220	88	95	217	620
1937	115	60	17	356	548
1938	191	78	86	57	412
1939	237	30	94	291	652

Table X: The People: Column Centimetres on Broadcasting,
Quarterly and Annually

Year	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total
1922	-	237	87	21	345
1923	67	380	340	266	1053
1924	261	235	319	345	1160
1925	496	706	479	838	2519
1926	552	277	323	779	1931
1927	782	1051	1197	1078	4108
1928	717	390	627	1672	3406
1929	1098	1009	863	1421	4391
1930	1627	1036	2001	2968	7632
1931	3894	1434	1534	2693	9555
1932	2649	1526	2175	3418	9768
1933	1642	878	1319	2256	6095
1934	1292	1103	1642	2340	6377
1935	1826	1069	1685	1940	6520
1936	1278	985	2020	1944	6227
1937	1357	1107	1654	2223	6341
1938	1747	1017	1792	2244	6800
1939	2098	1607	1008	1067	5780

Table XI. The People: Column Centimetres on Broadcasting.
(Adjusted to one third of total for comparison).

Year	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total
1922	-	79	29	7	115
1923	22.3	126.6	113.3	88.6	351
1924	87	78.3	106.3	115	386.6
1925	165	235.3	159.6	279.3	839.6
1926	184	92.3	108.6	259.6	643.6
1927	260.6	350.3	399	359.3	1369.3
1928	239	130	209	557.3	1135.3
1929	366	336.3	287.3	473.6	1463.6
1930	542.3	345.3	667	989.3	2544
1931	1298	478	511.3	897.6	3185
1932	883	508.6	725	1139.3	3256
1933	547.3	292.6	439.3	752	2031.6
1934	430.6	367.6	547.3	780	2125.6
1935	608.6	356.3	561.6	646.6	2173.3
1936	426	328.3	673.3	648	2075.6
1937	452.3	369	551.3	741	2113.6
1938	582.3	339	597.3	748	2266.6
1939	699.3	535.6	336	355.6	1926.6

Figure IV Year Total of Column Space in Broadcasting.

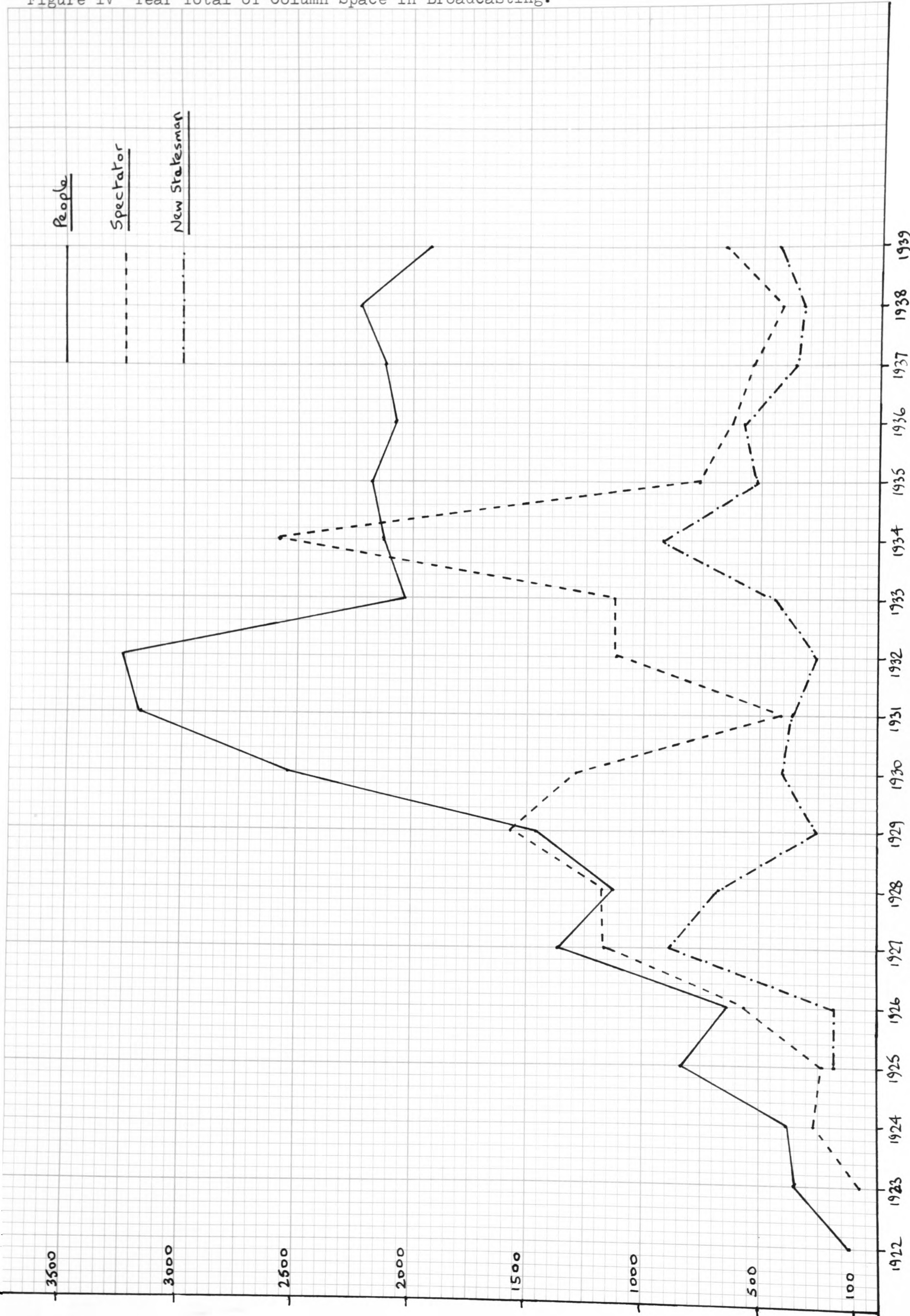
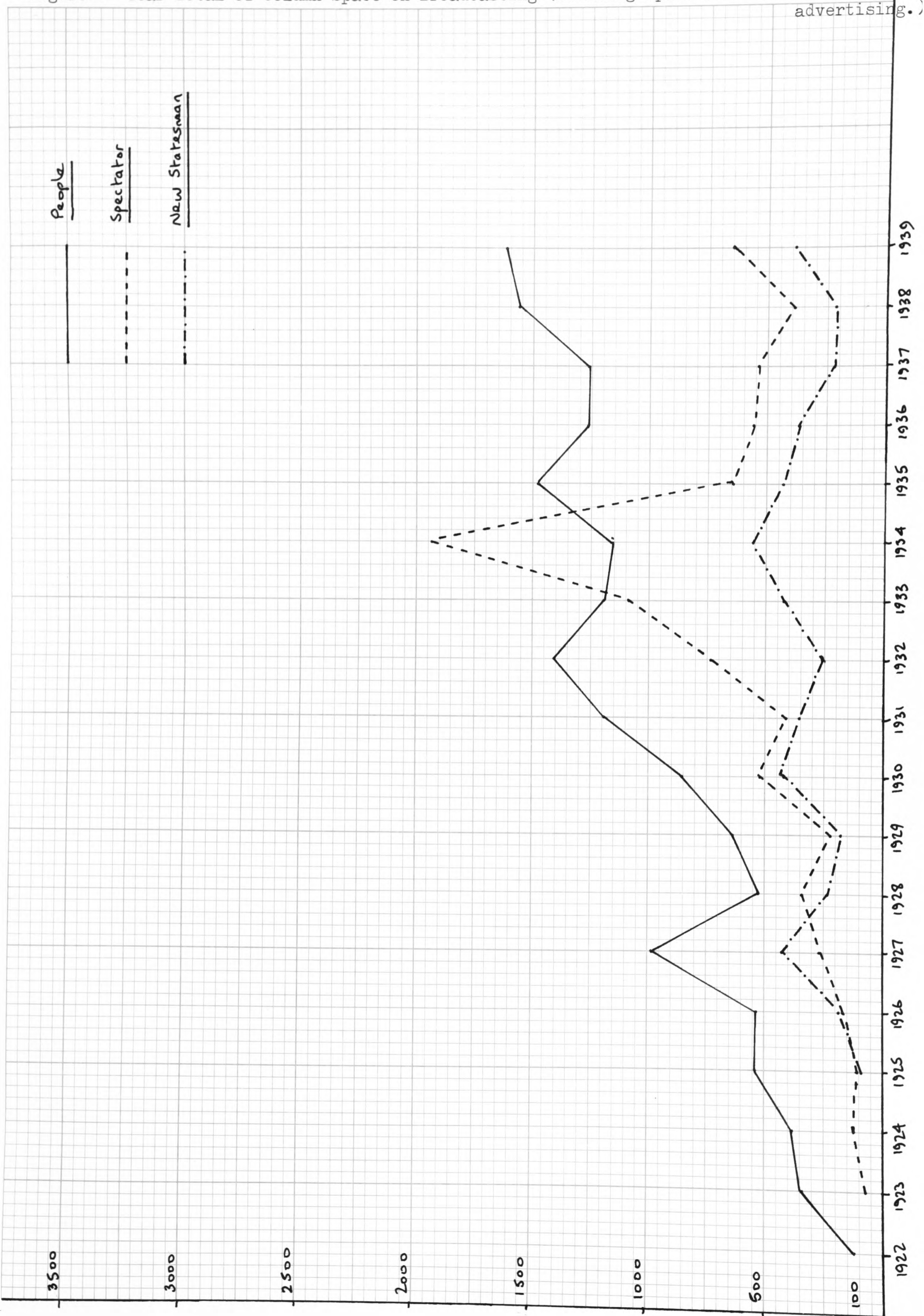


Figure V Year Total of Column Space⁻²³⁸ on Broadcasting (omitting space attributable to advertising.)



BBC became a reality.²⁴⁵ It was also producing the familiar flights of fancy on more fabulous prospects for radio. A headline promised, 'Secret Wireless' and an editorial anticipated listening-in to Mars,²⁴⁶ as well as the more realistic but slightly less exciting, 'Stock Exchange Prices and Wireless in the Home',²⁴⁷ and, 'Wireless for Airmen, Police and Train'.²⁴⁸

The Spectator waited for the formation of the BBC before making its first serious comments on radio. Like the People, it remarked upon the technical realities of radio. There the similarity ends. The Spectator noted the existence of radio in the USA as proof of what could be achieved in a very short time.²⁴⁹ The paper was quick to see the political possibilities, 'Election candidates will reach a whole electorate in a day, instead of taking a month',²⁵⁰ but the most considerable articles in this early period concentrated on the value of radio for broadcasting music.²⁵¹

The exception was the New Statesman where 1927 was the first year of substantial interest in broadcasting and the shock of the General Strike had been needed to force the BBC to the paper's attention.

After the variable start, the overall trend was towards a gradual extension of coverage for broadcasting subjects. Using Figures V and VI it is evident that there were two distinct peaks. If advertising is taken into account, the peak years were undoubtedly 1930-1933 for the People but 1934 for the New Statesman and particularly the Spectator. Without this factor the pattern changed quite considerably for the People but not for the other weeklies. The level of comment now appeared to run in three year cycles from 1932-1939, with the overall trend moving upwards. For the New Statesman and the Spectator the peak level remained in the period from 1933-1935 - just before the publication of the Ullswater Committee Report. The obvious anomaly is that the New Statesman and the Spectator seemed to lose interest in broadcasting in the period 1935-1939. After the stimulus of the Ullswater Committee, broadcasting subsided from the columns. This might appear curious since in these years it seems fairly clear that broadcasting had not diminished in intrinsic importance to

the public. Indeed the issuing of licences increased, albeit at a slower rate than before. Familiarity did not necessarily breed contempt but it did lessen the novel character of reporting on radio. Issues in radio merited less attention simply because they had become reasonably everyday, almost humdrum occurrences, already a part of the social fabric and no longer worthy of special comment. The other influential factor in the reduced coverage was the decline of radio's importance relative to other issues. The cloud of European fascism attracted the serious papers away from domestically orientated issues, such as radio, towards foreign affairs. It was quite apparent that if radio was specially mentioned in any of the three papers, it was nearly always in the context of a broadcast speech by a foreign politician, or the problem of foreign propaganda and the prospects for a BBC answer to it.²⁵² The fact that the People continued to record more items of broadcasting interest in this period is interesting. The subjects covered suggest two reasons for this. Although the level of advertising certainly fell, the interest in political broadcasting rose markedly and the level of programme comments rose slightly. This was caused by the extensive reporting of broadcast speeches by the main European leaders as war approached and the fact that the regular columns devoted to the list of the day's programmes were such an accepted fact of newspaper comment in the popular press that they could not easily be reduced.

Particularly in its formative stage, broadcasting was decidedly a seasonal topic for the press. Autumn and winter were the times when listening was most popular and when most attention was drawn to the medium. This tendency is most marked in the People where it is reinforced by similar seasonal increases in advertising; notably in October and the pre-Christmas issues. Fourteen out of the seventeen years covered by the analysis follow this pattern. The political weeklies show a much less precise trend. The Spectator, for instance, had relatively less of its advertising distributed into the first quarter of the year, particularly in 1926-1927 when portable radio sales were beginning and the possibility of outdoor listening made the spring and summer more attractive.²⁵³ If the advertising is omitted from the account, the weight towards the autumn

season is a good deal clearer. In the New Statesman a clear seasonal pattern of reporting has not emerged. The explanation lies in the style of comment used by the journal, the low levels of advertising and the distortions which occur very easily when dealing with relatively low levels of comment. The New Statesman like the Spectator, had less need to show immediacy in its criticisms. Articles could be, and usually were, more reflective, tending to deal with longer term issues. It only needed a couple of such articles to appear in one part of the year for the quarter concerned to emerge as the dominant quarter. In 1930, for instance, a long article on broadcasting technology and another on the varying tastes of listeners were together enough to make spring the dominant quarter.

This analysis has shown the value of the press as a commentator on the attitudes of the audience towards broadcasting. As the audience grew in size a newspaper reader was increasingly likely to be a listener as well. Each newspaper attracted a different range of readers and to appeal to their supposedly varied interests and tastes, each paper placed a different emphasis on broadcasting subjects. Very often the selections of subjects made by each paper contrasted sharply. In some cases the quality of the information supplied to the reader was distorted by poor reporting. Occasionally an issue was effectively censored - the public was denied a balanced view of the dispute between the press and the broadcasters on the broadcasting of news programmes.

The press also tried to lead opinion on broadcasting issues. Whether these attempts were successful is difficult to evaluate but the efforts themselves do stand as examples of the subjects which were considered to be important enough for further comment. The political weeklies concentrated on subjects such as the institutional position of broadcasting and the quality of the BBC's musical output. The popular Sunday newspaper stressed the quality and quantity of entertainment. The obvious contrast in the emphasis demonstrates the wide and often conflicting variety of interests which the broadcasters faced in preparing their programmes.

Chapter 6

Social Survey Research

Between the wars there was a general lack of interest in the social effects of broadcasting. Any interest that was shown by academics or social surveyors tended to be confined to sweeping statements on the relationship between radio and its audience with the vague but confident assumption - rather than any detailed proof - that this revolution in communication produced profound social effects. More contemporary investigation would have made it a great deal easier to substantiate these assumptions and, of course, it would assist in this analysis of broadcasting and its audience. Many commentators remarked on the causal connection between various social changes and the influence of broadcasting, operating alone or in unison with other media, but precious few went further and analysed the connection or sought an explanation. This omission is unfortunate and, as a consequence, the limited amount of social surveying is at a very high premium for the purposes of confirming or contradicting any evidence which emerges. It is the intention here to use this sparse evidence as a framework to aid in the assessment of the social influence of broadcasting and to place broadcasting more firmly into the overall context of inter-war leisure.

The explanation for the lack of contemporary interest in broadcasting could be founded on well researched judgement by social scientists that, between 1918 and 1939, broadcasting had so little impact that there was nothing to be gained from examining the possible social effects in any detail. However, this evaluation is quite implausible since there is little indication of anyone passing any judgement on such a rational basis. The evidence suggests neglect - as part of a blind-spot in the social sciences at British Universities before 1939. There was a great deficiency of data collection and analysis on most social questions before the Second World War.

Where broadcasting is concerned, the field is even more narrowly confined. Licence statistics were then available but not used very thoroughly except to point blandly at the marvellous national growth without any interest in the structure or composition.¹ The census returns did not include a question on licence holding. Lacking this basic data collection, it would be useful to turn

to other general social surveys. Sadly there are only three major ones in the period which even touch on radio and only then in such a peripheral way as to be of strictly limited value. There is Rowntree's study of York: Poverty and Progress,² Llewellyn Smith's project: , The New Survey of London Life and Labour³, and Caradog Jones': Survey of Merseyside.⁴ Apart from these, there is only one work of value concentrating entirely on the social effects of broadcasting. The BBC had offered £250 to any researcher who would do this.⁵ Tom Harrison was suggested by Professor T.H. Pear of Nottingham University and Bronislaw Malinowski, but declined due to the pressure of his Mass-Observation work.⁶ (Sadly Mass-Observation only vaguely touched on broadcasting before 1939). Caradog Jones also proved to be unwilling to accept the offer and the choice consequently fell upon Hilda Jennings and Winifred Gill of the Bristol University Settlement. Their findings on listening in the Bristol area were published by BBC Publications in July 1939.⁷

Other academics showed an interest in broadcasting without contributing anything more than useful advice. For instance, Professor Bowley of the L.S.E. was in great demand at the BBC for his services as a social statistician. Some social scientists realised the value of broadcasting as an aid to research in social questions, particularly in the area of adult education. Academics also gave broadcast talks on social questions with some success. But what was lacking was a sustained concentration of resources applied to data collection and analysis. The reliance on BBC and inaccurate press audience research for raw material is necessary through want of alternatives. More questionnaires and more samples would have done something to answer specific questions about broadcasting and the response of the audience, thus reducing the risk of confusion with the influences of the multiplicity of other media. Of course, good questionnaires were expensive and, to be fair, few British Universities were financially provided to carry out such work - even assuming that sufficient interest existed before 1939.

The lack of concern meant that the BBC was the main patron of academic uses of radio and research into its effects. It also provided the means for an economical, albeit rather unreliable, means of launching a specifically academic social survey. William Beveridge used radio as a means of collecting data on the family. As he argued: 'The ways of getting the essential facts for social science are so limited that no way which offers any chance ought to be neglected.'⁸ The series entitled Changes in Family Life ran from 17th February to 7th April 1932. Despite widespread press criticism about the dangerously authoritarian precedent of prying into private lives by means of a state institution, there was a good, and of course voluntary, response.⁹ Unfortunately wireless was of peripheral interest to the substance of the survey and little knowledge about radio's relationship with changes in the family was gained. Furthermore, the self-selective nature of the response cast doubts on the accuracy of the knowledge gained about the social composition of licence holders. The distribution of the returns followed the pattern suggested by licence statistics: the South of England was higher than average, the Midlands about average, whilst Northern England and Scotland and Wales were below average. However, the great middle-class over-representation in the returns could have been due to factors other than over-representation of that group in licence holding. It could also have been due to the greater tendency of the middle classes to listen to such talks - a case for which there is some evidence - or the predisposition of middle-class people to apply for and complete questionnaires.¹⁰

Contemporaneously, it was constantly asserted that broadcasting must have social effects, if only because it existed as a physical reality rather than a scientific abstraction. Ogilvie, the new Director General of the BBC, expressed such a view in his introduction to the book by Jennings and Gill:

'So revolutionary a change in national and international communications must have been reflected in the everyday life and tastes and points of view of us all. There is much talk of the influence of wireless, yet very little study has been made to determine in what that change consists.'¹¹

Radio arrived at the time when the consumer society was gaining considerable strength. The use of more household goods was reducing the number of obligatory domestic activities, such as the drudgery of household work, thus increasing the time available for other leisure activities. This was particularly true in the case of electrical goods. Clearly the rate at which households absorbed consumer goods varied according to the economic group of the occupants. The rate of expansion of the national grid for electric power and the rapid technological development of electrical devices also influenced the pattern of use. Consequently the share which radio took from this expanding leisure time was certain to vary tremendously - by geographical situation, by socio-economic class and by time. Social surveyors certainly lacked sufficient detailed evidence to make many serious judgements on this point. They were able to do little more than indicate the attractiveness of radio and the consequent likelihood that radio would be employed increasingly as a leisure activity. BBC audience research figures gave a more definite answer only for the period after 1937 when licence holding was quite close to the saturation point and broadcasting was a very considerable leisure activity.

Inevitably some particular social effects of broadcasting were expected from the beginning. It did not require a tremendous imagination to foresee that an inherent part of the medium was its capacity to concentrate attention on the home. Even following the introduction of portable sets, this prophecy was confirmed by the most casual social observation. It was also expected that a radio set would be a great solace to the housebound, the aged, the sick and the handicapped. This, too, was confirmed and radio became another positive means of aid for philanthropy. Campaigns to purchase radios for the blind or particularly for those confined by sickness or age to public institutions became a new part of charitable action and social concern. Rowntree went further, arguing from his observations in York, that the solace of radio ran much wider:

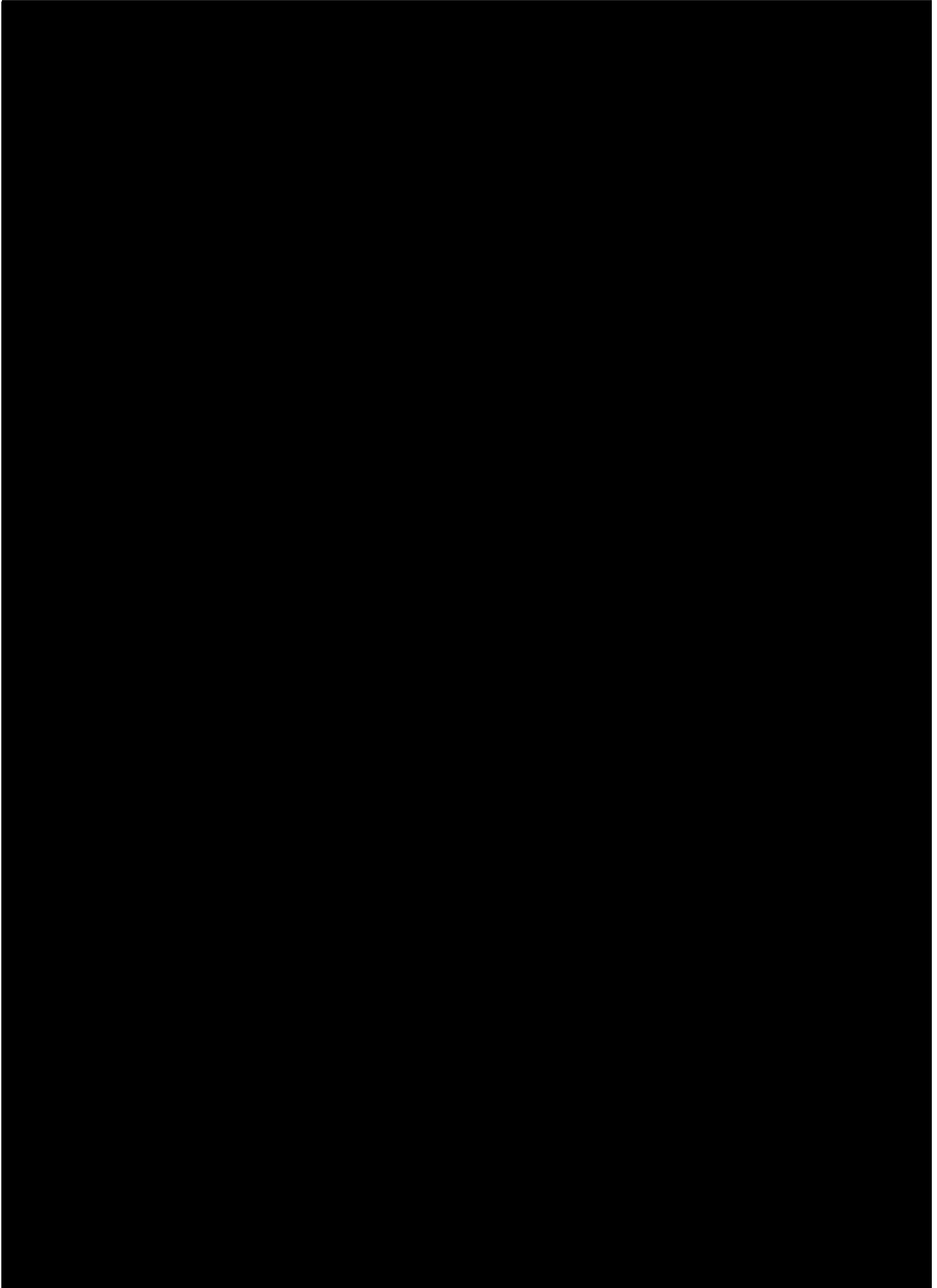
'Again and again, the idea is expressed, that the wireless is a companionable thing. "It is a good companion." It is used "to keep the family company." Wireless is a companion to anyone alone in a room

with some hand occupation, e.g. knitting or sewing.¹²

The concomitant of this home-centred existence could be seen in a reduction of the extended family system, where radio helped to concentrate attention on the immediate occupants of the dwelling itself.¹³ It could also be seen as the means for affecting a reduction of interest or participation in leisure activities which fell outside the home. The only flaw in this line of thought is that it implies a straight-forward correlation between the extension of licence holding and the tendency to remain in the home. In the first few years of broadcasting, the reverse was generally true. Communal listening was the rule rather than the exception and this might be expected to create an outward-looking tendency, away from the confines of the home. At some point, probably from 1927 onwards but with some regional variations, this aspect of broadcasting declined and the expected consequences of broadcasting were now satisfied. Yet there were still sufficient cases of listening outside the home - in pubs or in the course of celebrations such as the Coronation - to suggest that radio was not a wholly domesticating influence. Radio broadcasting did not necessarily lead to harmony at home. Collective listening within the family circle could easily be disrupted by divergent programme preferences. Broadcasting might become 'one of the petty tyrannies of family life'¹⁴ when parents and their children could not agree. Jennings and Gill sought more information. As Figure I shows, the dominant role in the choice of programmes was the father but in many cases collective decisions were taken. Evidently home-centred listening was rarely an individual experience and programmes were heard either by consensus or dominant parental decisions.¹⁵

Other social changes were a consequence of deliberate social engineering by the BBC. The precise effects were not always clear or accurately predicted but the essential intent was there. The key decision concerned the technological application of radio transmissions. The decision to end local outputs, to increase the use of simultaneous broadcasting and eventually to launch a national programme with a series of regional alternatives - all had important social

Figure I . Who Chooses the Programmes?



consequences. The national basis of the broadcasting pattern, established in 1925 and thereafter more firmly entrenched with each new transmitter, raised many questions about the impact which it would have on British social life. Would it help to produce a common culture, particularly through extensive broadcasting of the arts, music and drama and the use of a standardised form of speech? Would it, as a consequence, usurp alternative cultural activities entirely to produce tedious uniformity? Were there any forces in the localities which would resist such an apparently inexorable force?

It seems improbably that broadcasting could have remained on a local basis with a very weak central co-ordinating power, given the pressures of European broadcasting and the lack of a feasible technological alternative but, if it had remained, it is reasonably safe to assume that locally generated material would have been more favoured. Of course, national material could never have been totally excluded, once the ability to broadcast simultaneously from all stations was a proven reality, because the contribution from nationally generated programmes would have irresistably arisen to exploit radio's advantage over newspapers for immediacy in supplying national news. Nonetheless the weighting would almost certainly have been different and the social consequences equally certainly modified.

The problem with using the work of the social surveyors to corroborate findings on broadcasting is that they all started with the assumption that the extension of a uniform, national service was inherently good. This value judgement rested on the belief that radio would act as a desirable social weapon in the war against class conflict, social distinctions and antagonisms. Thus, Jennings and Gill set out to look for this tendency - as they argued in their objectives:

'Are the greater possibilities of common cultural enjoyments tending to decrease class barriers and making social unity more possible? 16

To this self-imposed conundrum they replied:

'The prevalent habit of daily listening to the news, the opportunities for cultural enjoyments, such as music and drama, which were formerly denied to the poorer sections of the population, the increased familiarity with a standardised diction and a greater vocabulary, tend to do away with those class barriers which are the result of paucity of common interests. Broadcasting is thus an equalising and unifying factor in national life.' 17

The prior judgement may have led to a less than critical approach and they may have ignored some of the less desirable, enervating consequences of a national system which were leading to dull cultural uniformity.

Another major philosophical intent of the BBC concerned the programme policy of 'uplift'. Reith intended to set what he saw as higher cultural standards which, when applied to broadcast programmes, would pass by some form of osmosis to the minds of the listeners. In practice this meant the application of a particular social pattern of behaviour to the whole country, raising educational or cultural standards to the level held by the metropolitan middle class élite employed by the BBC. Social surveyors did not apply themselves very much to this question. This was partly due to difficulty of evaluation. The effects of such a policy, if any, were almost certain to be diffuse and normally imperceptible over a short period. A longer term perspective was essential.

Interestingly, there was some contemporary awareness of the possible damage such a policy might cause, just as there were objections to the ousting of local broadcasting and the implementation of national and regional broadcasting. These issues were loudly voiced by listeners, by the popular press and by critics from inside the BBC, such as Peter Eckersley and Hilda Matheson. This made it surprising that no academics took advantage of the protests and applied their energies to an investigation of such questions.

The aspect of BBC output which did attract attention was the time of listening. The provision of a regular broadcasting system was a great incentive to listening - with programmes appearing at known times, on a daily or weekly basis. This certainly was much more likely to attract an audience than a

random series of broadcasts, at short notice, and with a less clearly defined programme pattern. There was, however, a serious limit to the provision of this regular service. That was the restriction on the hours of broadcasting. At no time before 1939 did broadcasting begin before 10.30 a.m. thus giving the commercial and other foreign stations free play in the early morning. In 1923, the starting time had only been at 3.30 p.m. and even when this was moved to the earlier time, there were frequent gaps during the rest of the day.¹⁸ These gaps were between 10.45 a.m. and noon and from 2.00 p.m. to 2.25 p.m. each weekday.¹⁹ Weekends were the main blackspot. Only in 1932 was there non-stop broadcasting from noon to midnight on Saturdays.²⁰ On Sundays, it was not until 1933 that the period between 6.15 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. was filled.²¹

Many of these limits were imposed as concessions to outside groups, such as the Press Agencies' ban on early news summaries, or the Radio Manufacturers' insistence on a test period each day. The self-imposed restriction was on Sunday to avoid a clash with the evening services in churches.

Commercial broadcasting companies realised that these limitations presented them with a fine opportunity to provide a service at times when people were normally able to listen but were not provided with BBC broadcasts. Some simple research exposed the potential for broadcasting to a considerable part of the listening population, unchallenged by a rival domestic service for many hours each day. The IBC, for instance, issued a pamphlet to advertisers in an attempt to attract buyers for their period of 'broadcasting time' on Radio Normandie. The evidence for early morning listening was based on the following advice:

'We asked the electricity engineer of a thriving London suburb and he, very kindly, had a look at his supply loading chart which, to our surprise, indicated that 74% of the population in his district got up between 7 and 8.00 a.m., while 24% got up before 7.00 a.m. This certainly seemed interesting, so we went to his competitor - (one of Mr. Therm's engineers), and he told us that 75% of the gas consumers were up before 8 o'clock.' 22

Of course these figures were measuring potential audiences but information derived from public utilities was an extremely useful guide to the general

pattern of social activity which influenced the size of the audience throughout the day. Another similar example of social research also yielded some information on the times at which the audience was able to listen.

The People's Food, by Crawford and Broadley produced survey material of general social interest which could be used as valuable raw material for estimating the potential audience.²³ The survey was, however, limited by its restriction to households in major urban areas throughout the country. The book openly noted the importance of meal times to the broadcaster since this was a likely time for listening. The time of breakfast was discovered to be commonly shared by all social classes in the hour from 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. This was, however, increasingly taken at home by working men: formerly they had taken breakfast at work because the working day started much earlier particularly before the First World War. This potential listening period was never served by the BBC before 1939 and hence the market was left completely open to the foreign commercial stations which duly filled the gap.²⁴ The BBC was well aware of this but never felt inclined to take any action.

1.00 p.m. was the only specific time which was shared by all social classes as a meal time. Everywhere else there was some disparity particularly between those earning less than £5 per week and those earning more. Crawford and Broadley, the authors, noted the failure of all the broadcasting stations to meet the needs of the audience at this common meal time:

'It is interesting to note that whereas the foreign stations which provide commercial broadcasts for the English market have developed extensive programmes before, during, and following the breakfast period, they have as yet done little to provide similar entertainment for the midday break. It is true that programmes provided during the luncheon interval would not reach those who lunch in restaurants and factories, but it must be remembered that the great majority of the population take their midday meal at home.'²⁵

The most interesting disparity from the point of view of the broadcaster was the contrast between the working class 'high tea', usually taken from 5 to 5.30 p.m., immediately after work, and the upper class 'tea' which was most often eaten between 4.30 and 5.00 p.m. This variation continued with the 'upper' class 'dinner' being normally taken between 7.30 and 8.00 p.m., whilst

Table I: The Times of Breakfast²⁶

Number of Families	Class AA 422	Class A 466	Class B 971	Class C 2,124	Class D 1,006
Before 6.30 a.m.	-	-	0.2%	0.8%	1.5%
6.30 and before 7.00 a.m.	-	-	0.5%	1.8%	3.7%
7.00 and before 7.30 a.m.	0.2%	0.8%	2.9%	9.3%	10.0%
7.30 and before 8.00 a.m.	3.3%	5.6%	11.5%	22.4%	18.9%
8.00 and before 8.30 a.m.	33.4%	45.1%	51.3%	41.1%	32.6%
8.30 and before 9.00 a.m.	34.8%	25.1%	18.5%	12.4%	14.5%
9.00 and before 9.30 a.m.	21.6%	17.4%	11.6%	8.1%	12.5%
9.30 and before 10.00 a.m.	4.7%	4.1%	1.5%	2.1%	2.8%
10.00 a.m. or later	1.0%	1.3%	1.5%	1.0%	2.5%
No information given	1.0%	0.6%	0.5%	1.0%	1.0%

Social Class	Income	% of British Population
AA	£1,000 +	1
A	£500 - £999	4
B	£250 - £499	20
C	£125 - £249	60
D	Under £125	15

the more numerous working class generally ate 'supper' between 9.00 and 9.30 p.m. The book noticed that the 'high tea' had moved to a considerably earlier time than before the First World War - when 6.00 to 6.30 p.m. was the most popular time - a change also caused by the reduction in the length of the working day. The book outlined the significance of the new position for broadcasters:

'The hour of the tea-time meal is even more important to wireless broadcasters than breakfast and lunch. The Children's Hour must be fitted in between their return from school and tea-time or postponed until tea is well over. A programme of special appeal to housewives will not secure its maximum listening public if it clashes with the preparation of tea or the washing up.' 27

Crawford and Broadley did not go further and examine the consequences of the BBC's limitations on the hours of broadcasting. The net effect of the limit is hard to estimate. Some potential daytime listeners, out of range for good foreign station reception, may have been discouraged from owning a set by the gaps in the BBC service. However, the provision of a full evening programme was maintained, except on Sundays, and this was probably the decisive influence on set ownership, since that was the time when most of the population was free to listen.²⁸ Unfortunately no social surveyors chose to confirm these speculations, although the BBC did eventually address itself to the question and audience research did, largely verify many of the findings of the People's Food. 29

Table II: The Time of Tea³⁰

Number of Families	Class AA	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
	422 %	466 %	971 %	2,124 %	1,006 %
Before 4.00 p.m.	1.2	0.6	0.5	1.2	0.8
4.00 and before 4.30 p.m.	25.1	24.2	12.0	7.2	6.1
4.30 and before 5.00 p.m.	35.6	34.6	21.8	17.8	18.0
5.00 and before 5.30 p.m.	26.3	22.7	35.6	40.3	40.0
5.30 and before 6.00 p.m.	2.1	2.4	10.7	13.8	12.7
6.00 and before 6.30 p.m.	2.6	6.7	9.1	9.9	9.6
6.30 and before 7.00 p.m.	1.0	1.3	1.4	2.0	1.9
7.00 or later	0.2	-	0.1	0.8	0.3
Not taken	3.1	3.0	4.4	4.7	8.3
No information	2.8	4.5	4.4	2.3	2.3

Table III: The Time of the Evening Meal³¹

Number of Families	Class AA	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
	422 %	466 %	971 %	2,124 %	1,006 %
Before 6.00 p.m.	-	0.2	0.3	1.6	2.3
6.00 and before 6.30 p.m.	1.2	3.0	2.5	2.9	2.3
6.30 and before 7.00 p.m.	3.8	4.3	4.6	2.5	2.1
7.00 and before 7.30 p.m.	15.4	17.0	11.0	3.8	3.6
7.30 and before 8.00 p.m.	36.3	25.5	8.9	5.1	3.7
8.00 and before 8.30 p.m.	23.2	15.9	9.9	7.9	8.5
8.30 and before 9.00 p.m.	6.2	7.9	10.0	8.1	8.3
9.00 and before 9.30 p.m.	6.6	9.5	13.4	21.2	21.3
9.30 and before 10.00 p.m.	2.6	5.2	16.4	16.5	11.7
10.00 and before 10.30 p.m.	1.4	4.7	12.7	17.0	13.1
10.30 and before 11.00 p.m.	-	1.9	2.2	3.6	3.4
11.00 and later	0.2	0.6	0.8	1.2	2.3
Not taken	0.5	2.4	3.4	5.6	14.9
No information	2.6	2.1	4.0	3.5	2.7

6.2 Broadcasting and Leisure

Before broadcasting can be placed in its context of inter-war leisure, it is absolutely crucial to state what is meant by the term. In this instance, leisure is seen in the terms of an advanced industrial society. The long working hours in the nineteenth century had led Marx to define any respite from work as mere 'reproduction of the labour force.' But when the working week was being reduced, this view became outmoded and rather crude. Leisure was more accurately seen as the description of the free time which this reduction afforded: the time providing an opportunity for self-expression. Leisure was now defined as the escape from the tyranny of work: where work is a rigid necessity and leisure is any non-obligatory activity outside the work place.³² Yet, as Dumazedier has observed, this was still not the complete definition - other social obligations such as domestic duties are also obligatory:

'Briefly, and most emphatically, contemporary leisure is defined by contrast not just to one's job, but to all of the ordinary necessities and obligations of existence, and it must be remembered that they who have and use leisure regard it as part of the dialectic of daily living, where all elements operate and interoperate.'³³

Certainly, broadcasting arrived as the time available for non-obligatory activities was increasing significantly. Llewellyn Smith thought that the emergence of the $5\frac{1}{2}$ day week was one of the most significant influences on social change since Charles Booth's original survey.³⁴ The way broadcasting fitted in with this expanding leisure appears to be rather interesting. To begin with, it is plausible to suggest that expanding leisure allowed broadcasting to fill the surplus available time without necessarily supplanting other leisure activities. This theory is attractive but is difficult to prove directly. In this context social surveyors had something to offer. They discovered quite quickly that radio was complementary to many other leisure activities. Listeners could be occupied in other activities whilst listening. They could even be engaged in obligatory tasks such as housework

and listen at the same time.³⁵ Thus it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that many other activities continued even at peak listening times.

Jennings and Gill found that, apart from reading, there was little sign of hobbies being adversely affected by radio and they were often carried on simultaneously with listening.³⁶ Whilst noting the debilitating effect of broadcasting upon children's homework, Rowntree also stressed the value of radio as a companion for women at home,³⁷ particularly during the daytime, and on the widespread tendency to use radio as a background to many other activities:

'Most cases of the more indiscriminate use of wireless occur on Sundays when it is often customary to switch on to Luxembourg first thing in the morning and leave it on all day.'

Or, as he argued more generally,

'it is also to a large extent customary to put on dance music, or other light music, at meal times.'³⁸

Thus, apart from activities away from the range of a set, portable or otherwise, or the influence of direct competitors, such as reading or music making, many activities were supplemented rather than supplanted by radio.

In fact, social surveyors were a little stronger on the question of the influence of broadcasting on other leisure activities. They were particularly concerned that radio might supplant other pastimes. The relative cheapness of radio was considered to be a major factor. As Llewellyn Smith argued:

'It looks as if "wireless", though an entirely post-war development, has already come to play a part in London working class life not less important than the cinema. As an agreeable means of passing leisure time in comfort, with no effort and little expense, "listening-in" is difficult to beat, and at the same time broadcasting is an immensely powerful instrument for the diffusion of popular cultural entertainment.'³⁹

The social surveyors were, in effect, looking at the uses and gratifications of radio by the audience. The leisure context was heavily stressed. In his survey of Merseyside, Caradog Jones' questionnaire placed radio as only one amongst twenty-three other categories of possible leisure activities during a particular week.⁴⁰ Rowntree was similarly anxious to quantify the level of interest in radio.⁴¹ However, like Caradog Jones, the size of sample he used was so small that its reliability was in doubt and it was, in any case, less

useful as a means of judging qualitative effects. Jennings and Gill were, for instance, quite openly critical of their own efforts through questionnaires:

'Mere statistics as to listeners and programmes listened to are not sufficient in themselves to give a picture of qualitative effects.' 42

Rowntree identified two main areas where radio was dominant: in the provision of news and music. This provides a useful guide to the best structure for a broader analysis - the use of radio for information and the provision of entertainment. The provision of radio news bulletins was widely considered to be one of the most critical influences on public attitudes. People were thought to be much better informed about national events than hitherto - that a definite feeling of national participation was created by broadcasting.⁴³ The quality, then unique to radio, of transmitting the actual voices and background atmosphere at an event as it happened added significantly to its effectiveness. In the localities this was particularly clear whenever the monarchy was involved in broadcast events. The intermediary role of radio was less obvious than that of the press. It was easier to feel involved when radio allowed listeners to hear people speak for themselves - without any need for print to express their words indirectly. The press survived because it was able to reinforce the message received but it was never able to compete properly with the directness and immediacy of radio. Even when the bulletins were restricted by the press and press agencies so that they could not be broadcast in the daytime, radio still had a decided advantage. Mundane items such as weather forecasts were always much more effective when broadcast than when shown in print. This was especially evident from the demand for them, predominantly in rural areas. Rowntree was very impressed by the appetite for listening in this respect:

'As important as the entertainment value of wireless is its value in giving the news of the day. Whatever else is missed, one or other of the news summaries is generally listened to. Different parts of the news may appeal to different listeners, the weather forecast to the cyclist or the gardener; the fat stock prices to the farmer; the results of sporting events to the majority of men; but there is also a general desire to know what is happening at home and abroad.' 44

The decline in religious observance was often attributed by critics to the arrival of radio. The social surveyors were less certain of this.

They pointed out the advantages of exposing the invalided and the aged to religious broadcasts. This was a considerable social contribution. Rowntree realised the difficulty of assessment:

'To what extent the fact that people can listen at home to a service is affecting church attendance it is impossible to say, for one does not know how many of those listening-in to services would have attended church had there been no wireless.'

His questionnaire showed that about half of those replying did listen to a religious broadcast each week and thought that, on balance, radio had served 'to bring religious teaching to many homes whose members seldom, if ever, attend a place of worship.'⁴⁵ Jennings and Gill supported the view that religious attendance fell only slightly, and largely because the elderly and infirm stayed at home:

'It seems that churchgoers felt that personal participation in the service, worship in fellowship with others, and a suitable environment were fundamental needs which could not be met by listening to broadcast services.'⁴⁶

They felt that the real effect was neutral - radio brought more into contact with religion but neither discouraged attendance nor stimulated new membership of congregations.

In the case of sport there was a similar lack of proof that radio discouraged spectating or participation. Sporting news was an entirely novel service filling the void until the sports editions of the local press emerged. The consensus seems to be that radio expanded interest in sport, particularly in national terms. Jennings and Gill suggested the Boat Race as a typical example, quoting one of their informants: 'Look how that's come to the fore. We never used to hear anything about that, and now there's many wouldn't miss it.'⁴⁷ In fact more typical examples would seem to be Boxing and Association Football. Boxing at national level had been a big radio attraction since the days before the BBC when Carpentier had fought Lewis in 1922.⁴⁸ Interest in football was characterised by the wide-spread frustration at the conflict between the Football Association and the BBC which denied the audience a full running commentary on the 1929 F.A. Cup Final.⁴⁹ When running commentaries finally

became widespread their popularity was not in doubt. Cricket and horse racing were well provided for, considerably enhancing their fortunes. Higher admission charges for these sports had kept many working class men away and radio provided a new means of contact for them.⁵⁰

The effect of radio on politics was not an area for the social surveyors to enter. They had little to contribute beyond the observation that public meetings were attended less well⁵¹ and that, more vaguely, 'many people who would not go to a meeting to hear a political opponent will listen to what he has to say on the air and afterwards discuss his point of view.'⁵² More specifically, it seemed that people might be more eager to listen to national leaders when they broadcast rather than go out to hear their local political figures. In this case, however, the social surveyor was considerably less able to substantiate such claims and resorted to mere speculation on the likely consequences.

The backbone of the BBC's social engineering was its attempt at formal education. This area merits a study in its own right but it is possible to draw something from the work of social surveyors. Apart from schools' broadcasting, the formal educational broadcasts were undoubtedly a failure. The listening groups organised by the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education did not attract widespread support despite the efforts of academics such as T.H. Pear and T.H. Searls. Possibly the medium was an inadequate method of teaching, with the lack of the normal two way teacher - pupil relationship being difficult to accept. Certainly there was no lack of interest in acquiring further knowledge amongst a large part of the population. Many listeners had left school at thirteen or fourteen and consequently had plenty of untapped potential. Perhaps the competition from the many existing further educational opportunities reduced involvement. Llewellyn Smith felt that this was the case in London:

'Of these newer agencies one of the most powerful is Broadcasting House, which offers its excellent educational talks to all and sundry who wish to listen and are able to listen at the right moment. But up to the present there has not been in London any organisation of 'listening groups' under leaders, such as have been found to be of value in some other

parts of the country. This is ascribed to the fact that in London the ground is so well covered by the various types of institutes.' 53

Of course, co-operation between the two educational systems did take place. The WEA was very willing to co-operate and philanthropic organisations, such as the Carnegie Trust, provided money for radio sets and helped to form listening groups amongst the unemployed in four areas of Britain: Lanarkshire, Yorkshire, the West Midlands and Kent.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the schemes were not successful. The reports made by the organising committees shed some light on their failings. First there was some suspicion of officialdom and the possibility that attendance at a group might lead to trouble from the Labour Exchanges 'for not genuinely seeking work.'⁵⁵ There was also the inevitable demoralisation amongst the unemployed which left them apathetic and difficult to organise.⁵⁶ Of more significance was the question of speech. In Scotland this was a very serious problem but even in Yorkshire there was a difficulty:

'There is still much room for improvement both in simplification of language and speed of delivery. The terms employed are still too academic and though their unfamiliarity put a double strain upon the untrained listener of having to interpret the language, and of following the line of thought of the speaker.' 57

The topics chosen for talks also came under attack. From Yorkshire came the recommendation that:

'Unemployed men have on the whole a hum-drum and sometimes squalid existence especially in the cities and talks should be devised which relate to the hobbies and pastimes in which they engage.' 58

In the West Midlands the lack of empathy between the subject matter and working-class men was also observed:

'The talks most suitable for discussion are those connected with everyday life and interests of members to which they can make their own contributions from personal knowledge; but many talks which are not suitable for discussion are welcome as a means of acquiring knowledge.' 59

These criticisms go some way towards an explanation for the failure to get fuller participation. The BBC recognised this and a Press Release of 14th December 1934 announced the demise of the CCBAE, and although co-operation was not entirely terminated, the active role of the BBC in helping the listening groups was very much diminished.⁶⁰

The real educational effect of broadcasting was almost completely informal and here the social surveyors were much more observant. The talks were more effective in broadening the outlook of the casual listener. In the case of the unemployed, it was a series of talks on their own plight entitled 'Men Talking' which captured much wider attention because it allowed the men to speak for themselves. At that time it was an innovation which popularity rapidly turned into a standard technique of broadcasting. Other talks on subjects such as travel or gardening were also observed to be popular. The general picture was of a wide range of minority programmes which cumulatively attracted a large audience. Jennings and Gill bear this out:

'Nine-tenths of those questioned said that broadcasting had introduced fresh subjects to them, and of this number two-thirds had kept a lookout for further reference to the subject in the press or in general conversation.' 61

Further:

'Approximately 50% of the listeners who said that the wireless had introduced new interests to them also replied that they had taken some steps to follow up these interests. As a rule, such steps did not include more than reading a book or books on the subject of the talk.' 62

This was clear evidence that radio could stimulate interest, stir people into action and almost certainly broaden their knowledge of a wide range of topics. In York, Rowntree analysed the returns of the local relay company, then serving 3,000 subscribers. He discovered a considerable minority interest in talks and concurred that, 'the wireless is also carrying on educational work of considerable importance.' 63

The impact on reading was more mixed. Radio could provide the incentive to read a book cited in a broadcast and there was particular evidence from libraries that novels dramatised for the radio were quickly put under heavy demand. Whilst it was true that reading suffered if it came into direct competition with radio, simply because it was difficult to read and listen at the same time, no diminution of reading was discerned. The most outstanding case of this concerned the press. Jennings and Gill found that all but a small

minority gave more credence to the political objectivity of the broadcast news when compared with the coverage of the press. But there was no sign that newspaper consumption fell.⁶⁴ The reinforcement value of the written word was important. In the case of local newspapers there was no real competition from news bulletins. Local news was not covered in any detail by radio and radio could not satisfy the need of local advertising at that time - neither the public corporation because of its Charter, nor the nationally orientated commercial stations. The immediacy of news bulletins was of more relevance to the national press and there was a decided change in format to meet the competition. Once the BBC news service had been created and the fetters of press agency restrictions removed this became more critical. Certainly other causes were partly responsible for the changes. There was heavy competition within the newspaper business. Better technology allowed a much higher quality of reproduction for photography on newsprint. The newsreels, which came to the cinemas in the thirties, created a sharper visual impression of the news. But the most influential cause seems to have been a consequence of the developed listening to radio news bulletins. The bulletins, out of necessity, were briefer and sharper than a newspaper report. The mere fact of speech reduced the amount of news that could be conveyed within a reasonable time span. The press competed by reducing the amount of fine print. Headlines became bolder, columns were doubled and articles in the more popular papers were frequently supported by photographs. The stress was placed on shorter sentences, concise paragraphs and bolder representation. The contrast between the style of the twenties, with tightly knit fine print covering all the pages of both national and local newspapers and the thirties, with a much lower density of print on each page, is easily the most noticeable feature of the inter-war press. Radio helped to create the taste for such a change.

Radio was often attributed as the cause of a national obsession with another, very specialised type of information: precise time. The validity of this argument seems to be somewhat wanting. The tyranny of the machine, the

demands of industrial production following the industrial revolution seems to have been more fundamental in this respect. In fact attempts by the BBC to 'change' time, as it were, met with absolute failure. The logic of the BBC's case for the 'change' was that a twenty-four hour clock would reduce the amount of confusion in programme timetabling - and at the same time have wider implications. On this occasion the resentment of the patronising, paternalist tone of the BBC and the dislike of 'Big Brother' so openly applying its social engineering policy led to defeat for the BBC at the hands of a concerted press and public campaign. The trial lasted only three months and was terminated forthwith during the summer of 1934.⁶⁵

No great degree of perception was needed to discover that the other essential demand placed on radio was for entertainment. This was the dominant concern, emphasised by the massive levels of listening to the commercial stations on Sundays when the BBC consistently refused to concede to this demand.⁶⁶ The social surveyors pointed out the importance of entertainment programmes and BBC audience research figures were to confirm the validity of such assertions in terms of the high levels of listening to such programmes and the considerable satisfaction extracted. In the twenties, commercial lobbies and the returns from press surveys all revealed this preference. Thus there is nothing remarkable in discovering that musical programmes, variety or comedy shows and, to a lesser extent, radio drama were the real attraction for listeners.

Most social surveyors agreed that radio had stimulated an interest in music and certainly broadened the knowledge of music.⁶⁷ As with much of their research, the difficulty was finding a base to work from. It was difficult to establish the level of musical knowledge before radio arrived.⁶⁸ If anything more than a guess could be made at this, then the new level had to be judged by more sophisticated means than regular visits to building sites to listen for labourers whistling Schubert's Unfinished Symphony as they carried their hods. Llewellyn Smith was in the best position to make a judgement, having the valuable assistance of a previous study for comparison. Sadly he missed the opportunity.

He agreed vaguely that musical knowledge was expanding because of the increased opportunities for hearing popular cultural entertainments. His real concern was speculative and lay elsewhere:

'A much more subtle and imminent danger is lest the systematic broadcasting of good music rendered by the best artists may react unfavourably on the demand for the services of musicians of lower rank, and so on the prospects of a musical career as a profession, with the result that eventually the basis of selection of first rate executants, on whom the quality of BBC concerts depends, may be dangerously narrowed.' 69

Others were less sure. Of course, W.J. Turner of the New Statesman held that this might actually be a good thing.⁷⁰

The economy of listening to radio entertainment undoubtedly made it attractive in comparison with live performances outside the home. The Music Hall was already dying with the competition from the cinema. Radio merely dealt a death blow to something that was already ailing. Yet if radio kept people at home because it was cheap, it also introduced entertainments to many of the really poor who could not afford any live entertainments. In this sense, radio was a great boon to all but a small residuum of the poor before 1939.

Increased exposure to radio could kill some features of musical performance or variety. In comedy the life of a joke was reduced tremendously. One exposure to a national audience killed a 'gag' which would otherwise have done the rounds of the country for a year or more. However, the social surveyors found little to suggest that radio was actually sapping the will to play a musical instrument in the home - either through sheer enervation or through a fatalistic acceptance that a higher standard could not be reached. Jennings and Gill felt that the decline was marginal. When broadcasting began there was a temporary decline, but then broadcasting began to act as an incentive to amateur playing because of the wide example of musical performance with which it inspired the performer.⁷¹ Hymn singing was definitely reduced in the home but this could have been due to the decline in religious observance.⁷² In York, Rowntree found little evidence to suggest a general decline of musical performance in the home.⁷³ Like Jennings and Gill he

turned to musical instrument salesmen and sheet music sellers for evidence. Neither reported a decline in either Bristol or York. There was, however, the suggestion that the interest stimulated by music was reflected more and more in increased sales of gramophone records rather than in the sheet music necessary to actually perform the piece. As one correspondent remarked:

'You hear something you like on the wireless - then you go out and buy a record of it, and you get the music and play it.' ⁷⁴

The increasing success of gramophone records in the twenties and thirties was proof enough of that tendency.

In the case of drama the effect was less easy to discern. Audiences were smaller for radio plays even if the books so dramatised were widely demanded from libraries. A decline in theatre attendance could be attributed rather more to the onslaught of the cinema. It seems that the main beneficiaries were those such as housewives who were exposed to drama for the first time through day-time broadcasts from the BBC, and had previously had no contact whatsoever with theatres because of the cost.⁷⁵ Inevitably the effect of broadcast drama was limited mostly to middle class listeners. Before the expansion of broadcasting, working class listeners generally preferred the Music Hall and variety to the Theatre and the play. Broadcasting was unlikely to challenge such preconceptions easily.

The comments of educated and well-informed observers on the social influence of broadcasting were valuable and they did give an impression of some important changes in the behaviour of the growing audience. Unfortunately such comments were also a clear indication of the limitations in the methods used by the inter-war social surveyors. More substantial information on the behaviour of the audience was unlikely to emerge from their research. Certainly, Rowntree employed a house-to-house survey technique in York, whilst Llewellyn Smith and Caradog Jones used questionnaires to supplement their careful use of existing data. Yet the scale of their surveys was limited - in terms of sophistication and accuracy of the methods used and also the restricted geographical scope. Since each survey concentrated on a particular urban area,

there was a great lack of comparison and therefore perspective, so that little sense of the national pattern could emerge. Moreover, broadcasting was peripheral to the main purpose of the surveyors and this produced generalisations and rather casual remarks about broadcasting. The temptation to place great store by their observations must be resisted and the enormous areas of research which remained untapped must always be remembered. For whatever reason, be it lack of interest or resources, the social surveyors created no impression of the national pattern - of the national distribution and composition of the audience. Furthermore they did not apply themselves to really detailed analyses of the tastes or habits of listeners. Such research demanded specific attention on a scale considerably in excess of the pilot study by Jennings and Gill: the field was left open to the broadcasters themselves - to discover, gather and analyse information from the vast, uncharted areas of audience opinion and behaviour.

Part 3

BBC Reactions

Chapter 7

Broadcasters and their Audience

7.1 Reith and His Audience

It is impossible to analyse social aspects of broadcasting without attempting to understand something about the notion of public service broadcasting held by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Since the BBC was the largest broadcasting institution, with the most comprehensive service, it is imperative to devote some attention to its relationship with its audience. As BBC policy evolved, the accumulation of material about the audience increased; growing rapidly as the Corporation showed more and more interest in the 'void' into which it had hitherto broadcast. Such a good source of material must be tapped, especially in the late thirties when audience research was formally permitted and much interesting information was discovered. It is important to begin with an analysis of the early attitudes of the BBC - particularly to scrutinise the Reithian philosophy which dominated contact with the emerging audience. It will then be useful to examine a gradual and interesting evolution in the attitude of the BBC towards the audience as this philosophy came under increasing pressure from inside and outside the BBC. A closer relationship between the two sides of the microphone was urged and, although Reith and his supporters did not capitulate, some concessions were made. These concessions deserve some investigation not just because they led to the collection of more information about the audience, but also because they had important social consequences.

To many of its audience and certainly to many of its active critics, the BBC possessed an entirely insular attitude. The Director General, Sir John Reith, then indisputably the personification of British broadcasting, represented an organisation which relied entirely on independent judgements from its hierarchy to establish moral and cultural standards for programmes and seemed to produce programmes based upon artistic judgements that had little regard for the tastes of the various components of its audience. If such a generalisation were entirely accurate, there would be no point in studying the BBC, in order to discover more about the audience. As a reflection, it would be useful only

in showing the views of middle-class radio personnel and their circle of friends. As the BBC did not collect research data on its audience before 1937 in any systematic way, there seems to be nothing to be gained from examining it further.

The real picture is quite different. Even in its most introspective days, the BBC's contact with its audience ran deeper than the extreme statement might suggest. It possessed a limited method of contact which had some value but which was so inefficient and selective that it was capable of producing wholly misleading information. The best expression of these early arrangements can be found in Reith's book: Broadcast over Britain, written in 1924 when the BBC meant British Broadcasting Company and he was Managing Director. The main purpose of the book was to establish the Company's position after eighteen months of service and it contained a detailed justification of monopoly public service broadcasting. In the book, Reith accepted the deficiencies in his knowledge about his audience but was generally defensive about existing policy and even pessimistic about the possibility of collecting more reliable evidence from the growing audience. In Broadcast over Britain, Reith was anxious to stress the ultimate benefits of monopoly broadcasting with its insulation from commercial and any other dominant control. The manufacturers, he argued:

'have all come to the conclusion that, since the Broadcasting Company regards itself as a public service, and is catering for the public interest, it behoves the trade to adapt their manufacturing and selling policy to the requirements of the public as reflected in BBC policy.' 1

Yet a suggestion of a fully democratic broadcasting system which this statement implied was strictly limited by Reith. The public had to be firmly guided:

'I think it will be admitted by all, that to have exploited so great a scientific invention for the purpose and pursuit to 'entertainment' alone would have been a prostitution of its powers and an insult to the character and intelligence of the people.' 2

This sense of moral purpose pervades Broadcast over Britain. His views on gambling and religion were strongly expressed, without any apparent realisation of the contentious nature of his remarks. Other facets of his ambition were

less debatable. The idea of leading public taste and opinion was not subject to any considerable contemporary criticism, as such: what was attacked, was the direction which this leadership took, and the style of transmitting this to the audience. Few except the commercial lobby disputed the dangers of conceding to so-called popular taste. As Reith argued:

'It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need - and not what they want - but few know what they want and very few what they need... In any case it is better to overestimate the mentality of the public than to underestimate it.' 3

In other words, Reith was prepared to respond to the public only in the very broadest sense. He was interested in audience opinion as it was expressed through established representative bodies. These included advisory committees, individual experts and members of the Board of Education, the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, various learned societies and the press.⁴ More objective tests of audience reaction were limited to the rising circulation of the Radio Times and the boom in licence holding. For as Reith asserted:

'When it comes to questions of general policy - the fixing of standards and the setting up of ideals - to decisions as to what shall or shall not be broadcast, we are obviously on dangerous ground... At the risk of being charged with posing as judge or educator, or with deciding matters outside our province, we must make the decision since ours is the responsibility for the conduct of the service.' 5

The aim was to rely heavily on the capacity of the experienced BBC production personnel. Their conception of broadcasting policy was derived, not essentially from close contact with the audience at large but rather more from practice in transmitting programmes, close cooperation with 'experts' and, all too frequently, from the advice of their own metropolitan acquaintances.

These 'experts' were sometimes called upon individually, Sir Oliver Lodge for instance, but more frequently they participated in advisory committees. Naturally, some were more influential and more useful than others. The National Advisory Committee on Education, formed on 6th October 1923 under J.C. Stobart, had an important role to play.⁶ Its National Committee and local committees later formed the base for the much more formal organisation, the Central Council for Schools Broadcasting formed under the auspices of the new Corporation in February 1929. On the other hand, the ill-fated Programme Board attempted

to represent the interests of groups such as the RSGB, the TUC and the press but so little contentious material was produced by the Board that Reith described the meetings as 'a ghastly waste of time.'⁷

Other Advisory Committees had slightly more value as a contact with the audience. These included the Religious Advisory Committee, formed in May 1923; the Advisory Committee on the Spoken Word, formed in April 1926 (which always succeeded in drawing adverse press comment); the Wireless Organisations Advisory Committee, created in January 1927; and the Musical Advisory Committee, begun in July 1925. Although these committees had varying degrees of success in creating closer contacts between the BBC and its audience, they all suffered from a common fault. The reliance on too many leading figures as representatives for their various fields drastically reduced the sense of wider participation. Indeed so close did the connections become, that at times the purpose of the committees was totally defeated. Press attacks, for instance, often failed to separate the Advisory Committee on the Spoken Word from the BBC itself.⁸ These committees may have been of considerable value to the BBC but they stopped short of significant democratic participation in the control of the public service.

These committees continued, uninterrupted by the creation of the Corporation. In fact in February 1935 a new committee was created: the General Advisory Council. As before, its personnel was selected by the BBC so that as many interests as possible should be represented. The secrecy in the selection automatically reduced the credibility of the committee and those such as Harold Laski or J.B. Priestley with strong left-wing political sympathies were deliberately excluded.

In Broadcast over Britain Reith outlined his other sources of contact, although with some qualifications about their usefulness. The contacts with Government Departments were often necessary to discover the details and demands of various groups. For instance, in the case of agricultural workers, the Ministry of Agriculture would be requested to delegate spokesmen to give talks on farming matters.⁹ Again this was hardly a method of contact with audience opinions and

could easily be interpreted as a means of disseminating official information.

Reith's references to the evidence of the rising circulation of Radio Times and the increase in licence holding were acceptable only as a broad guide to audience responses. These statistics could only reveal that the audience was certainly fascinated with broadcasting but could tell nothing about the views of the growing mass audience on details of broadcasting policy or programme content. Reith was prepared to accept these weaknesses. He admitted that close attention was paid to the circulation figures and a chart was plotted:

'on which is given the number of licences per thousand of the population at each broadcasting centre. Neither of these tests is definite enough.'¹⁰

Another source of contact was the Programme Correspondence Section. Formed in May 1924, it was an important part of the BBC's organisation. Reith favoured it, not just because it opened the way for the audience to express opinions on broadcasting, and by this means affect change by the producers, but also because it gave the listener the sense and feeling that such changes were possible. The psychological satisfaction of contact was considered equally as important as the content of any letter or group of letters. As Reith argued:

'It all tends towards the establishment of some degree of confidence and intimacy between the broadcasting organisation and the public'.¹¹

By the thirties, the PCS could expect approximately 150,000 letters per year but this was still only 15-20 per programme on average - hardly enough on which to base any sound judgements.¹²

The character of this kind of approach stemmed from Reith's basically pessimistic view of his audience. He had no illusions about the selection process which led people to write to the BBC. 'The inarticulate portion of the audience is infinitely greater than the articulate.'¹³ Yet his suspicions ran deeper than that. He visualised the audience to be so infinitely divided and separated by taste, so capricious in instinct, so limited in artistic appreciation and so selfish that it would be impossible to learn anything more from a more objective survey. Whilst paying due deference to the views of educated correspondents and his expert advisors, Reith was led to the conclusion that all too many letters:

'show neither acknowledgement of the existence of any kind of taste other than their own, nor the possibility of the existence of such, nor that it should have at least some measure of consideration.' ¹⁴

One rather anomalous contact was with that strange person, the programme correspondent. Filson Young served in this role from 1926 until 1938 and was allowed to sit on the BBC's programme committee to advise on the planning and organisation of programmes. Throughout the period he willingly offered criticism,¹⁵ but his extremely close and friendly relationship with the staff at the BBC severely limited his value. He was hardly the typical man-in-the-street which he professed to be.¹⁶

The question now remains: what did all these methods of contact with the audience tell the BBC about its audience? The overall picture was sure to be distorted in favour of the opinions of articulate and powerful interest groups. The BBC discovered a good deal about the opinions of these dominant groups and there is no doubt that the information so acquired was put to use as part of the general experience which BBC personnel required to construct the organisation - but on their own terms. This conformed very closely to the overall intention to set cultural standards and lead opinion rather than be seen to be led by it. Knowing too much about the uncertain and uneducated tastes of the audience might contaminate the programme builders. It seemed easy to accuse the BBC of ambiguity in its policy when it claimed to provide a public service but made no attempt to allow participation or provide any democratic access. Whatever he might say in debate about achieving higher cultural standards by the 'brute force of monopoly',¹⁷ Reith defended his position on access by pointing to consultation through the advisory committees and, ultimately, the regular reviews of the BBC charter with ultimate democratic control in the shape of Parliamentary debate and reform. But with his reliance on experts and opinion leaders such as the national press for his information, Reith missed the opportunity to gather details about less obvious groupings in society. Age, sex, economic status and political opinion could provide an identity of interests which could not be discovered by the existing methods of contact. These groups, when viewed in aggregate, were

certainly not as capricious as Reith might think. That is not to say that he ever accepted the idea of a 'standard listener' - Reith recognised the heterogeneous nature of society but argued that the BBC knew best how to guide it.

Matched against this, the BBC was especially handicapped by its choice of personnel and the pervading atmosphere of its organisation. The formality of the dinner jacket, invisible at the microphone, was merely a symbol of the public school, Oxbridge backgrounds of many of the staff. This, along with the powerful presence of characters like Admiral Carpendale, laid the BBC open to criticism of being socially élitist. In this medium, the accent of the announcers alone was enough to mark the social distinctions between the broadcasters and a good many listeners. If this social difference was felt at all, then the BBC would always seem to represent a part of the ruling establishment. This social barrier was likely to cause resistance, put limits on Reith's search for his 'public' and weaken the validity of his reliance on committees as informed sources of contact with the audience as a whole. Interestingly Silvey, the first Head of Audience Research, found that, despite his Fabian socialist convictions, the social élitism of the BBC was not too intolerable. He agreed that this was a more important target for criticism rather than any political bias in reporting but in defence he argued:

'In those days, the people who had wireless sets were not a cross-section of the whole population, it was a section of the population which had a pretty strong middle-class bias.' 18

If this was so, then the BBC largely represented the authentic voice of its audience but there was no means of discovering if potential working class listeners were deterred.

Despite the refusal to seek out the detailed structure of groups in its audience, it would be unfair to imply that the BBC made no attempt to provide for minorities. For instance, the ignorance about the needs and tastes of working people contrasted sharply with the social purpose of such programmes as 'Men Talking' and 'Time to Spare' which allowed the unemployed and others to speak out on issues directly through the microphone. After all, the BBC had permitted the attempt at social surveying by W.H. Beveridge to supplement his series

'Changes in Family Life'.¹⁹ Such programmes revealed some attempt to break into hitherto unexplored areas, but the fact remains that the programmes could have been produced in a better form if the largely inarticulate groups, such as the unemployed, had been consulted to discover their needs more precisely. It would not have been contradictory for the BBC to insist on setting standards whilst at the same time, planning the programmes with the fullest possible knowledge about the likely consumers. The fear of contamination, it seems, overwhelmed such thoughts.

There were few alternative sources of information about the audience to turn to. The BBC was not alone in lacking interest in the social activities of much of the population. Apart from the census returns and other official Government surveys, there was a serious deficiency of detailed institutional, commercial or academic social survey evidence to refer to. When the BBC finally decided to set out to survey the audience, it set the pace and most other authorities lagged a long way behind.

Nonetheless, at this time the Reithian philosophy remained firm. Partly it had been a necessity to preserve artistic integrity in the fight against intrusions from those less morally guided than the Director General - particularly the commercial lobbies. However, once the organisation had firmly established its institutional position and seemed bent on passing from strength to strength, the uncertainty about audience contact gradually emerged: perhaps a concession from this strength might be possible at some time in the next decade - to help and not to hinder the broadcaster at work?

7.2 The Case for Listener Research

Listener research in the BBC first attained complete formal acceptance on 1st October 1936. On that day Robert Silvey was appointed to serve on a Listener Research Committee. The creation of the Committee owed much to the

tireless work of Sir Stephen Tallents, the Controller of Public Relations since 1935, and to the pressure of the General Advisory Council. Tallents had shrewdly put the issue to the Council in an attempt to win an ally as a means of persuading the Director-General to concede in his opposition to research.

Naturally this brief paragraph hides the internal disputes and policy decisions which were made to allow large-scale statistical surveying of the radio audience to begin. The changing attitudes inside the BBC - from active resistance to reluctant concession - revealed numerous interesting examples of preconceptions about the audience and about the methods of observing it. This will become evident if the internal arguments for and against closer surveying are analysed. There is much to be learnt, too, from an analysis of the external pressures - urging the immediate formation of an audience research department-which were aimed at the BBC.

When examining the internal debate over audience research, it is tempting to draw up battle lines inside the BBC: each side implacably opposed to the other: the radical subordinates against the establishment. In fact the struggle took place inside the establishment as well. Heads of Departments in the traditional areas of audience response such as variety, drama and education felt the lack of this reaction as acutely as any of their subordinates. Val Gielgud, the Director of Drama, led the campaign. Taking his cue from a discussion on the possibilities for listener research at a programme meeting in May 1930,²⁰ Gielgud produced a detailed memorandum in favour of closer investigation of the audience.²¹ He proposed what was to become a rather consistent theme:

'I myself and a certain number of other members of the staff, in particular my producers and Research Section, are more and more exercised in mind concerning our ignorance of the true reactions of our programme public. I should, perhaps, at this point, be careful to dissociate this opinion from the question which has been raised at different times concerning personal credit for different programmes. This is simply a practical issue affecting all our work.

I cannot help feeling more and more strongly that we are fundamentally ignorant as to how our various programmes are received, and what is their relative popularity. It must be a source of considerable disquiet

to many people besides myself to think that it is quite possible that a very great deal of our money and time and effort may be expended on broadcasting into a void. I believe it is now generally agreed that the information to be gained from our correspondents is both inaccurate and misleading. The plain listener is not a person who ever writes a letter, except under very startling circumstances, and we obviously do not wish to broadcast for the benefit of cranks and people with a great deal of spare time on their hands.

I hope that this will not in any sense be considered a form of reflection on the good faith or intelligence of my colleagues. Naturally, we are all doing what seems best to us as best we can. But if the normal margin of human error is to be indefinitely extended by extreme ignorance of the opinions of the public which we are trying both to please and to educate, we must run great risks of making very severe mistakes.

It seems to me absolutely vital that some scheme should be put in hand - and such a scheme would have to be on a very large scale and one necessarily involving considerable expense - to survey our listening public. To do this by means of a questionnaire or printed post card would be in my opinion worse than useless, because in that way also one would get an entirely unrepresentative result.' 22

Gielgud went further in an attempt to dent the hitherto impregnable self-confidence of BBC personnel that they knew pretty well what the audience derived through programme experience and personal contacts:

'I understand that Adult Education have already sanctioned in theory what is practically a house to house survey of their particular listening public to see whether they are providing what is required and how what they provide is received; and I would propose that this scheme be extended to cover all the Programme Branch activities. I would not deny for a moment that we might possibly find as a result that things must go on as they are. I do not suggest that popular opinion is or should be the last word as to whether our programmes are or are not good and should or should not be continued in any particular form; but a body of real information would be, speaking personally, of the most immense qualifying value to me in framing dramatic policy and controlling production methods, and I cannot help feeling that such information could not fail to be of the same value to anyone else responsible for any type of programme activity. Again and again, one finds suggestions about programmes either pushed forward or opposed on the grounds that such and such a programme would or would not please the normal listener. There is the old slogan "Remember the cabman's wife in Wigan". But there is not the least use remembering her unless we know what she thinks; and at present I feel that we are allowing qualifications to be made on the grounds of what cabmen's wives think, when all we know is the opinion of X - member of Programme Board - as to what he thinks she thinks which is another story.

In the course of the discussion on Friday, much to my surprise, Mr. Stobart said that broadcasting is not and should not be democratic. As you know, I am not a fanatical supporter of democracy in theory, but it seems to me that there is no other entertainment in the world which is so much at the mercy of every single member of its audience as is broadcasting.

Of course, the best argument against any such suggestion of this kind is that it is simply an impracticable one; that such a survey would be impossible to make and therefore that if it was made the result would be misleading. As to the possibility, I am not competent to express an opinion, but I feel that the Corporation's knowledge of the state of listeners' opinions is as important as was knowledge of the state of public opinion in Germany of the government during the war. A miniature intelligence department compiling information data is what we need. It is surely up to us to see that such information leads us to the right conclusions and weighs with us to a degree that is desirable.'

Despite Gielgud's enthusiasm his views were completely ignored. The formal reason was the need for economy during the depression but the procrastination was partially the consequence of ignorance about the form of surveying. There was a serious distrust of sampling as a method of research, largely because of a lack of knowledge about its mechanism and purpose. The only large-scale method of surveying then in use was the national census itself and BBC staff naturally quailed at the thought of a prohibitively expensive blanket survey. The favourite version was the addition of a questionnaire to the licence form which would have been both expensive and grossly unwieldy for any form of analysis. Only very gradually did sampling become acceptable. After all, the most famous social surveyor of all, Rowntree, had no great love for sampling either. Sampling eventually became acceptable partly because of dissatisfaction with the obvious selectivity of press survey samples and partly because of the good example set by commercial and advertising surveys in Britain and abroad. The future Head of the Listener Research Department, for instance, was selected on the basis of his commercial research into consumer behaviour at the London Press Exchange.²³ Yet even after his appointment, Silvey still found problems in persuading BBC personnel to accept that samples could be representative. As he put it:

'perplexities about sampling had their source in the innumeracy common among highly literate men. For example, I was asked again and again how big a sample should be. This frequently went along with a conviction that a sample which was small, in relation to the population it represented, was ipso facto suspect... I would hear people say: "How can this sample, numbering only five hundred, possibly tell you anything when it is supposed to represent a population of twenty million? It is only one in forty thousand".' ²⁴

This failure to comprehend the methods of random or quota sampling was not easily remedied. As late as 1935, for instance, Basil Nicolls, the Director of Internal Administration complained about one survey:

'If any surprising information came out of the plebiscite, we would not accept it, except in the case where the plebiscite was an absolutely complete one of every licence holder: otherwise we would say that it was a freak result.' 25

Such confusion was further demonstrated by one of the first efforts to produce an ideal listener research questionnaire; where the Directors of the various Departments were asked to put their most urgent questions to their respective audiences. The desire for information was clear, as there were 115 items on the questionnaire. Cecil Graves, the Assistant Director of Programmes, discussed the plans with Professor Bowley of the London School of Economics, the doyen of inter-war social statisticians. Bowley soon demonstrated the naivety of the researchers by showing that 20-25 questions must be the maximum if the survey was not to be too onerous for the listener to answer and a good response prevented.²⁶

A good deal of this early activity was induced by the demands of the Adult Education section. The Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education (CCBAE) badly needed audience research because its needs were so peculiarly closely related to the needs of its audience. Indeed, the poor performance of the CCBAE was in part attributable to ignorance of the educational needs of the audience.²⁷ The Central Council had been the first to ask for more information in 1929 - well before Gielgud began his own campaign. At an Executive Committee meeting of the Council on 15th January 1930 the plan to employ a survey was formally introduced. The Council approved the expenditure of at least £1,000 on such a survey but it was delayed and eventually axed as an economy measure.²⁸ The CCBAE was very keen on the use of sampling and on the extension of the principle of audience research to all sections of the BBC.²⁹ In an undated memorandum, probably written in 1930, the CCBAE Executive Committee asserted:

'it would in many ways be wasteful if the surveys were rigidly confined to the sphere of adult education.' 30

Although this scheme was axed, the Education Department at the BBC had participated in one example of research. The first survey was made into schools broadcasting in Kent as early as 1927.³¹ This used the financial assistance

of the Carnegie Trust and much useful material was gathered to support the more successful school educational broadcasting programmes; helping to make them more relevant to actual needs before 1939.³²

Despite the initial rebuff, the Drama Department continued to press its case for audience research. Gielgud eventually gathered some allies from inside the BBC, although most of them could not accept a full-blown statistical survey. Siepmann and Matheson, for instance, were rather more in favour of pre-selected information from the audience. As Siepmann put it:

'I feel convinced that a statistical survey, i.e. anything in the nature of a mere numerical analysis of public opinion, whether widely or narrowly conceived, will prove futile and misleading. We are not out to count heads, but to collect a mass of information on which to base broad conclusions.' ³³

Matheson suggested an alternative method:

'I think the cooperation of a more educated type of listener - this is not a class distinction - could be served by the right sort of microphone appeals. Thousands of such people would be willing to write if they thought it was going to be some use.' ³⁴

The Assistant Controller, V.H. Goldsmith, put the case for direct contact with the public, to be achieved by sending out programme planners into the regions for a few days. This, he suggested, would avoid the dilemma aroused by the contrast between the quantitative nature of survey results and the qualitative work of the BBC.³⁵ The most popular option, indeed the one eventually adopted in the first instance, was the panel system. J.S.A. Salt of the Talks Department recommended a listening panel in November 1934.³⁶ His idea was turned down by Siepmann's successor as Head of Department, J.M. Rose-Troup, on the grounds that it was a typical product of those new to the organisation and hence more unsure of their audience than usual.³⁷

This discussion on method followed Gielgud's second attempt to get a decision on the principle of surveying the audience. In a memorandum to Roger Eckersley, the Director of Programmes in 1933, he again attacked the existing alternatives of the press and Programme Correspondence Section (PCS).

The PCS, he envisaged, would fill a more expansive role than its existing letter-box function. He desired to use the regional headquarters as his lines of contact with their respective audiences. He argued:

'it seems to me that a properly organised intelligence service is as urgent a need for a Broadcasting Corporation as it is for any War Office'³⁸

His poignant appeal at the end of his memorandum was evidence of the kind of frustrations which afflicted the Directors of Departments who transmitted programmes traditionally associated with live audiences:

'...from the point of view of my own department, nothing handicaps me more than the non-possession of anything in the nature of a thermometer which would correspond in the theatre to the acid test of box office returns. I am still entirely in the dark as to whether five thousand, ten thousand, a million, or twenty, people listen to the average play broadcast; I am still more in the dark as to what proportion listen from beginning to end, and as to what is the real opinion concerning them. It is, in fact, only when I occasionally give a lecture in public that I begin to have the slightest idea as to what listeners think of our dramatic work. The removal of this severe handicap could, it seems to me, to worth a very considerable sum of money, and almost any amount of necessary labour.' 39

Interestingly, this paragraph demonstrated a failure to define his demands precisely. He asked for a 'thermometer' of reaction but it is clear that his real appeal was for an audience 'barometer': a purely quantitative assessment of the audience.

This confusion about intentions was shared by his critics. Lindsay Wellington, the Presentation Director, was broadly in favour of establishing a 'body of agreed data' about the audience but he feared that a single barometer of public opinion would be impossible to produce if consideration was to be paid to the tremendous variety of component groups within the audience. That surveying results would create the impression that the BBC had accepted the existence of an 'average listener' was a familiar criticism from inside the BBC at that time.⁴⁰

As if to scotch the critics, Gielgud launched a broadcast appeal for help from the audience in the construction of drama and feature programme policy. The appeal, broadcast on 8th and 9th March 1934, yielded 12,700 replies. The general opinion of this self-selected group was naturally more committed and better informed than any scientifically controlled sample but it produced some useful qualitative advice for Gielgud and was to form the basis for the first

organised research of the Listener Research Section in 1937.

This search for more evidence was also pressed by the editor of the Radio Times, Maurice Gorham, who was anxious to use his pages as a method of launching an appeal. He advocated the use of one page as a detachable questionnaire - a scheme which was later adopted.⁴¹ On the other hand, Major Atkinson, the Director of Foreign Relations, was still pressing for a full survey, having been influenced by the apparent success of the Peace Ballot. The public, he claimed, had voted against the advice of the national press, and hence refuted the argument used against surveying, that during the period of research the electorate would be stampeded by the press, with the result that policy would be forced in directions where the BBC wished to preserve its liberty of action.⁴² Both of these schemes reflected erroneous conceptions about sampling which the uninitiated tended to hold: Gorham's appeal would have only produced qualitative results, sent in by more active readers of the Radio Times; Atkinson still assumed that a full survey necessarily had more validity than a sample.

One external influence on BBC policy came from the most important and rival medium: the press. The BBC held the news provided by all the newspapers to be inferior. Whilst proprietors and directors imparted their own political bias on news and information, the BBC could let people speak for themselves, without the intervention of any distortion. Of course, this ideal position was not reached, partly because of the restrictions imposed by press agencies and the Government's rulings on controversial material but also because of the BBC's own policy of censorship. Many speakers were, like Winston Churchill, not allowed any airtime at all, even after the ending of the 'controversy rule' in 1928, and had to print their views instead. Reith stressed that debate was the best way of dealing with contentious matters but apparently still had cause to prevent it when necessary.

The press possessed a powerful vested interest which had a stronger influence on broadcasting policy than Reith would have liked. In the early days it had taken the action of Gordon Selfridge to allow the printing of programme times in national papers: he broke the press ban by publishing the details in

his own advertising space.⁴³ The competition to supply news was however the main battleground. The BBC was permitted to broadcast news only after 7 p.m. in the evening (6 p.m. after 1928) and was forced to rely on the news agencies for the supply of material. Only for a short period during the General Strike and eventually in the thirties was the BBC able to break through this barrier and collect news for itself. After 1934, the News Section regained independent status from the Talks Department and rapidly expanded its own news collection and analysis.⁴⁴ Despite this mutual hostility, the BBC had some respect for the press as a source of criticism. Press influence could even be beneficial. It disliked radio advertising as much as Reith did, although the competition for revenue not a paternal concern for any damage to programme standards was the motive.

The BBC underlined its interest in the press by making arrangements for cuttings to be taken from provincial and national dailies, periodicals and trade papers in the hope of discovering some local or national audience opinion.⁴⁵ Even when listener research was firmly established, current affairs and music producers still considered intelligent press criticism more useful than audience research, particularly when the audience was very small.

Some attempts by the press to discover information about the audience increased the pressure on the BBC to carry out its own research. Various dailies launched their own polls - where listeners wrote in to say which were their favourite programmes. Examples included the Daily Herald and the Daily Mail⁴⁵ which had already made frequent appeals for audience response - and some regional papers such as the Yorkshire Observer and the Birmingham Gazette.⁴⁶ (See Table I) Even the editor of the Spectator organised a poll of readers.⁴⁷ The main purpose, besides helping to boost circulation and increase reader interest, was to provide ammunition to lobby the BBC for a change in programme planning.

Table I: Daily Mail Ballot 1927.⁴⁹

How Listeners Voted	
Subject	Votes Cast
1. Variety and Concert parties	238,489
2. Light Orchestral Music	179,153
3. Military Bands	164,613
4. Dance Music	134,027
5. Topical Sports and News	114,571
6. Symphony Concerts	78,781
7. Solos: Vocal and Instrumental	72,658
8. Opera and Oratorio	60,983
9. Outside Broadcasts	51,755
10. Short Plays and Sketches	49,857
11. Talk: Scientific & Informative	30,919
12. Chorouses and Sea Shanties	30,445
13. Chamber Music	27,467
14. Revues	27,059
15. Long Plays	17,576
16. Readings and Recitations	2,717
Free votes not recorded	4,013
	1,285,083

In this way, press polls gave an extra stimulus to the BBC hierarchy to accept research as a means of defeating criticism. Robert Silvey certainly felt that this was the case.⁵⁰ If research was done scientifically it would be easy to demonstrate the accuracy of such methods in comparison with the poor quality, self selected samples which the press produced.

Other forms of pressure on the BBC to organise research had a less definite effect. Commercial radio stations naturally had a much greater interest

in audience size with the competition for advertising revenue. Work done by the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising (IIPA) into listeners' habits during the autumn of 1935 set an example of what was possible but, equally, it aroused hostility inside the BBC because of the inevitable intention of this sort of research - to pander to the audience as much as possible.⁵¹ Nonetheless, it was a more sophisticated attempt and the sample was carefully weighted to cover rural and urban areas throughout England. Obviously it produced the sort of material advertisers liked to see. It divided the audience rather crudely into economic groups and concentrated on listening to Radio Luxembourg.⁵²

Earlier in November 1935, the Radio Manufacturers Association (RMA) had also put the case for more research. The RMA apparently related the approaching saturation of the market, expressed by the declining rate of new licence issues, as though it were due instead to consumer resistance to the BBC's output. Their pressure for this limited amount of research was resisted inside the BBC because of the open message from the RMA that the results could only confirm their assertion that 80% of the audience would fall into the group: 'who want entertainment which requires no special training to appreciate it', whilst 'those who have a cultivated capacity for appreciating serious drama talks, grand opera, chamber music and symphonies represent no more than 20%'.⁵³ Such statements confirmed the worst fears of the BBC senior staff, that any corpus of research material might be used by critics as a cudgel with which to beat down the defenders of the existing BBC policy and apply instead, the rule by the ratings.

Overseas examples of audience research may have had similar effects on the minds of BBC staff. The American example of research could not exactly sell itself as a useful addition to the armoury of the programme planners because of its clear commercial intentions. German examples had even more distasteful overtones with the suggestion of marshalling the audience for anti-democratic, political purposes. Nevertheless, some members of the BBC examined these methods. The Chief Engineer, Noel Ashbridge, had examined German techniques in 1930 and the Director of Foreign Relations, Atkinson, kept the BBC constantly in touch with

various systems throughout the world.⁵⁴

Some academics, such as Professor T.H. Pear, pressed the BBC to sponsor audience research - if only to compensate for the lack of alternative sources from their own profession.⁵⁵ Three academics did engage in a limited form of research. George Burnett and a member of the General Advisory Council, J.H. Nicholson, were keen supporters of academic research but their efforts in collecting opinions were dependent on samples of insignificant proportions.⁵⁶ H.C. Shearman was granted £40 by the BBC to further research for the Cambridge University Extra-Mural Department into listening in six Bedfordshire villages. The financial axe fell on his survey before anything conclusive was produced.⁵⁷ Consequently the academics which were sponsored contributed little in physical terms to the debate on the merits of audience research. Senior academics were sought out for advice whenever a scheme was discussed inside the BBC but their limited assistance could only have reduced confidence in the value of statistical surveys.

Nonetheless, pressure inside the BBC continued to rise and in 1935 the BBC hierarchy resorted to another subterfuge in an attempt to quell criticism. With a blatant delaying tactic, the Director General held over the question pending the arrival of a public relations expert to fill a new office at the BBC.

7.3 The Listener Research Committee

The appointment of Sir Stephen Tallents as Controller of Public Relations was a decisive stage in the establishment of systematic audience research. His arrival coincided with an increasing anxiety - even loss of confidence at the BBC - in the face of external criticism, especially from the press. This concern as much as anything else persuaded Reith and Carpendale to concede the initiation of research - at least it would help improve public relations. Tallents already had experience of much closer contact with the consumer when working in his previous appointment as Head of Public Relations at the GPO. He was actively

in favour of listener research and began preparing a case soon after his arrival. He cleverly pressed the case with Reith by having the problem discussed at the General Advisory Council meeting in January 1936.

The outcome was modest. In a memorandum to Carpendale, discussing the Council meeting, Tallents defined the three aims of Listener Research.⁵⁸ First, more general sociological information was needed on the habits of listeners - a shortage of data shared with many other organisations. Secondly, research was needed on listeners' tastes. Thirdly, some empirical knowledge about the capacity of listeners' sets was required in order to judge reception patterns. Tallents only pressed the second case hard. He aimed merely to build up a sensitive network of listeners throughout the country from which reports could be obtained on particular points.⁵⁹ This course was approved by the Control Board and an extra member of staff was permitted to help set up the work. The minutes of the Control Board meeting emphasise the perpetuity of the old resistance: 'Those concerned were reminded that research was to be selective, specialised and more or less informal.'⁶⁰ Reith was always apprehensive that quantitative analyses of public preferences should be used to subordinate programme policy.

A Listener Research Committee was created soon after permission was granted, although much of the preparatory work went on informally. Maurice Farquharson of Public Relations produced a memorandum laying out the modest proposals for an initial survey, stressing the problems in the quantitative assessment of listeners' habits and demonstrating the easier task of collecting valuable qualitative material on listeners' tastes. The initial period of uncertainty came to an end when a second assistant was appointed to help the Committee into action.⁶¹

This had been achieved despite the resistance of many senior BBC officials. They were not necessarily unanimous in their objections but it may be said that they shared a belief in Frank Muir's aphorism, 'Look what happened to the Battleship Potemkin when the ratings took over.'⁶² J.C. Stobart, despite his involvement in educational broadcasting, was consistently hostile.⁶³ Rose-Troup

was also unhelpful, and Lionel Fielden, also of Talks, was positively antagonistic. He remarked, 'The real degradation of the BBC started with the invention of the hellish department which is called Listener Research.'⁶⁴

How then, with all these powerful figures in opposition, did the supporters of research achieve any success at all? External pressures were only partly responsible. Internally, it seems that Reith changed his approach. His dominance over the Control Board, where such policy decisions were ultimately made, meant that his attitude had to change before any concession could be made. However reluctantly, Reith moved from his posture of 1924. As early as 1930 he had shown a willingness to consult Rowntree about the most economical research methods.⁶⁵ He was ultimately responsible for granting the permission to appoint new personnel to the Listener Research Committee. Most noticeably of all, he saw fit to congratulate Silvey on the results of the first effort - the Drama Reports Scheme in 1937.⁶⁶ He did not seem to be unduly upset by the concession (see Figure I).

After his appointment, Silvey had commenced work immediately and managed to produce his first Listener Research report (LR/1) in February 1937. His first task was, however, to plan and prepare a much longer term of action for his Committee. He had little BBC material to work on and was no doubt expected to rely heavily on his experience in commercial research.⁶⁷ The only guide was the paper produced by Maurice Farquharson outlining the proposed campaign on listener research. In his memorandum he emphasised the contrasting methods which were necessary to examine listeners' tastes and habits. Both types of information were in demand from many programme departments, but the latter form was hedged by the ruling by the Control Board that research was to be selective, specialised and informal.⁶⁸ As Farquharson showed, this restriction would not prevent the collection of valuable information on tastes but it would restrict research into habits:

'It would seem that information about habits, however, if it is to be useful, will need to be quantitatively reliable to a far greater extent than information about listeners' reactions to programmes. Here we

Figure I

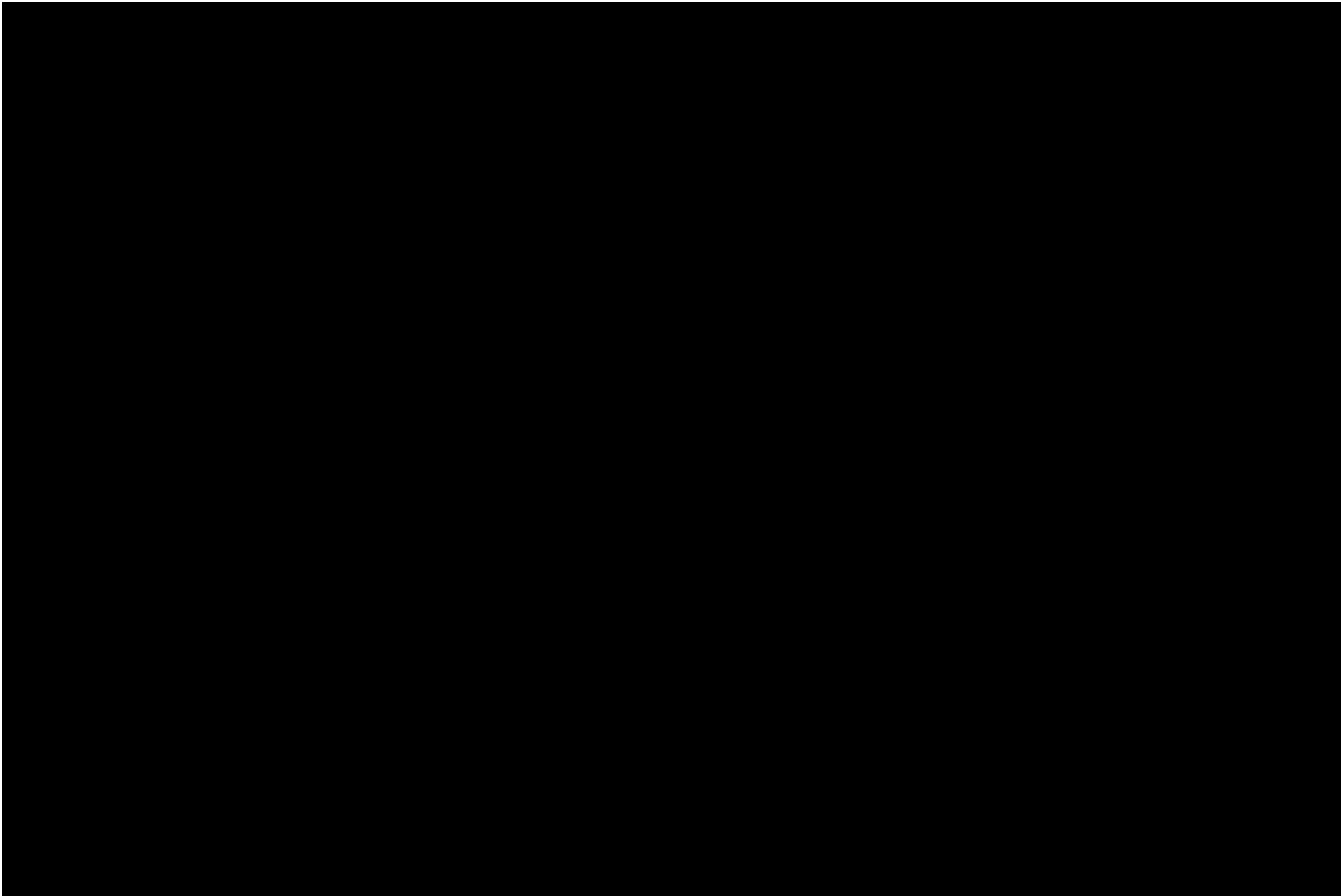
Director-General to Tallents, 8 July 1937.

Transcript: "I have read these papers carefully and congratulate Silvey and others concerned on their work.

The Appendices are not yet complete - are G & J here.

When, and in what shape, do you propose to circulate conclusions and recommendations for the future to C.B.? (i.e. Control Board).

J.C.W. Reith.



shall be in search of facts, as distinct from opinions, and it will be necessary to have quantitative rather than qualitative evidence. For this reason it will probably prove difficult to restrict ourselves to the informal small scale methods laid down in principle by the General Advisory Council.' 69

Some, he asserted, could be learnt from public utilities, where habits could be partially discerned from the noticeable decline in electricity or water consumption observed during the most popular broadcasts and the large increase observed immediately afterwards. Early suggestions on research methods were equally tentative. One was to invite five hundred selected listeners from their respective regions to comment on BBC programmes. However Farquharson suspected that it would be impossible to weight these 'glowworms', as they were called, to give a balanced cross-section of the audience as a whole. Fortunately some information on tastes could be collected, possibly supplemented by material gathered by specially well-informed people such as social service workers, WEA tutors and even secretaries of Women's Institutes. These were to be called 'super glowworms' or 'searchlights'.

From this rather inadequate basis, Silvey set out to prepare more detailed plans for the first meeting of the Listener Research Committee on 15th October 1936. His first aim was to strengthen the collection of material on the audience from other sources and exploit existing BBC activities such as the Programme Correspondence Section, press and trade connections more fully.⁷⁰ With this as the base, the Committee could embark on its essential task: the scientific surveying of the audience. The preparations had clearly exposed the existing inadequacies: 'what was needed was a fresh start'.⁷¹ Silvey stressed the experimental nature of this initial period but also emphasised that the accuracy of the results was not in any way lessened. Rather it was a matter of exploiting the potential of the surveys more fully: to find the extent of public willingness to cooperate with the BBC; to discover the most successful methods of surveying for the various needs of the programme planners - together with many other more simple points, such as the most attractive format for a questionnaire. In pioneering days, even the effect of the latter remained to be determined. The

road ahead for Silvey and his colleagues was certainly perilous but also challenging. A considerable amount of entirely new ground would need to be covered and the foundations of BBC research would have to be laid very carefully to ensure a reliable supply of information.

Chapter 8

The Methods and Findings of Listener Research

8.1 The Panel System

In the absence of alternative sources of information the methods and findings of BBC research are of considerable interest in a study of the radio audience. Five basic methods were used by the Listener Research Section, each with a different purpose and structure. In each case an assessment can be made of the salient aims and techniques involved, the quality and accuracy of the method and the information produced. Each method had something to tell about the listening population and, invariably, even the least scientific survey revealed as much of general social interest as of direct value to the programme planners.

The approach used most frequently in the early days was the panel system. The first example of it was also the most important of its type: the Drama Reports Scheme. The panel scheme was chosen because it was cheap and relatively easy to organise. Only 350 people were used on the panel, which aimed chiefly at producing relevant qualitative rather than quantitative results. With this in mind, the small size of the panel was not as crucial as for a quantitative analysis, although a minimum size was calculated to validate the most limited conclusions. Drama was chosen because it was a conveniently nucleated area of broadcasting which actually had more use for such research than for quantitative material. It also represented the sort of Department which felt the lack of an audience response most acutely. The Director of Drama and Features (DFD), Val Gielgud was, of course, the departmental head most likely to cooperate with the work.

The composition of the panel had its limitations. It was only likely to produce restricted conclusions on listeners' opinions of radio drama because it was drawn only from amongst those predisposed to listen to radio drama. The selection was deliberately made to use those from the ranks of people already known to have an interest. Only a limited amount of balancing was done, largely on the basis of occupation and area of residence.¹ As the general summary of the Drama Reports Scheme observed:

'Until the composition and size of that part of the listening public which is interested in radio drama is known, it is impossible to find out statistically whether the present or any other panel is representative of the radio drama public.'

The summary argued that the balancing made in the original selection was enough to produce a panel which was broadly representative of those who normally listened to radio drama; it being neither 'lowbrow' nor 'highbrow'. As the scheme continued, it became clear that the opinions gathered would be enhanced if the membership of the panel could be arranged to contain fewer habitual and enthusiastic listeners to dramatic productions. The scheme would then resemble more closely the kind of 'box-office' which Gielgud desired.² An appeal to the casual listener, it was felt, ought to improve the representative nature of the qualitative judgements offered.

Despite these misgivings, some important evidence was compiled from the replies to the numerous questionnaires sent to the panel from January to June 1937. Cooperation, for instance, proved to be no problem. A committed audience responded with pleasure and it was the distortion due to listening purely to please the enquiry, or 'duty listening', rather than apathy which presented the major problem to this and many subsequent enquiries. The response averaged 55% with a steady decline from 75% for the first few weeks down to 35% in May and June.³ The shape and frequency of the questionnaires was also established. Free comment sections provided a useful counterbalance to the limiting rigidity of the question structure, with its demand for a definite rather than a qualified response.⁴

Several other lessons of general surveying relevance were also learnt. The style of the questions was varied and the panel split into two groups to compare the results. It was found that a straight 'Yes/No' choice of answer was open to confusion as 'No' often meant 'No option'.⁵ On the other hand, a limited choice of answers did not produce significantly different overall results when compared with a broader selection of alternative answers.⁶ This sort of detail provided lessons for improving the quality of later surveys, largely because of the greater understanding of the psychology of those who responded to questionnaires.

The scheme also provided an interesting opportunity to compare the results of organised audience research with the more primitive methods, hitherto used with apparent equanimity. In a direct comparison with the Programme Correspondence Section, the Listener Research Section easily demonstrated the superiority of its most limited method of research over the correspondence method of opinion gathering. The 8,000 reports clearly outweighed the 600 letters on the same topic received for the duration of the scheme. Letters were shown up for what they were. They seized upon the less well received programmes and clearly provided a much poorer and certainly deceptive guide to the way individual plays had been received. One of the least remarkable plays according to the panel, actually received the most letters - eighty - simply because of the bad language used in the play.⁷ Clearly the distortion due to this 'goat-getter' might normally have overshadowed the generally favourable response to the drama productions and the drama programme planners would be no wiser about the overall reception of their output.

Many small items of dissatisfaction which were discovered would have been hard to assess from unsolicited opinions. The best timing of drama and feature programmes was elicited from the panel. It was discovered that listeners were frequently confused by poor definition of scene changes. Some also found the voices of characters confusing in plays using a large number of actors. A league table of the most popular plays was contrived. The relative positions of the plays, it was suspected, resembled that which would have been compiled by a wider audience; plays written by John Galsworthy and William Shakespeare being the most popular, and features the least.

A good deal of this material was hardly of world shattering importance, but it was a solid beginning and some light was cast on the technical problems of surveying. To the Drama Department, very little of the response could have been entirely surprising but it was obviously important to have suspicions established and confirmed. As Grace Wyndham Goldie noted:

'The vast, imposing and long-awaited report of the drama investigation is in front of me. It is the result of four months patient work by the staff of the Listener Research Department. Its conclusions are set out laboriously, carefully and politely. And they are, I find to my amusement, conclusions which I have not only drawn, less politely, myself in this column, but points at which I have hammered so insistently during the last two years that I am almost ashamed to put them on paper again.' 8

She then outlined the chief defects which she and the panel agreed upon, especially the:

'old, old story that a number of feature programmes are intolerably boring, that the trouble does not come from the subjects but from the writing and handling of them.'

She concluded:

'Not one of these points is new. The importance of the report is that they have been made by a panel of four hundred representative listeners. What we now want to know is what the Drama Department proposes to do about them. What I hope they will not do is to concentrate on the detail and neglect the general issues.' 9

The panel method was successful enough for its future to be secure although, before 1939 it was largely confined to research for the Talks Department.¹⁰ The aims were similar to that of the Drama Reports Scheme. For instance, a panel of known listeners to cinema talks was created.¹¹ The information gathered was useful as a guide to the tastes of frequent listeners and provided assistance to programme planners by emphasising the purpose and content of programmes which listeners preferred and also the most convenient time for them to listen. A useful graph was constructed, demonstrating the most convenient times. (see Figure I).

In October to December 1938 three separate panels were set to work on four series of autumn talks. Each panel was allotted a series, the fourth series was introduced to replace 'Men Talking'. This replacement was an emergency response to the Munich crisis and was entitled 'Everyman and the Crisis'. The only difference from the usual panel system was that known committed listeners were to be supported by some group listeners, chosen by the Central Council for Group Listening. The reactions of the two types were to be compared. 'Everyman and the Crisis' was the most favourably received of the talks.¹²

CINEMA TALKS

Percentage of panel free to listen at each half hour

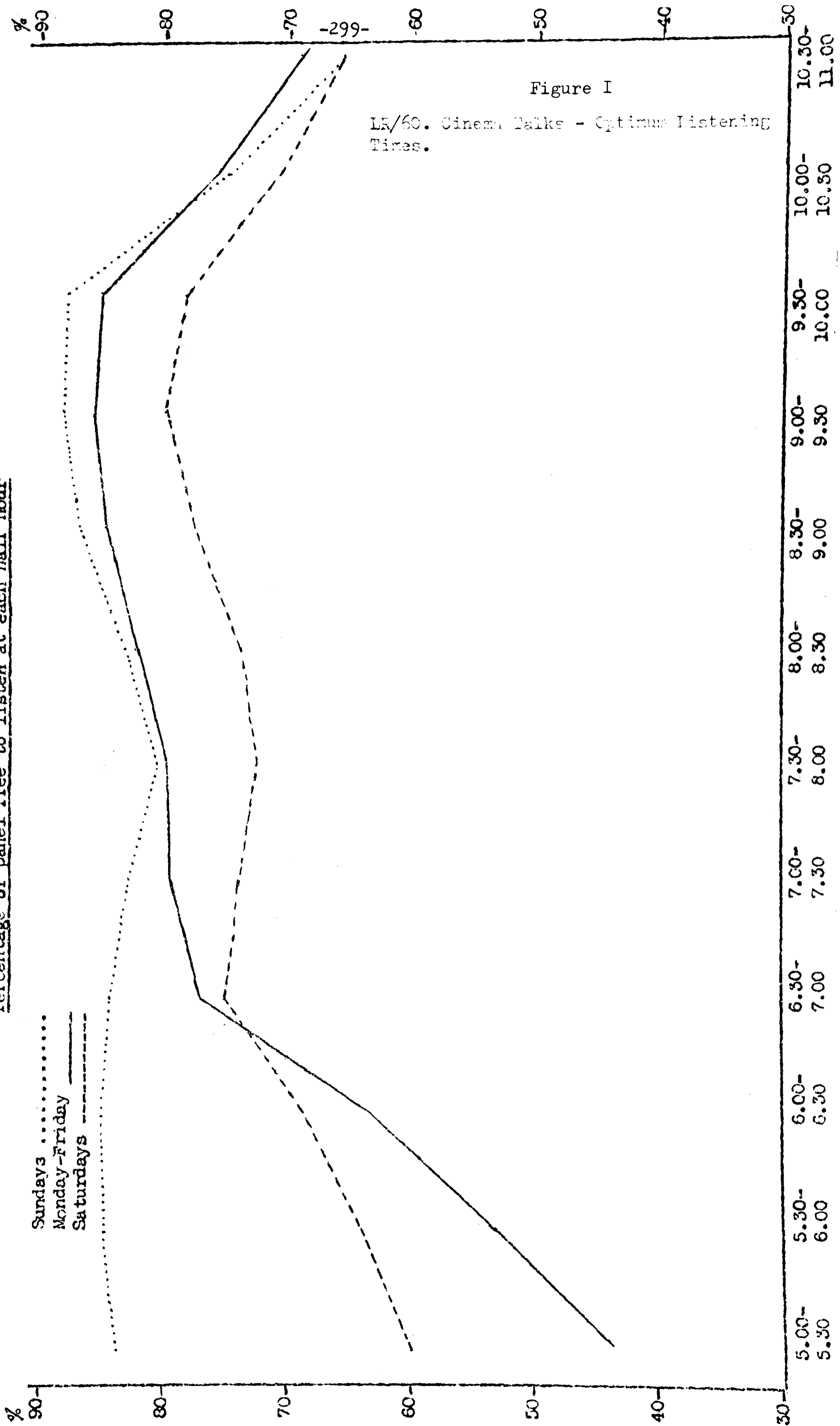


Figure I

LR/60. Cinema Talks - Optimum Listening Times.

This was partially because of its relevance to contemporary events but also because of the broad social appeal derived from people talking for themselves about the effect of the crisis. The technique of allowing people to talk for themselves about their lives and jobs had been successfully employed in 'Men Talking' for some time. The 'Men Talking' series was definitely very popular - as a later method of listener research, the General Listening Barometer, demonstrated. 34% of the members of this survey listened, compared with 19% to a series on the 'Mediterranean' and 16% to the series on 'Class: an Enquiry into Social Distinctions'. 90% of the 'Everyman and the Crisis' panel favoured the method of broadcasting used and fifty members argued that the principle should be extended. Many felt the spontaneity and largely untheoretical nature of the talks helped to make for good radio. As one argued: 'The fact that the speakers came to the microphone unheralded, intensified their nearness to us all.'¹³ However, there were some criticisms - as the report noted:

'Several listeners made remarks which suggest the prevalence of the view that the BBC is not always free from official interference. One said: "How many of the talks were given in their original form? Was there much Blue Pencil used"?'¹⁴

The series was unpopular with listening groups who found that there was a marked lack of direction from the programme on which to base their normal post-broadcast discussions. Groups preferred the series 'Class: An Enquiry into Social Distinctions'. This used the services of speakers such as Tom Harrison and M.M. Postan and radio personalities such as Raymond Gram Swing. Besides the more formal structure and the attractive speakers, the listening groups liked the use of an interlocutor who prepared the group for discussion by summarising the main points. This was a welcome innovation. It was also clear that the tastes of the group listeners were no different from other listeners, rather their circumstances of listening were different and this was responsible for the difference in attitude.

Two other methods of acquiring qualitative information were used to a limited extent before 1939. Both methods relied on the opinions gathered by

people who were specialists in the fields covered by the surveys. As they were little used, it seems easiest to examine them together, despite the detailed differences between the methods. The smallest and most specialised of the two was the Roster of Music critics undertaken by fifteen 'experts' between November 1937 and January 1938.¹⁵ Each critic was asked to produce ad lib, comments on Chamber Music and Studio Orchestral Concerts. These minority programmes were obviously suited to this more detailed and informed criticism but the roster paralleled press criticism too closely and soon fell out of use.¹⁶

A much larger affair was the 'searchlight' on the 'Children's Hour' programmes. In March 1938, 2,561 teachers were asked to elicit the views of the 79,341 children under their charge. The selection of teachers was balanced to represent the spread of population and especially to represent the BBC regions. The report set out to discover the quantity of listening and programme preferences. The reliability of the sampling left something to be desired. Many of the forms were completed incorrectly and this made analysis difficult. The results were interesting, even if they have to be used with care. Quantitatively, it appears that 78% of those children aged 5-13 who had sets at home listened to 'Children's Hour'. Of the total asked, roughly 20% had no set at home. In simpler terms, 6 out of 10 children between 5 and 13 listened to the programme in some form. 4 out of 10 did not listen, of which 2 out of 10 could not because of the absence of a set. Extrapolated to the whole population, this would give 1.2 million children who could not hear the programme because they had no set and 3.75 million who listened regularly or occasionally - out of a total elementary school population of 6 million - a very considerable section of the community. These estimates cannot have been too far away from the actual position and tell something about the considerable number of families which still did not possess a set in 1938.¹⁷

8.2 'The Variety Listening Barometer'

The main deficiency in the Drama Reports Scheme had been that it did not entirely satisfy the demand from the Drama Department for a 'Box-office'. There was no real attention to the quantitative aspect of listening, even with the tables of the most popular plays. The validity of these tables was weakened simply because the panel was composed of committed listeners. To remedy this flaw, the general summary of the scheme (LR/56) proposed a wider scheme which was to become the Variety Listening Barometer. In its ultimate form, a 'barometer' would measure the rise and fall in the total size of audience for a programme. If this was completed, the results made generally available and used in the compilation of programme plans, then one of the citadels of Reith's philosophy would have fallen.

The plan was issued in August 1937.¹⁸ Variety was chosen because, like Drama, it was a well defined area of programmes which had a strong need for audience reaction. It was meant to be confined only to regular listeners to variety - not the audience as a whole - but as variety attracted such a large part of the audience, those selected would be fairly representative of the whole listening population. The intentions for research were clearly indicated:

'It ought to be pointed out, first, that listening barometers are visualised as centering round different departments. A Variety Listening Barometer would be quite separate from an Outside Broadcast Barometer or a Music Listening Barometer. Secondly, that a listening barometer will not show how large an audience is in terms of thousands of listeners, what it is hoped it will show is the relative sizes of audiences to different types of output from a given department.' 19

This attitude was later modified as plans for the barometer were then only in a tentative and experimental stage. This experiment was intended to check simple details in the mechanics of surveying: to establish the best method of organisation, to check the value of the information for planners and to see whether an adequate number of thoroughly representative listeners could be induced to participate in the first instance and then persuaded to continue for the duration of the survey.

The method of forming the barometer was to appeal for volunteers to complete the weekly listening logs. Originally it was intended to use only 1,000

Figure II LR/65 Variety Listening Barometer. Listening Log for October 11-16, 1937.

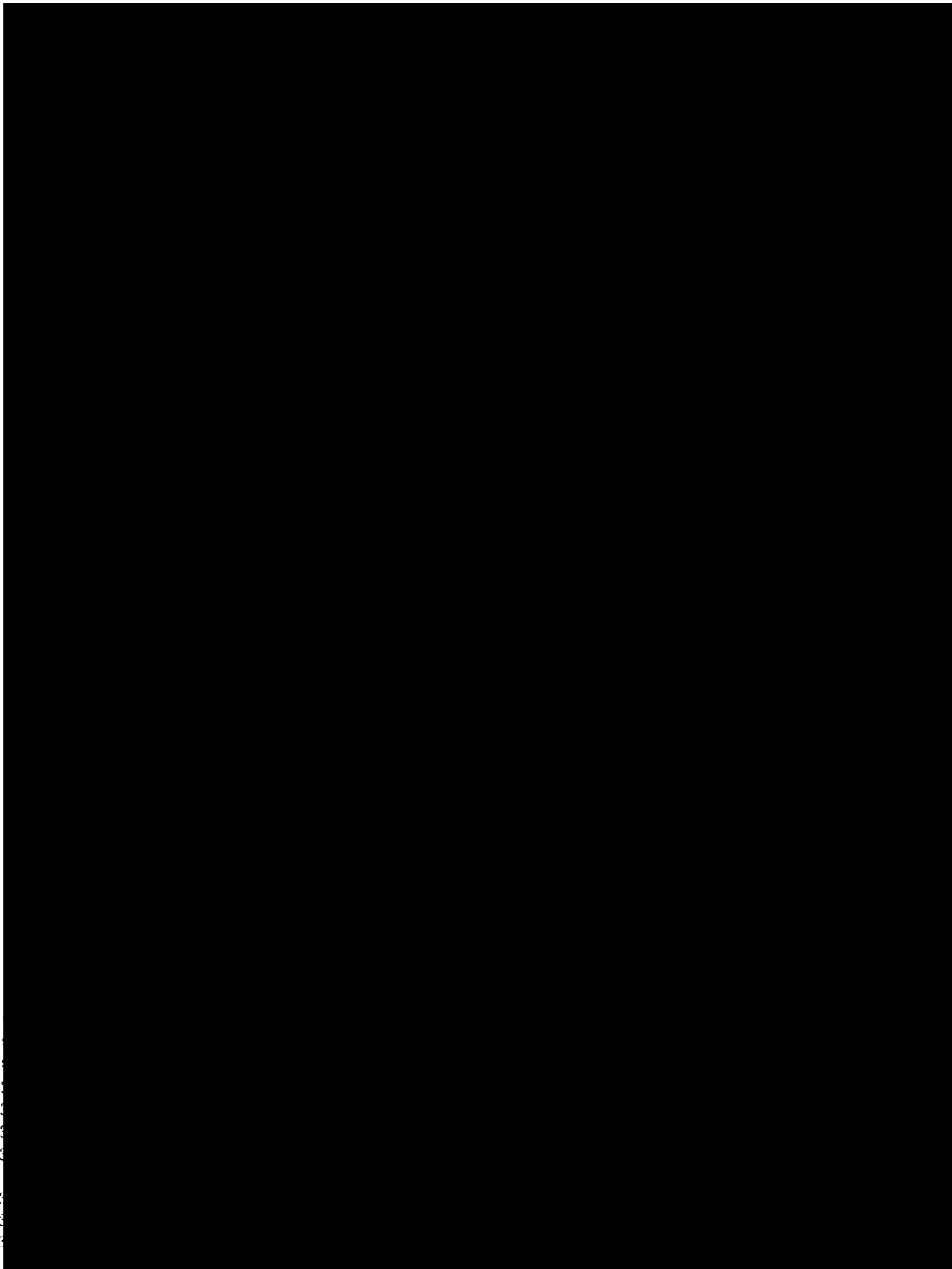
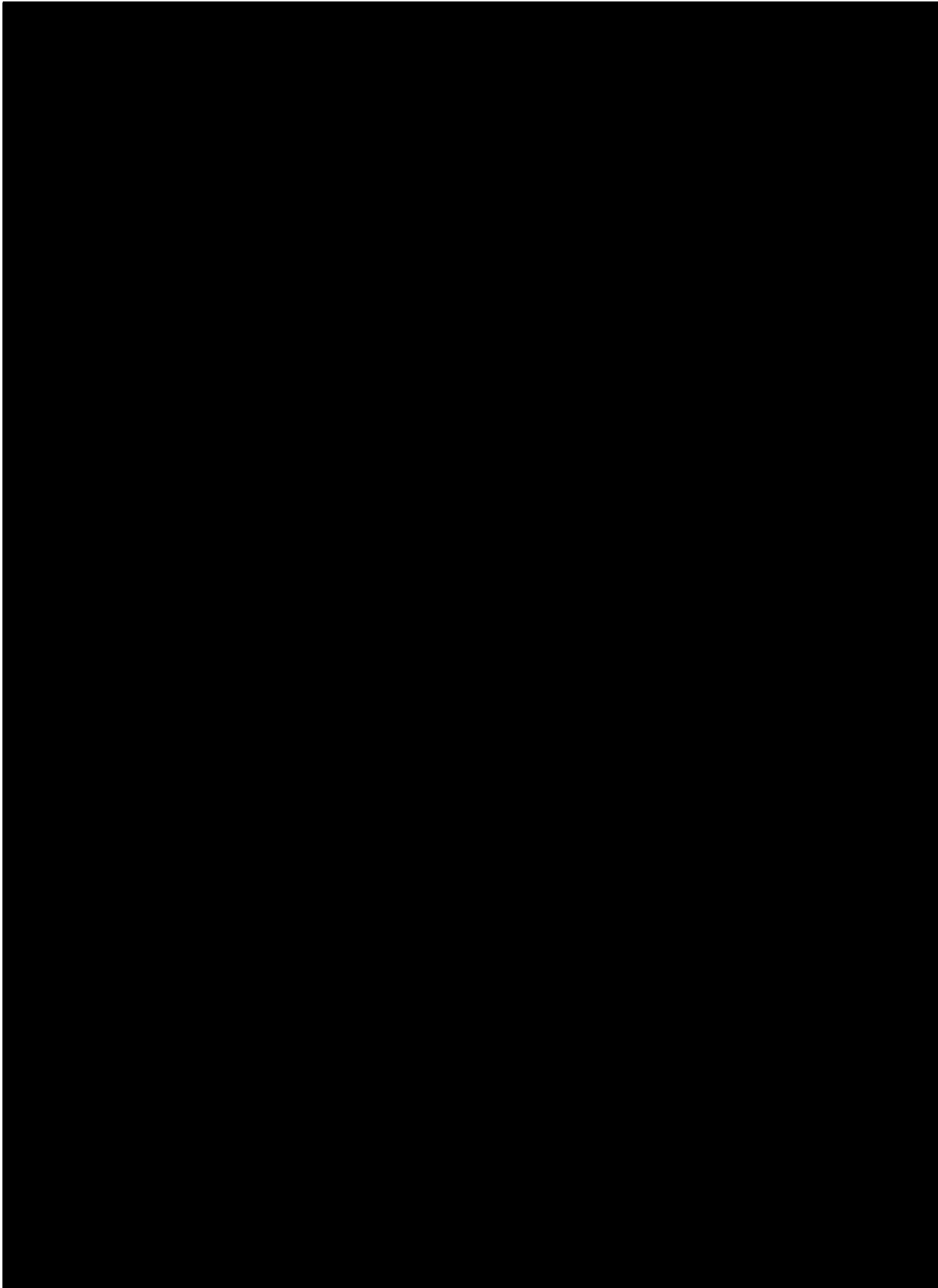


Figure III Variety Listening Barometer - An early attempt to discover listeners' tastes.



volunteers but so vast was the response to the microphone appeal by John Watt, the Head of Variety, after Saturday night 'Music Hall' on 18th September 1937, that 2,000 were used instead. In all, 47,000 people responded to the broadcast appeal and the appeals in the Radio Times and The Listener. The excellent response quickly removed fears about the lack of public goodwill. The scheme ran from 11th October 1937 to 1st January 1938 and involved the participants in completing weekly listening logs. These were supplemented with extra questionnaires requesting opinions on the programmes. (See Figures III and IV). These supplementary questions covered broader issues of great importance to the BBC especially the extent of listening to foreign stations on Sundays. Much of this was processed gradually in a series of interim reports which were issued between January and May 1938. The main report was not produced until November 1938 but by then most of the results were already well distributed inside the BBC.

The inevitable pre-selection of the volunteers meant that it was possible to criticise the survey for representing only the more eloquent and active listeners to variety. This criticism was anticipated in the formation of the survey:

'The recruitment of log keepers by means of invitation from the Corporation is open to the possible objection that those who respond may not be really representative of the variety public. The greatest safeguard against this danger lies in the way in which the appeal for volunteers is made and the simplicity of the work which they are asked to do.' 20

In fact a control group was employed to check that the sample was broadly representative.²¹ Fortunately the virtual identity of the variety loving public with the radio audience as a whole meant that a large response from volunteers was achieved and the Listener Research Section was able to weigh the sample according to age, sex, region and social class with much greater freedom than expected.

The actual representativeness of the 2,000 log keepers was examined in detail. There were more male than female logkeepers and their average age was lower than that for the whole population. The social composition was over-weighted towards the middle class listener - 45% of the logkeepers compared with

49% who were working class. For the whole population it was more like 33% to 66%. This assumed that working class people were those earning less than £5 per week and middle class people those earning £5 to £12 per week. This may represent the relative willingness of the two classes to cooperate and also the extent of set ownership, roughly at least, amongst working class people. The national distribution over-represented the London area.²²

Table I: Variety Listening Barometer: Distribution of Logkeepers

Region	Logkeepers %	Licences %
London	57.3	35.6
North	20.8	28.9
Midland	10.6	14.6
West	6.4	6.7
Wales	2.0	4.4
Scottish	2.1	8.5
Northern Ireland	0.8	1.3
Total	100	100

The only other error in the survey was caused by a problem which had afflicted the Drama Reports Scheme but which had far more serious consequences for a quantitatively orientated survey: 'duty listening'. The overall effect was to increase the amount of listening by members of the barometer, partially out of a mistaken sense of duty to the BBC but also out of interest in broadcasting aroused by participation. The net effect was probably less serious:

'Briefly, the conclusion arrived at ... is that while the 2,000 logkeepers undoubtedly listen to more programmes than the average listener does, their choice of programmes is probably typical of the great mass of listeners who like broadcast light entertainment.' 23

The barometer discovered some interesting facts about the habits of the radio audience as represented by the logkeepers. In aggregate form there was much to be learnt about the main times for listening, the daily variations in these times and also the overall quantity of listening in these periods. Some discoveries were obvious. For instance, Saturday evenings drew the largest audiences and revealed the greatest number of people listening until a late hour - after 11 p.m. This was due to the leisure available on the following day but also to the skill of the radio producers in transmitting the most attractive programmes on that evening. This was suggested when the 'Palace of Varieties' programme was moved to a Tuesday for one week. It still managed to draw a loyal audience of 82% of the log keepers.²⁴ On the other hand, the timing of Saturday programmes produced some surprise. Twice as many preferred 8-9 p.m. as the best time for 'Music Hall' - then the most popular programme - as compared with 9.20 - 10.20 p.m. Even on a Saturday, the audience declined very rapidly after 10 p.m. Relevant figures were derived from a question to the panel in November 1937.

Table II: Variety Listening Barometer: Listening Levels.²⁵

Proportion of logkeepers who listen to radio in any form:	Weekdays %	Saturday %
Up to 9.30 p.m.	97	97
9.30 - 10.00 p.m.	91	94
10.00 - 10.30 p.m.	54	79
10.30 - 11.00 p.m.	25	57
11.00 - 11.30 p.m.	7	29
11.30 - midnight	3	16

Weekday listening levels did not vary so much from each other. The main contrast was with the control group. Here figures derived from personal interviews showed that, as predicted, absolute levels were visibly lower but relative levels were fairly similar.

One related facet of variety listening was investigated, to try and quantify one of the most contentious issues of this decade in broadcasting: the amount of listening to foreign stations. 20% of the light entertainment public listened to them on weekdays - mostly before 10.30 a.m. when there was no BBC competition - and 66% listened at some time on Sundays. Approximately 33% of the panel would be listening to foreign stations at any time during the period 10.00a.m. to 7.30 p.m. on a Sunday.²⁶ Even when the BBC was in competition, the relative popularity of the two alternatives on a Sunday was hardly in doubt since, 'The proportion of listeners to foreign stations at 6.00 p.m. is higher than at any time during the day.'²⁷ 57% of those who said they listened had their sets tuned to foreign stations at that time - equivalent to 38% of the entire panel. Obviously there was a need for more surveying to provide comparisons with these figures but the results were the first solid manifestations of the actual extent of listening to foreign stations and the first concrete proof - established by BBC personnel - of widespread dissatisfaction with BBC programmes on Sunday.

In addition to the basic search, the barometer also revealed the stations listened to. On Sundays 70% of those who said they listened to foreign stations - that was nearly 50% of the panel - listened to Radio Luxembourg. Radio Normandie was the second most popular, followed well behind by Lyons and Hilversum. As the report observed, Luxembourg's programmes on Sunday had some extra audience attraction since:

'apart from the fact that regular foreign station listening is three times as frequent on Sundays as on weekdays it is noteworthy that whereas Normandie slightly exceeds Luxembourg in popularity on weekdays, Luxembourg is nearly twice as popular as Normandie on Sundays.'²⁸

The component elements of this aggregate view of the habits of the panel revealed more interesting aspects of the audience. The audience was markedly differentiated in habits by age. Those aged 16 - 20 years listened in the proportion 100:121 compared with those aged 40 - 49. On the other hand young people tended to listen later in the evening than the average. There were also differences in the quantity of listening between men and women. Female listening was consistently higher than male listening. Obviously work patterns were

influential and the survey clearly showed that the most numerous daytime listeners during the weekdays were working class housewives. Only in listening to foreign stations did male significantly exceed female listening.

Table III: Variety Listening Barometer: Listening by Men and Women.²⁹

Shows beginning between (average for the whole week)	Women	Men
12.00 - 2.30 p.m.	100	58
4.00 - 4.59 p.m.	100	62
5.00 - 5.59 p.m.	100	79
6.00 - 7.59 p.m.	100	95
8.00 - 8.59 p.m.	100	98
9.00 - and after	100	96

Probably the most interesting result of all was the small variation between the regions which was discovered. Probably the only major difference was that, listeners in the BBC's North Region tended to listen later in the evening than those in the London Region. This was the first real evidence that audience behaviour was dictated primarily by the age, sex and social class of the listener. These early findings were to be consistently supported by later research and it served to make research into local behaviour very important - to see why this similarity should occur. All kinds of imponderable factors were aroused by these results and needed to be scrutinised. Had broadcasting, since its inception in 1922, wrought the basis for this similarity or had regional habits and tastes been fairly uniform before the arrival of broadcasting? Equally there were gradations between these two outer limits. If broadcasting had some influence, it may have been heavily modified by other social forces. It must not be assumed that broadcasting could have been the sole agent in creating such a position; other persuasive forces such as the press and, indirectly, the internal combustion engine, need to be considered.

Variations according to social class were more marked. More of the working class with sets listened than their middle class counter-parts, in the proportion 100:83. More of the working class than of the middle class listened on Saturdays and listened more regularly to foreign stations on Sundays : 73% compared with 63% of the middle class listeners. As one report described Sunday listening behaviour:

'If the habits of middle class and working class listeners are considered separately it is found that the curves run approximately parallel throughout the day - the working class curve, however, being some 10 to 15% higher than the middle class curve. This position is only reversed after the Corporation has closed down at 10.30 p.m.' 30

More of the middle class tended to listen later on weekdays but the working class audience on Saturdays was in excess of middle class listening.³¹

Table IV: Variety Listening Barometer: Saturday Listening

Proportion who normally listen on Saturday	Middle Class %	Working Class %
Up to 9.30 p.m.	97	96
9.30 - 10.00 p.m.	95	93
10.00 - 10.30 p.m.	79	80
10.30 - 11.00 p.m.	56	60
11.00 - 11.30 p.m. (especially)	26	35
11.30 - midnight	16	18

There was no academic exploitation of these figures at the time and, therefore nothing more than a tentative interpretation is possible. Clearly the differences are fairly slight but there is a noticeable and persistent variation. This may tell something about the leisure patterns of the respective classes. The hours of work may explain, for instance, why the working class listens less on weekdays than the middle class.

The research into the programme preferences of the 2,000 also proved to be fruitful. But before pursuing the discoveries further it will be useful to explain what was meant by 'taste' in audience research particularly when compared with 'habits'. A barometer was meant to be essentially concerned with pressure rather than heat. That is, it was meant to be concerned with quantities not with the enjoyment of the programmes. In this case only a limited attempt was made to discover the opinions and preferences of the log keepers. 'Tastes' are extraordinarily difficult to measure. There can be no foolproof method of measuring them collectively. Any questionnaire must expect firm answers - usually a blunt yes or no - to its questions on tastes. This is contrary to the normal form of taste which is graduated almost infinitely between two extremes of liking and disliking. However, a wider choice of answers will probably only introduce more confusion and certainly lead to results which are useless for the purpose of analysis. Programme categorisation is no easier - there is a constant dispute between definition of what is 'serious' as opposed to 'popular' music. It could be asked, too, where 'taste' ended and 'habit' began. The Listener Research Section resorted to one definition and shut out the blurring at the edges for the sake of convenience. 'Habits' were concerned with those available to listen at various times of the day. This part of the research became almost a general social survey, simply because so many other daily activities influenced the hours at which people could listen. The surveying of 'tastes' was restricted to the liking for specific programmes or groups of programmes.

In fact some interrelation has to be ignored because it would be so difficult to demonstrate anything more than speculative conclusions - habits can influence tastes. If, say, a listener is available to listen for a specific period of time each day, he may begin by disliking the programme then available but eventually acquire the taste simply by the act of listening. This, after all, was the essential aim of the BBC. The only way to measure this change in taste is to carry out a series of censuses of taste at fairly frequent intervals and, even then, the mechanics of the change could elude the surveyors. It was equally true that taste could influence habit. If the same listener could not bear

the programme at all, he might resort to another leisure activity - hence being lost for that period of time regardless of any future change in the programme. There was possibly an element of this in Sunday listening. Part of the audience may have chosen to abstain altogether because of the unattractive BBC programmes and the reluctance to listen to foreign stations. The lower levels of listening may then become habitual.

In the Variety Listening Barometer, the analysis of 'taste' was fairly crude, relying as it did on a pre-selected group. This meant, therefore, that the opinions and preferences of the more committed were discovered. The only true census of taste attempted came later with the Second Random Sample. The usual tables of the most popular programmes were constructed and from the returns 'Straight Variety' was easily the most popular. 'Vaudeville' always drew enormous audiences, with the Royal Command Performance attracting the largest audience of all - 94% of the log keepers listened to it. With such a large following, these programmes probably possessed the most homogeneous audience of all. An analysis of a supplementary questionnaire put to the audience produced a useful hint of the most popular types of programme. The conclusions were:

Table V: Variety Listening Barometer: Popular Programmes³²

Type	like more %	like less %	satisfied %
Straight Variety (Music Hall etc.)	70	1	29
Reginald Foort at the Theatre Organ	55	5	40
Comedy Shows	54	5	41
Concert Parties	44	8	48
'Interest Programmes' (Scrapbook)	41	7	52
Cinema Organs	41	8	50
Serials (The Plums)	31	12	51
Musical Comedy	29	19	52
Dance Music	17	28	54
Relays from the United States etc.	8	57	34
Average	39	15	46

These figures were not true for the audience as a whole - only for the more committed. However, evidence from the control group for the barometer did suggest that, although the liking for the various programmes was a good deal less, the order of popularity was roughly similar. As the variety audience represented the largest part of the whole audience, there would probably have been little change if the log keepers had been chosen entirely at random.

Audiences were capable of behaving differently towards programmes of the same basic type. So called 'background' music programmes, such as gramophone record broadcasts, were listened to by roughly the same number of people regardless of content - the size of the audience being related far more to the time of the broadcast.³³ These were broadcast during the daytime hours. In the evenings the 'foreground' programmes attracted a more discriminating audience. A programme such as 'Monday at Seven' varied somewhat according to content. Research showed that, for instance, Cicely Courtneidge's appearance considerably boosted the listening by the youngest age group. This was a limited challenge to the theory of indiscriminating 'tap listening' by the audience. Nonetheless, previously unperceived evidence could be produced in support of this theory. It was noticed that the rise or fall in size of audience for one programme, such as 'Monday at Seven', heavily influenced the size for the following programme. One report observed the behaviour of a group of intermittent listeners:

'Whether the smaller group should or should not listen to 'The Plums' does not appear to have had anything to do with that programme but to have depended upon the attractiveness of 'Monday at Seven' which preceded it.' 34

As with the habits of the audience, opinions differed most markedly according to age. The main report (LR/65) stated rather bluntly: 'Differences in taste were more often correlated with differences in age than with differences either in sex, social class or region but even these were less than might have been expected.'

For the really big variety broadcasts the structure of the audience was almost identical to the social composition of the entire audience, but, as might

be expected, the programmes appealing to the physically active, such as dance music, drew decidedly more of their audience from young rather than middle aged people.

Variations in taste according to sex were hidden by the inability of men to hear many of the daytime programmes; these were therefore confined largely to female audiences because of the limitations of the working day rather than from any free programme selection. Regional preferences varied much less than might have been expected. The classic case used to demonstrate this similarity was the serial 'The Plums'. As the main report argued:

'It is interesting to note that although 'The Plums' were North country characters, the proportion of log keepers who listened to them was as high in the London Region as in the North.' 35

Class differences in taste were also less visible than might have been expected. The report had few speculations to make on the influence of social class on tastes but those differences which were discernable were closely related to the habits of listeners already observed. In their greater willingness to listen to foreign stations, working people demonstrated a lower tolerance to the BBC Sunday programmes and probably shared a greater affinity for variety and popular music broadcast by Luxembourg and Normandie.

8.3 General Listening Barometer

The Variety Listening Barometer was so successful that it was decided to expand the method to cover the entire output of BBC programmes. The new panel was in operation from 4th December 1938 to 1st April 1939 and produced a continuous listening log of great value to the programme planners. The panel was composed partly of volunteers and partly of those used by the Listener Research Section to produce a more accurate balance by age, sex, region, class and occupation. Of the total 4,205 on the panel, roughly 500 middle class people and 500 working class came from each of the four English BBC regions: London, North, Midland and West. Questionnaires still had to be used although the

surveyers looked to the future when the expensive, but more reliable, method of personal interviewing could be used. As Silvey explained:

'Volunteers had again to be used, for the days when we could conduct a survey based on personal interviews were still to come, and it was clearly understood that we would be estimating no more than the relative audiences of programmes.' 36

The questionnaires formed a daily listening log on the same basis as before but covering the entire output. Supplementary questions were also inserted in the same way. The results were issued in two forms. Special reports dealt with the specific issues which most excited the attention of the BBC planners, while information on listening to foreign stations was issued in interim reports as soon after collection as possible.

One special report covered religious broadcasts and in the process told something about contemporary attitudes towards religion generally. 33% of the panel, for instance, listened to at least one of the Sunday evening broadcasts - the most successful being the monthly broadcast from St. Martin's in the Field. Working class listeners listened more than middle class ones and listening was greatest in the West Region and least in the London area.³⁷ Other reports dealt with such disparate things as listening to news, music, and sport³⁸ but the most interesting analysis reflected the increasing concern for the European situation. A report covered the extent of listening to German bulletins in English.³⁹ The group was asked if they listened to broadcasts from Hamburg or Cologne at 7.15 p.m. each evening. The results revealed little listening - or few who would admit to listening.

Table VI: General Listening Barometer: Listening to German Broadcasts.

	Yes %	No %
Reception of them possible?	64	36
Did you know of them?	49	51
Have you heard them?	29	71
Do you listen regularly?	7	93

The North Region's Public Relations Officer ran a vox pop in the style

of Mass-Observation to provide colour to these results. Generally, those who listened were critical. The summary described the trend:

'I think that the German broadcasts were listened to rather extensively at first, but now they seem to have fallen quite flat ... In spite of this there are some, shall we say, thoughtful people who listen periodically to try to detect any reactions that may be registered in response to important speeches or events.' 40

One man argued:

'I felt, what is the use of all this, its only a pack of lies - we can only get the truth from our own stations, and of course did not listen again.'

This disbelief seemed to have been shared by many listeners in the North.

The interim reports also contained interesting material. Several paralleled the earlier work on listening to foreign stations - rather confirming the original impression created. Since the previous work, the BBC had managed to make some inroads on Sunday listening by opening transmissions for other than religious broadcasts earlier at 10.45 a.m. instead of 12.30 p.m. However, weekday listening to other stations had actually increased. Of course, these changes could have been due to the change in sample rather than any attempt to brighten up the programmes. In any case there were still several points of resistance to the BBC's output. On weekdays the peaks were from 8 - 9 a.m. when 10% of the log keepers listened to foreign stations (with no BBC competition) and from 10 - 11 p.m. when 8% listened. Luxembourg was the most popular station throughout the week. On Sundays the trends were much as before, although one interim report noted that there was one particular kernel of large scale listening which lingered between 4 and 6 p.m. The reason was one of the more popular programmes broadcast by the foreign stations at that time. The report tartly explained the reasons for any ill-informed BBC personnel:

'From 4.00 to 5.00 p.m. both Luxembourg and Normandie broadcast a Horlick's Tea Hour, and from 5.30 to 6.00 p.m. Luxembourg broadcasts the "Ovaltineys" which is primarily a children's programme.' 41

Another report looked at the impact of talks on the audience. 45% considered them to be too cautious, 39% felt that they did not deal with contemporary issues, whilst a considerable minority felt that they were not

interesting enough.⁴² Perhaps this conformed with the discovery that few of those cooperating with the survey used the opportunity of free comment to criticise political bias in BBC news broadcasts. Reticence was not responsible as many, especially working class listeners, took the opportunity to vehemently condemn the dull Sunday programmes.

One interim report looked at sport.⁴³ A table of the most popular sports was composed. The top six sporting commentaries were:

Table VII: General Listening Barometer: Sports Programmes.

Sport	Liked by % of the panel
1. The Boat Race	70
2. Championship Boxing	51
3. Soccer	50
4. Cricket	50
5. Lawn Tennis	34
6. Horse Racing	33

The working class correspondents were more interested in broadcast sport than the middle class and liked soccer and boxing noticeably more. There were some predictable regional variations: the London Region liked the Boat Race and speedway more than the average, whilst the North liked rugby league more. The Welsh Region preferred rugby union and soccer was more popular in the North and Midlands than elsewhere.

Overall, this barometer was successful enough to persuade the Listener Research Section to press for its development as a continuous method survey using the interview method rather than the questionnaire.⁴⁴ Ironically, September 1939 was to be the starting date and the war delayed its introduction: of course war conditions, where the study of morale was a crucial need, actually made it more necessary than ever to discover audience preferences. After the initial hesitation the 'Continuous Survey of Listening' was rushed into service and began working in December 1939.⁴⁵

8.4 The Random Samples

After the work on the Variety Listening Barometer, the Listener Research Section moved on to the random sample method of surveying. Once again one of the main problems was persuading BBC personnel that the sampling method was reliable. There were two random samples in 1938. The first searched for 'Winter Listening Habits', the second, 'Summer Listening Habits'. The First Random Sample (LR/67) was published on 1st September 1938, although four interim reports had already been issued before then. 3,000 homes were chosen at random from GPO licence files at pre-selected post office areas to cover all the BBC regions. 8,200 persons over 16 were reached by this method and 3,152 replied - a response of 44%. The results of the Second Random Sample (LR/71) were released on 15th February 1939, although similar interim reports gave prior coverage of the results. It too looked at households rather than individual sources, using the same form of random sample to reach 4,700 different households or 12,700 listeners in all. 4,500 replied, a response of 35%.

The most useful analysis came from the comparison of the two sets of results and so it is best to look at the surveys as a related pair, on some occasions making comparisons which the two reports failed to make directly. Overall, the two surveys were much more reliable than any hitherto. The pre-selection was carried out as much as possible by the samplers. The only other pre-selection of the sample came from the audience response but even the lowest level of return, 35%, was good by existing precedents. As with previous surveys, the response had only a small effect on the results. The report to the First Random Sample observed:

'Had a full 100% response been received the results so given would possibly have been on a slightly lower level all round though it is not thought that there would have been any material change in the relative positions of the various programmes or times which were compared.'

The report was also keen to emphasise that the size of the sample was not necessarily concomitant with its accuracy:

'In order to double the accuracy of a sample it is necessary to quadruple its size; to quadruple the accuracy, the sample must be multiplied by sixteen, and so on. This can be put another way: if accuracy to within 3% is sufficient for the job in hand, a sample of 1,000 is just as good as a sample of 10,000.

Silvey also sought to reassure the unilluminated about the theory of probability upon which the sample depended:

'We are concerned not with the theoretical possibility of getting the right answer from a sample, but with the probability of doing so, which is a very different matter. The important point is that though those 501 different answers are all equally possible they are certainly not all equally probable.' 46

The surveys proved to be fairly representative of the population. This can be demonstrated by comparing the composition of the First Random Sample with that derived from the census returns.

Table VIII: First Random Sample: Composition of Sample by Age.

Age	F.R.S. %	Population of England and Wales %
16-19	7.3	8.4
20-29	21.3	21.7
30-39	24.9	20.6
40-49	19.5	17.2
50-59	14.9	15.1
60-69	8.8	10.7
70+	3.3	6.3
Unknown	10.0	-
By Region		
N. Ireland	2.3	1.3
London	41.0	35.6
North	26.3	28.9
Midland	14.1	14.6
West	5.7	6.7
Wales	3.2	4.4
Scotland	7.4	8.5
By residence		
Urban	84.3	82.1
Rural	15.7	17.9

The only main divergence was that of the class of the listener. The First Random Sample gave the figures of 42.9% middle class, 51.2% working class with 5.9% unknown. The report noted this, pointing out that it was unsafe to assume that the composition of the listening population should be similar to that of the population as a whole:

'Indeed there is every reason to suppose that the social grade composition of the listening public is radically different from that of the population as a whole, for it is highly probable that the principal factor preventing families from having sets is poverty. It has been estimated that approximately 70% of the population is working class ... If we assume that 90% of the families without sets are working class (a legitimate assumption in the circumstances) this would mean that the listening public consists of 40% middle class and 60% working class.' 47

As a consequence the report asserted:

'it seems probable that the sample is subject to two biases - an under-representation of the less enthusiastic listeners and an over-representation of the middle class. But since we know that more listening is done in the average working class home, than in the average middle class home, it may well be that these two biases to some extent cancel one another out.' 48

Perhaps the questionnaire was too formidable for working class listeners (despite the popularity of football pools) or possibly there was a connection between more listening than average and a greater willingness to cooperate.

Between them, the two surveys examined four major facets of the amount and type of listening. The first indicator of the quantity of listening was the time when listeners normally switched on their sets in both summer and winter. The second naturally involved looking at the time they switched them off. Thirdly, for the purposes of comparison, the samples examined the amount of listening each day at half-hour intervals. The Second Random Sample also asked listeners to judge for themselves whether they listened more or less in summer than in winter. The fourth part of each sample analysed the audience for the various types of programme. In addition, the Second Random Sample included the first real attempt to discover more about the things which listeners actually liked by using a separate questionnaire devoted to 'tastes'.

The time when listeners switched on their sets provided the first basis by which the levels of listening could be measured and a comparison can be made

TABLE I

SUMMER LISTENING COMPARED WITH WINTER LISTENING

Question: Please put a X against whichever of these statements is true

- I listen less in the summer than in the winter
 (a) Between 6.00 and 8.00 p.m. (b) Between 8.00 and 10.30 p.m.
- I listen more in the summer than in the winter
 (a) Between 6.00 and 8.00 p.m. (b) Between 8.00 and 10.30 p.m.
- I listen about as much in the summer as in the winter
 (a) Between 6.00 and 8.00 p.m. (b) Between 8.00 and 10.30 p.m.

(26% of those who returned questionnaires did not answer in respect of (a), and 23% did not answer in respect of (b))

Types of listeners	(a) Between 6.00 and 8.00 p.m.			(b) Between 8.00 and 10.30 p.m.		
	Listen <u>less</u> in Summer	Listen <u>more</u> in Summer	Listen <u>as much</u> in Summer	Listen <u>less</u> in Summer	Listen <u>more</u> in Summer	Listen <u>as much</u> in Summer
	%	%	%	%	%	%
GRAND TOTAL	42	3	55	26	8	66
Men	45	3	52	28	8	64
Women	39	3	58	23	8	69
Middle Class	49	3	48	30	8	62
Working Class	35	3	62	21	8	71
Aged						
Under 20	43	4	53	31	9	60
20 - 29	<u>44</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>63</u>
Under 30	43	4	53	31	7	62
30 - 39	45	3	52	24	9	67
40 - 49	38	3	59	24	9	67
50 - 59	41	2	57	26	7	67
60 - 69	40	1	59	23	7	70
70 and over	<u>27</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>67</u>
50 and over	39	2	59	24	7	69
Urban	39	3	56	25	8	67
Rural	51	2	47	25	13	62
London Region	43	3	54	26	6	68
North "	38	4	58	25	8	67
Midland "	44	3	53	24	9	67
West of England.	40	1	59	26	10	64
Wales	42	5	53	23	14	63
Scotland	45	3	52	30	11	59
N. Ireland	40	3	57	41	6	53

between the two samples:

Table IX: Random Samples: Listening in Summer and Winter

Subject (Base = 9pm = 100) Proportion of those listening at 9pm who usually start listening about:	Winter First Random Sample			Summer Second Random Sample		
	6pm	7pm	8pm	6pm	7pm	8pm
	Grand Total	83	93	99	66	71
Men	78	91	98	61	67	87
Women	89	95	100	70	74	93
Middle Class	80	91	98	59	65	88
Working Class	86	95	99	70	74	93
Aged 20-29	80	91	99	62	67	89
Aged 50-59	88	95	99	72	75	93
Urban	83	92	98	66	71	90
Rural	89	97	100	61	66	90
London Region	80	92	99	63	69	92
North Region	85	93	98	67	72	90
Midland Region	86	94	99	65	70	92
West Region	86	94	99	67	72	88
Welsh Region	89	94	98	74	76	93
Scottish Region	88	94	97	65	70	85
N. Ireland Region	84	99	100	71	80	89

Taken from Table IV of F.R.S. and Table II of S.R.S.

This particular comparison was not actually made in the samples - the results were expressed in separate tables in each report. An absolute comparison was not possible because the base level at 9pm was higher in winter than in summer. Placed together, the contrasts in listening are evident. Winter listening was always higher at an earlier time for all groups, almost certainly due to the darkness and inclement weather which reduced alternative leisure pursuits. The young listened consistently less than the old, although as the evening progressed, especially in winter, the difference was reduced. Women could listen consistently more than men whatever the season or time of day. More of the working class could listen at any time. Regionally there was little contrast. Significantly the London Region showed slightly less listening than the other areas at 6 p.m. This

was probably due to the longer distance from work to home and the consequently increased travelling times. The most complex variation was that between urban and rural listening. In the First Random Sample, urban listening was definitely less than rural listening. In the summer the position for early evening listening was exactly reversed. This may have reflected the increase in agricultural work during the summer evenings.

The Second Random Sample demonstrated the contrast between summer and winter listening in a different way. It asked its listeners to say whether they listened more, less or about the same amount in the summer. Two periods were suggested. From 6 - 8 p.m., 42% claimed they listened less, 3% claimed they listened more and a majority, 55% claimed they listened about the same amount. By 8 - 10.30 p.m., 20% claimed they listened less, 8% more and 66% the same amount.⁴⁹

The report commented:

'early and later, there is less seasonal change in women's listening than in men's. It is the young and the middle class listeners, too, rather than the elderly and the working class, who tend to listen less in the summer. As between different regions, there is little worth remark...' (See Figure IV)

The statement continued:

'But a comparison of the answers of urban, with those of rural listeners shows that whereas in the early evening in the summer many more listeners in the country are kept away from their wireless sets than in the town, after 8.00 p.m., the position changes. For between 8.00 and 10.30, not only is the shrinkage in the audience no greater in the country than the town, but there is a substantial minority of country listeners (13%) who say that they listen more in the summer than in the winter.' 50

The Second Random Sample also divided the age grouping between the sexes to demonstrate some interesting aspects. The proportion of the peak audience for each group who listened at 6 p.m. were:

Table X: Second Random Sample: Listening by Men and Women at 6.00 p.m.

Audience at 9 p.m. = 100		
Age	Men %	Women %
Under 30	60	63
30-40	50	65
40-50	61	77
50+	71	78
Average	61	70

Demonstrating a new willingness to interpret the results more speculatively, the report argued that more younger women probably went out to work, thus reducing the numbers available to listen. There was one anomaly where men under 30 listening more than the 30 to 40 age group. The report suggested, 'perhaps interest in the sports news which is given in the 6 o'clock bulletin has something to do with it.' 51

The time when listeners switch off can be compared. The question in both samples was: 'At what time in the evening do you usually stop listening on weekdays (excluding Saturday)?'. The results were as follows:

Table XI Random Samples: Time When Listening Ends in Summer and Winter: Proportion of those listening at 9 p.m. on weekdays (excluding Saturday) who usually listen up to the following times: 52
(A guide to the rate of decline - absolute levels are different).

9 pm = base 100 All figures expressed as a %	Winter First Random Sample					Summer Second Random Sample				
	10.00	10.30	11.00	11.30	12.00	10.00	10.30	11.00	11.30	12.00
Grand Total	92	62	31	9	4	93	65	32	12	6
Men	93	66	33	11	5	93	69	36	14	8
Women	90	57	29	8	4	92	61	29	10	4
Middle Class	92	64	30	9	5	94	70	36	13	7
Working Class	92	61	32	10	4	91	63	30	11	5
Aged: Under 20	86	56	27	11	3	91	64	31	13	6
20-29	96	70	43	17	8	95	71	43	19	9
30-39	92	65	30	9	6	94	67	31	10	5
40-49	93	61	30	8	3	94	69	34	12	6
50-59	92	60	29	6	2	92	64	32	12	7
60-69	91	56	22	5	2	89	59	27	7	3
70+	78	28	6	-	-	81	43	16	3	3
Urban	93	64	33	11	5	93	66	33	13	6
Rural	85	51	19	3	1	91	42	25	9	4
London Region	89	58	27	8	4	91	60	27	8	4
North Region	92	64	33	8	3	94	70	38	15	7
Midland Region	95	59	30	10	6	92	61	28	9	4
West Region	92	54	19	7	5	93	57	23	7	3
Welsh Region	93	66	37	10	4	92	73	32	19	16
Scotland	95	75	43	16	5	95	76	49	25	11
N. Ireland	99	83	55	23	11	96	87	66	30	11

This composite table shows fairly clearly that there are very few variations between summer and winter listening in the late evening. If anything, the level of listening is higher after 11.00 p.m. in summer compared with winter. Far more interesting was the more consistent difference between the component groups.

The difference in listening between the classes was, for instance, influenced by the seasonal change. More of the middle class listened in the summer than the winter and on weekdays the audience contained more of the middle class than of working class listeners - in contrast to January when both classes listened in roughly the same proportions. Men listened later than women although over the rest of the day women listened in greater proportions. At both times of the year, urban dwellers listened later than rural inhabitants. The regional variations revealed a new feature of listening which had not been appreciated before. The report argued the point clearly enough:

'These figures suggest that no matter what the season or the day, the greater the distance of a region from the South of England, the later do its listeners switch off in the evening. This result is so unexpected that one might be excused for suspecting it to be a statistical freak were it not for the fact that it is corroborated by three separate questions in two distinct enquiries.'

Other questions on the same basis asked listeners when they switched off on Saturdays and Sundays. Broadly speaking, there was little seasonal variation: in both periods of the year, there was more listening on Saturdays at a later time, whilst there was less on Sunday than for a normal weekday. Again a composite table can be composed of those listening at 11 p.m. in both samples on Saturday and Sunday. (See Table XII).

The most obvious contrast here was the confirmation that, regardless of the season, working class listeners chose Saturday to listen much later than on a week-day - the reverse of the week-day position, where marginally more of the middle class listened later. The pattern of switching off later in the provinces was maintained on a Saturday at both times of the year, although listening in the West of England appears to have ended earliest of all. Sunday listening was considerably less. It is worth noting that the BBC closed down at 10.30 p.m. on Sunday and hence any listening recorded after this time must have been to foreign stations.

As in all the tables from the random samples, the two tables shown here do not provide precise guides to absolute quantities of listening. The bases may be different and they merely show the rate of decline in listening from the

Table XII. Random Samples: Time when Listening Ends on Saturday and Sunday.

Proportion of those listening at 9 p.m. who usually listen up to:

9p.m. = base 100 All figures expressed as % Day and Sample Time	Winter				Summer			
	Saturday FRS		Sunday FRS		Saturday FRS		Sunday FRS	
	10.00	11.00	10.00	11.00	10.00	11.00	10.00	11.00
Grand Total	96	63	77	11	95	61	79	10
Men	96	67	79	12	96	65	81	12
Women	95	59	76	10	95	57	78	7
Middle Class	94	58	78	12	95	56	82	11
Working Class	97	69	76	11	96	67	77	9
Aged under 20	94	63	65	12	93	65	72	12
20-29	97	75	81	18	98	72	82	15
30-39	96	64	78	14	95	64	81	10
40-49	96	66	73	7	97	63	79	9
50-59	95	59	80	10	97	60	82	9
60-69	93	49	82	7	94	43	81	2
70+	85	25	69	1	85	29	66	4
Urban	96	65	79	12	96	63	81	10
Rural	93	52	66	6	95	50	69	9
London Region	94	57	77	10	94	54	76	7
North Region	95	68	77	13	96	68	81	11
Midland Region	99	67	84	12	95	61	84	11
West Region	98	54	74	5	97	52	77	7
Welsh Region	94	54	82	12	96	62	82	14
Scottish Region	98	73	67	12	97	71	72	6
N. Ireland Region	100	88	73	21	98	79	86	39

base at 9 p.m.

The main tendency unearthed by the surveys was that there was definitely less listening in summer but it was a much smaller reduction than had been thought previously. Technically the reduction took place almost entirely before 9 p.m. The report on the Second Random Sample was anxious to demonstrate that the blocks of figures and percentages might hide a varied composition. The conclusion was tempered by this fact:

'Listening less in the summer may take the form of listening fewer evenings per week, of being more selective when one is listening, of switching on later, or of switching off earlier. The available evidence suggests that listeners certainly do not switch off their sets earlier in the summer. That they are more selective in their listening is possible, though unlikely. At the time of writing we have no evidence on the question of whether listeners listen fewer evenings per week in the summer. But there is evidence to support the view that to a large extent that minority who do less listening in the summer are in the main listeners who begin their evening listening at about 8.00 p.m. rather than at about 6.00 p.m. or 6.30 p.m.' 54

In the First Random Sample there was some interesting observation on the quantity of listening in the daytime before 6 p.m. The report observed that the largest increase in listening took place naturally enough as people came home from work between 5 and 6 p.m. It continued:

'This means that from the time BBC transmissions begin at 10.00 a.m. until 6 o'clock, the normal audience is never less than about 4,000,000 persons. At the peak of lunchtime it rises to about 8,000,000 and between 5 and 6 it passes the 10,000,000 mark.' 55

The audience was predominantly female, forming 75% of the audience from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and from 2 to 5 p.m. Male listening only increased in the period 12 to 2 p.m. and here it was noticeable that working class lunches ran more frequently from 12 until 1 p.m., whilst middle class lunchtimes normally ran from 1 to 2 p.m.⁵⁶ In rural areas, daytime listening was significantly higher than in urban areas. The gap was greatest between 10 and 11 a.m. when the morning service and women's talk attracted 40% of women listening in rural areas but only 27% of women in towns. There were regional differences. In Wales and the West of England, listening was consistently higher throughout the day. The report added:

'this is not a repetition in different words of the fact

'that rural daytime listening is greater than that in towns, for urban areas were strongly represented in both Wales and the West of England.' 57

The First Random Sample made an effort to discover something about the audience preferences for certain types of programmes at various times of the day. Light music was definitely the dominant demand from the listeners. Light orchestral, cinema organ music and dance music were the main components. This was consistently preferred to variety which had very little support in the daytime. The only substantial support for other programmes was for talks and readings, especially from 10 to 11 a.m. and from 2 - 4 p.m.

Some research was also done on the audience for evening news programmes. Basically, there were four main news bulletins in the evening, two on the national wavelength and the others on the regional programmes. The first news was easily the most popular, being the first permitted bulletin of the day, it contained much of the news which would escape the press until the next day. It also contained a very popular sports section. A table composed of the results in the First Random Sample can be drawn as follows:

Table XIII First Random Sample: Listening to News.

News	Regular	Occasional
1st News 6 p.m. National + Sport	58	16
2nd News 7 p.m. Regional. No Sport	14	24
3rd News 9 p.m. National. No Sport	33	25
News Summary 10.p.m. Regional + Sport and Talks	21	24

A rather different sort of research was done in the Second Random Sample, where a questionnaire was devoted to listener's tastes over the whole output. It is useful to turn to Silvey's definition and description of this part of the survey:

'This was the first of a number of attempts we made during my time at the BBC to carry out a census of what we came to call "tastes". (For convenience we confined the term "tastes" to attitudes towards broad categories of output as distinct from particular broadcasts.)' 58

Altogether there were 21 categories to choose from. Tables were composed to show the numerical support for the existing types of programmes. It was not the intention to provide a guide to the quantity or the quality of programmes which the audience might desire in the future. Variety naturally topped the census table, with cinema and theatre organ music following closely. The other groups in the top ten were, in order of popularity: musical comedy, dance music, plays, light music, orchestral music, brass band music and finally talks. The categorisation of the various groups of programmes was the weakest point of the sample, due to the possible variations in interpretation of the definitions used, but at least the broad order of popularity seemed to be fairly accurately compiled. Clearly, the variety type of programme was the most popular, with light music and dance music programmes the next group of popular programmes, followed only then by talks and discussions.

The following table was produced:

Table XIV Second Random Sample: Programme Preferences of the Sample.⁵⁹

<u>Programme</u>	<u>%</u>
Variety	93
Theatre and Cinema Organs	82
Military Bands	72
Musical Comedy	69
Dance Music	68
Plays	68
Light Music	66
Orchestral Music	55
Brass Bands	55
Talks	53
Discussions	49
Cricket Commentaries	48
Serial Plays	41
Light Opera	38
Vocal Recitals	32
Tennis Commentaries	26
Piano Recitals	21
Grand Opera	21
Violin Recitals	19
Serial Readings	12
Chamber Music	8

For all the programmes, the average number marked as 'liked' was 9.9 out of 21. In other words, the average listener liked at least half of the 21 major categories of programmes. Middle class people had more catholic tastes than working class listeners, choosing 10.2 on average compared with 9.8 selections. Of course, this could have meant that middle class correspondents marked the questionnaire more liberally and that their tastes were really rather more limited.

A clear divergence in programme appeal was between young and old listeners. Older listeners, say from 40 to 49, chose 10.5 programmes on average, compared with 9.3 for those under 20. This might be expected, as would be the divergence of taste between the two age groups on particular types of programmes. Dance music appealed to 88% of the under twenties and, hardly surprisingly, to only 38% of those between 60 and 69. The reverse was true of the relative popularity of talks and discussions, which were liked by 25% and 60% respectively. Other programmes showed less divergence.

The variation according to sex was reasonably predictable. Two-thirds of the men liked cricket commentaries, compared with only a third of the women. Men also liked brass band music and discussions significantly more than women. In contrast women liked plays, serial plays and serial readings a good deal more than men. Regional variations were much less than expected. Cricket commentaries were not liked as much in Scotland or Northern Ireland - for the obvious reason that the game was played less there. The Scots, Irish, Welsh and North Region listeners preferred vocal recitals more than elsewhere, whilst listeners in the North Region showed an expected affinity for brass bands.

This useful quantification of taste had a fairly predictable impact on the BBC hierarchy. Of course, planners already knew that variety was more popular than chamber music and this led many to reject the findings of surveys as unnecessary. However, as Silvey asserted, 'by no means everyone would have predicted that men's and women's preferences were as similar as they proved to be.'

Fortunately Silvey could see that the number of those in the BBC who preferred 'facts to folklore' was increasing. On its own, the survey did have limits but these were largely due to the lack of any parallel results. As Silvey remarked:

'We saw it as merely the first of a series, much of the value of which would come from comparisons. Was it true, as was so often said at the time, that broadcasting would raise public tastes? A series of inquiries on these lines should, we thought, contribute to the eventual finding of an answer.' 61

In fact the results of subsequent series did not differ so markedly from the original attempts and hence the earliest conclusions about tastes in the thirties can be used as valuable guides to audience behaviour.

8.5 Miscellaneous Research

From time to time the listener research section engaged in some ad hoc research to supplement its main effort. Of these unsystematic activities, two reports did produce something of interest, although neither conformed to the usual surveying methods. The earliest of the two relied on the method which was most often advocated by those who knew little about surveying techniques but more about publicity. This was the Radio Times questionnaire which appeared in the issue of 25th November 1938.⁶² A page in the Radio Times was given over to a questionnaire, in the way that Maurice Gorham had suggested, requesting readers to send in information about their reception of BBC stations, the type of aerial they possessed and the age of their sets. The response was reasonably good, with 101,803 replies out of a circulation of three million.

The quality of the results was suspect, as with any appeal where the response was dependent on the more energetic listeners. There was an uneven distribution in the areas from which listeners responded and, of course, Radio Times readers were not necessarily representative of licence holders as a whole. Nonetheless, the element of error was not so great that some relative conclusions could not be drawn from the results. Respondents were likely to listen more

often but not necessarily to a different number of stations in each region than those who had no desire to respond to the survey or who were not readers of the magazine. Since the BBC did not know the precise social composition of the readership, it could only be assumed that poorer listeners were probably under-represented because they could not afford the magazine. If that was true, although it does not have to be, then the questions which raised issues relating to income, such as the age of a set or the possession of an outdoor aerial, would not reflect the position of licence holders as a whole.

Results on listening to stations were interesting. The only noticeable anomaly was listening in Staffordshire, where poor reception meant that the Regional programme was frequently heard by less than half the listeners and the National programme consequently listened to a good deal more than average. Otherwise results were hardly unexpected. The Droitwich National station, then broadcasting on 1500 metres, reached the most listeners and normally attracted the largest audience in all the BBC's regions, except for the London Region. Here 61% claimed they listened to the National programme frequently, whilst nearly 77% claimed they listened frequently to the London Regional station broadcasting from Brookman's Park. In the North almost as many listened to the Northern Regional as to the National, whilst in the Midlands, listening to the National was significantly more popular than listening to the Midland Regional. This lack of commitment to the Regional programme was surprising and difficult to explain. Was reception or some other cause responsible? Listening to other Regional programmes followed fairly predictable lines. People in North Derbyshire listened in large numbers to the Midland Regional, although formally the area was placed in the BBC's North Regional area. Equally, people in North Oxfordshire listened to the London Regional in significant numbers, even though the area was in the Midland Regional transmission zone.

Besides the patterns of listening to BBC stations, the survey found that nearly 60% of readers' sets had been purchased in the last three years. Clearly the willingness to change sets was quite high, since the increase in licence

holding had been very small in the same period. New purchases in Wales and Northern Ireland even exceeded the average for the whole country, although the increase in licence holding was also higher in these areas. In Northern Ireland nearly 70% of the sets had been purchased since 1936. The attempt to estimate the preponderance of outdoor aerials was clearly stimulated by the desire to isolate transmission black spots. Outdoor aerials were more common than indoor ones. Comparing Derbyshire and Oxfordshire, North Derbyshire - rather predictably considering the topography - had a higher percentage of outdoor aerials at 63.3% although South Oxfordshire also had a considerable percentage with 61.8% having outdoor aerials. Obviously, however, these figures could have been influenced as much by the ability to purchase or construct an outdoor aerial as by the desire to improve reception. The lower quality of the survey must limit its value, both as a document on the social responses of the audience and as a work to enlighten BBC engineering and programme planners. Its chief effect must have been to help convince readers that the BBC was now taking an active interest in their listening habits and reception problems. From this point of view the publicity gained must have had some value for the BBC.

The survey by the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) rounded off the work of the Listener Research Section before the end of 1939.⁶³ Although it took place a month after war had broken out, with the needs of wartime morale adding greater urgency to such research, the basic intent was related to the earlier aim of establishing the Continuous Survey of Listening. The intention was again to try and measure the pressure of listening throughout the day. The BIPO work was meant as a pilot study to help implement this aim. The report observed the lack of change in behaviour - surprising considering the impact of the war:

'It is worth noting that the living habits of the bulk of listeners appear to have altered little as compared with previous conditions. Spectacular changes in the circumstances of individuals have no doubt taken place, but these have not been sufficiently numerous to total up to any national change.' 64

The method of interviewing relied on calling at a sample of one in 2,100 homes in the leading thirty-two urban concentrations in England, Scotland and Wales. The survey was consequently entirely weighted towards urban listeners. Of the 3,444 houses called upon, 2,723 had wireless sets.

The composition was as follows:

Table XV BIPO Survey: Households and Wireless Sets

Income grade for social class of household	% with sets	% without
Grade A £10 per week or more	97.4	2.6
Grade B £4 - £10	92.4	7.6
Grade C £2.10 - £4	84.4	15.6
Grade D £2.10 or less	57.7	42.3
All	77.1	20.9

These results were important in providing the first concrete research relating the size and composition of the audience to the size and composition of the whole population. The low representation of set owners amongst the lowest social grade gave weight to the assertion in the First Random Sample, that the size of the working class section of the audience was quite different from its size in the whole population.⁶⁵ It seemed unlikely that the outbreak of war had done a great deal to alter this impression. A figure revealing that nearly 80% of households possessed sets seems formidable but it was an extremely deceptive guide to social composition, since the vast majority of the remaining 20% belonged almost entirely to one social class. Only as the war progressed did the erosion of this residuum begin to take place.

One of Silvey's first principles of action had been to ensure that other social surveys of relevance to the BBC were sent in as a matter of course. Surveys for commercial purposes had inspired some of the methods used in research and, of course, Silvey's early experience lay in such work. As in the USA, the primary incentive for commercial broadcasting organisations to engage in research was the

lure of attracting advertising revenue. To sell prime time at higher rates and to attract commercial interest, it was a necessity to discover the peak viewing hours.

American influence was strongly impressed on the British market. Firms engaged in research by the opinion poll method included Gallup and Crossley from the United States.⁶⁶ They were first employed by the two European rivals broadcasting to Britain - Radio Luxembourg and Radio Normandie. Nielson's mechanical set recorder also had its attractions. Although not used in Britain before the war, it was interesting enough to persuade Silvey to visit Nielson and investigate the potential of his method when on a tour of the States to try and learn more about the techniques of surveying.⁶⁷

The relevance of this commercial research is that it provided invaluable supplementary evidence on audience behaviour. Evidence which can corroborate BBC research conclusions.

Radio Normandie had some material on the audience as early as 1935. In his evidence to Ullswater, Captain Plugge cited this evidence to support his case. At that time he had a team of twelve making personal calls throughout the country. The survey was of 8,800 homes, of which 79% had a set. 62% of those with sets claimed to listen to IBC although the extent of those listening was not amplified in any way.⁶⁸ Plugge put the case deceptively. His argument that the greatest concentrations of listeners were in the South and South Coast, where proximity to the transmitter made listening easy, quietly slipped over the fact that in the North, where reception was poor or non-existent, there were hardly any listeners to IBC. A map distributed to advertisers by the IBC made this quite clear⁶⁹

In 1938, Radio Normandie offered a research contract to Crossley Incorporated.⁷⁰ This produced evidence of more value. Also using personal, next-day interviewing, 5,785 interviews were carried out. The results were analysed by day and by hour. On weekdays 64% of those listening before 11.30 a.m. listened to commercial stations, although the audience was only 30% of the

maximum size at that time. Between 2 - 6 p.m., 44% of sets were in use, only 36% of these were listening to foreign stations.⁷¹

It was on Sundays that the really large-scale listening occurred - as the Variety Listening Barometer had shown. In the morning 52% of sets were in use, of which a massive 82.1% were listening to foreign stations. After noon more sets, 66%, were in use and before 6 p.m., 70.3% were listening to commercial broadcasts.⁷² This amply confirmed BBC research. The survey concluded that the concentration for Normandie was in London and the Home Counties; Luxembourg^{having a} more powerful transmitter, had a much wider reception area. On weekdays these two stations had roughly equivalent levels of listening - if anything Normandie had the most listeners - but on Sundays, Luxembourg had easily the largest audience in Britain.⁷³

8.6 Assessment

The decision to undertake audience research appeared to mark a complete change in policy, but if the BBC was to prove that this was a genuine change of heart, the research material actually had to be used in programme planning. If it was not, then the research would only serve to satiate the superficial need to improve public relations; granting only the illusion of deeper consultation. The undoubtedly valuable findings would be quite wasted.

The use of the material varied considerably from department to department throughout the Corporation. The Variety Department used it extensively, as might be expected with its greater commitment to the audience, whilst the Talks Department employed the information much less. The nature of the output seemed to be a decisive influence on the level of interest shown by a department; Silvey noted the response to the Variety Listening Barometer by the Head of Variety:

'John Watt used the results extensively when planning this winter's programmes.' 74

Otherwise the implementation of findings was more desultory and their value was not properly appreciated before the outbreak of war in 1939.

Publicity was certainly an essential aim and the Listener Research Section remained a part of the Public Relations Department before 1939. A paper from the Section to the General Advisory Council made the position clear:

'Another by-product of the work lies in the goodwill which it has evidently created among the listening public. Appeals for co-operation from listeners have met in every case with a most encouraging response, and sustained help has been given by those selected to take part in the various schemes described. Newspaper comment has been friendly. Goodwill of this kind, while not the primary object of the work, is helpful to the BBC in many ways.' 75

Actually, some of the press were not so easily placated. Whereas most newspapers had demanded more research, with typical inconsistency some papers actually attacked the results of the first efforts, and even advocated a return to the previous system of relying on letters.⁷⁶

Despite these criticisms there had been some change in BBC policy and, the relationship between the broadcaster and the listener had moved marginally closer. The horizons of contact had been broadened and there was no longer any need to rely on letters or personal contact. As Maurice Gorham remarked:

'To study these figures, as we did, day by day, seven days a week, gave you a feeling of being in touch with your audience and much more satisfying than depending on letters, which are often written by minorities, or by taking the opinions of the comparatively few people around London who you can meet yourself.' 77

BBC personnel began to accept that knowing more about the audience would not necessarily challenge the prerogative of the producer and consequently lower programme standards. Some began to realise that knowing more about less conspicuous social groups might actually help in programme planning and production. The chief disadvantage for the BBC in improving relations with its audience remained its metropolitan middle class image: personified each day by the accent of its voice. In the twenties and early thirties this may have represented the larger part of the audience rather well since the cost of a set or a refusal to listen ensured that the composition of the audience diverged from that of the whole population. Yet audience research showed that regional contrasts in the audience were always surprisingly small, thus

indicating the importance of diluting the metropolitan bias, and the success of the medium in attracting new listeners ensured, ironically enough, that the social and regional differentials were eventually emphasised more clearly. As working class listeners came to form the largest part of the audience, the accent and style of broadcasting became less representative. Only the impact of war provided the excuse for concession - a light music wavelength was allowed for the benefit of the Armed Forces.⁷⁸

One last question needs to be resolved. If the broadcasting institution was so out of sympathy with a large part of the audience, why did wireless set ownership spread so rapidly? Quite simply, for many broadcasts the image of the BBC was unimportant. Radio provided an excellent news service, good sports coverage and, more importantly, good coverage of royal occasions and major political events. All of these things transcended any conflicting demands from the various social groups.

Table XVI: Index of BBC Listener Research Reports 1937-1939.

LR/1	Television in January 1937	5th Feb 1937
LR/2	Drama Reports Scheme	16th Feb 1937
LR/3	" " "	16th Feb 1937
LR/4	" " "	16th Feb 1937
LR/5	" " "	24th Feb 1937
LR/6	" " "	23rd Feb 1937
LR/7	" " "	23rd Feb 1937
LR/8	" " "	25th Feb 1937
LR/9	" " "	2nd March 1937
LR/10	" " "	1st March 1937
LR/11	" " "	4th March 1937
LR/12	" " "	8th March 1937
LR/13	" " "	8th March 1937
LR/14	" " "	16th March 1937
LR/15	" " "	15th March 1937
LR/16	" " "	22nd March 1937
LR/17	" " "	22nd March 1937
LR/18	" " "	31st March 1937
LR/19	" " "	30th March 1937
LR/20	" " "	31st March 1937
LR/21	" " "	31st March 1937
LR/22	" " "	2nd Apr 1937
LR/23	" " "	8 Apr 1937
LR/24	" " "	5th Apr 1937
LR/25	" " "	6th Apr 1937
LR/26	" " "	14th Apr 1937
LR/27	" " "	13th Apr 1937
LR/28	" " "	13th Apr 1937
LR/29	" " "	16th Apr 1937
LR/30	" " "	19th Apr 1937
LR/31	" " "	19th Apr 1937
LR/32	" " "	21st Apr 1937
LR/33	" " "	29th Apr 1937
LR/34	" " "	27th Apr 1937
LR/35	" " "	26th Apr 1937
LR/36	" " "	3rd May 1937
LR/37	" " "	6th May 1937
LR/38	" " "	6th May 1937
LR/39	" " "	14th May 1937
LR/40	" " "	10th May 1937
LR/41	" " "	13th May 1937
LR/42	" " "	24th May 1937
LR/43	" " "	24th May 1937
LR/44	" " "	25th May 1937
LR/45	" " "	26th May 1937
LR/46	" " "	25th May 1937
LR/47	THE LISTENER. Readers' Observations.	27th May 1937
LR/48	Men Talking. Opinions on a series.	28th May 1937
LR/49	Drama Reports Scheme	31st May 1937
LR/50	Proposals: Opinions on Cinema Talks	2nd June 1937
LR/51	Drama Reports Scheme	8th June 1937
LR/52	" " "	9th June 1937
LR/53	" " "	7th June 1937
LR/54	" " "	9th June 1937
LR/55	" " "	10th June 1937
LR/56	" " "	25th June 1937
LR/57	Proposals for First Fandom Sample.	15th July 1937
LR/58	Proposals for Variety Listening Barometer	24th Aug 1937
LR/59	Proposals for Talks Panel.	1st Sept 1937
LR/59a	Survey on Radio Valves	29 Oct 1937
LR/60	Cinema Talks - Opinions.	18th Nov 1937

Index of BBC Listener Research Reports contd.

LR/61	The Microphone at Large Series - Opinions	13th Dec 1937
LR/62	Roster of Critics	14th March 1938
LR/63	Clear Thinking Talks Panel	26th Apr 1938
LR/64	Agricultural Talks in Ulster	13th May 1938
LR/65	Variety Listening Barometer + 17 Interim Reports	29th Nov 1938
LR/66	The Audience for Paul Temple	19th Aug 1938
LR/67	First Random Sample + 4 Interim Reports	1st Sept 1938
LR/68	The Time of Meals	21st October 1938
LR/69	Children's Hour Searchlight	9th Jan 1939
LR/70	Autumn Talks. 1938.	March 1939
LR/71	Second Random Sample	15th Feb 1939
LR/72	Opinions on the Under Twenty Club	9th May 1939
LR/73		
LR/74	General Listening Barometer. German Bulletins.	16th May 1939
LR/75	Television	26th June 1939
LR/76	Opinions on This Symphony Business Talk	26th June 1939
LR/77	General Listening Barometer	5th July 1939
LR/78	Choice of Stations	11th July 1939
LR/79	General Listening Barometer. Religious Broadcasts.	20th July 1939
LR/80	General Listening Barometer. Horses and Cricket	28th July 1939
LR/81	General Listening Barometer. Home Service	11th Oct 1939
LR/82	Experiment for the General Listening Barometer	3rd Nov. 1939
LR/83	Proposals. Listener Research in Wartime.	9th Nov. 1939
LR/84	Religious Broadcasts.	7th Dec. 1939
LR/85	General Listening Barometer. Wartime.	20th Dec 1939
LR/86	B.I.P.O. Wartime.	22nd Dec 1939
LR/87	General Listening Barometer. Wartime.	22nd Dec 1939
LR/88	General Listening Barometer. Wartime.	16th Jan 1940
LR/89	General Listening Barometer. Wartime.	17th Jan 1940
LR/90	General Listening Barometer. Wartime.	January 1940

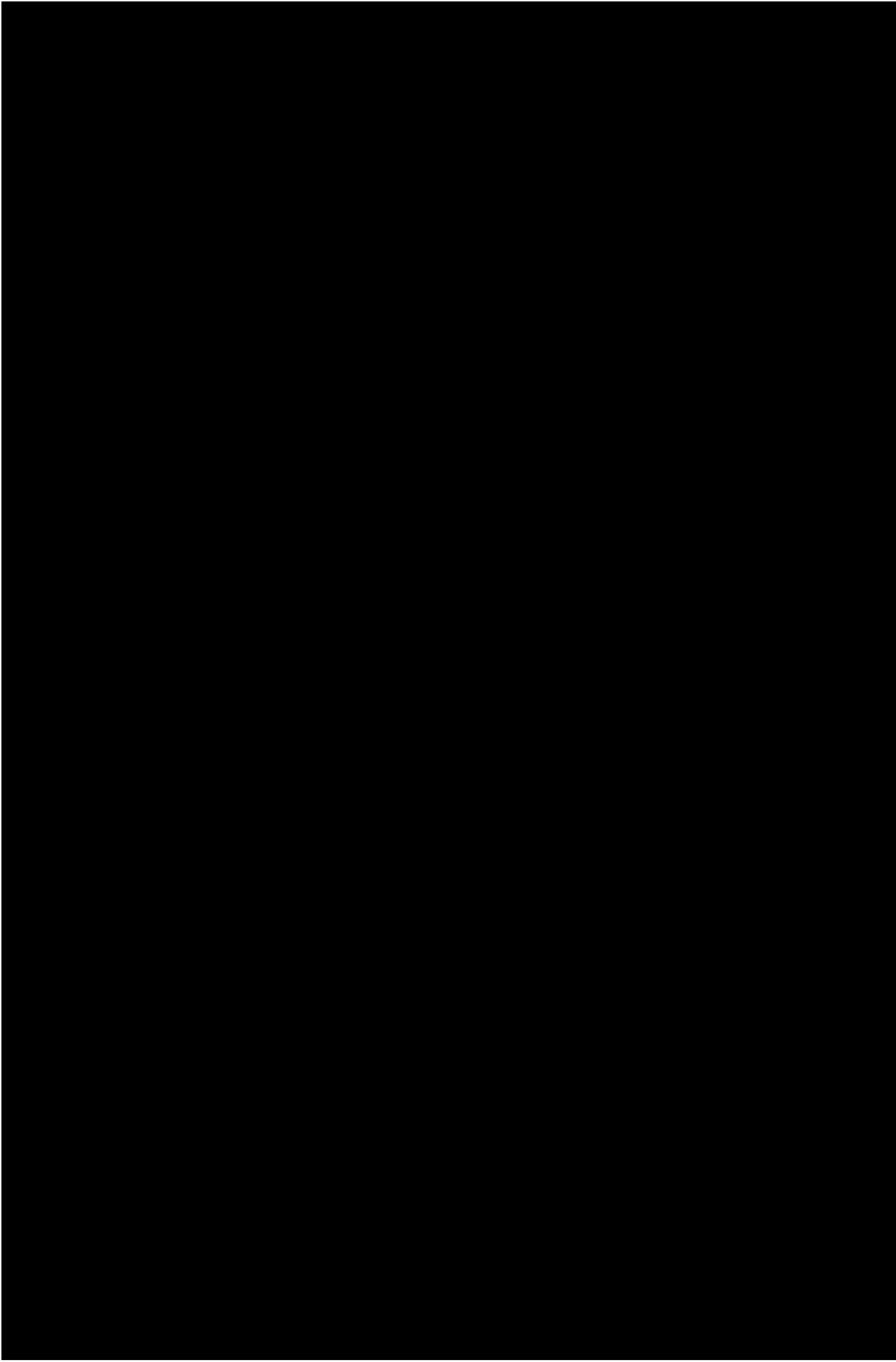
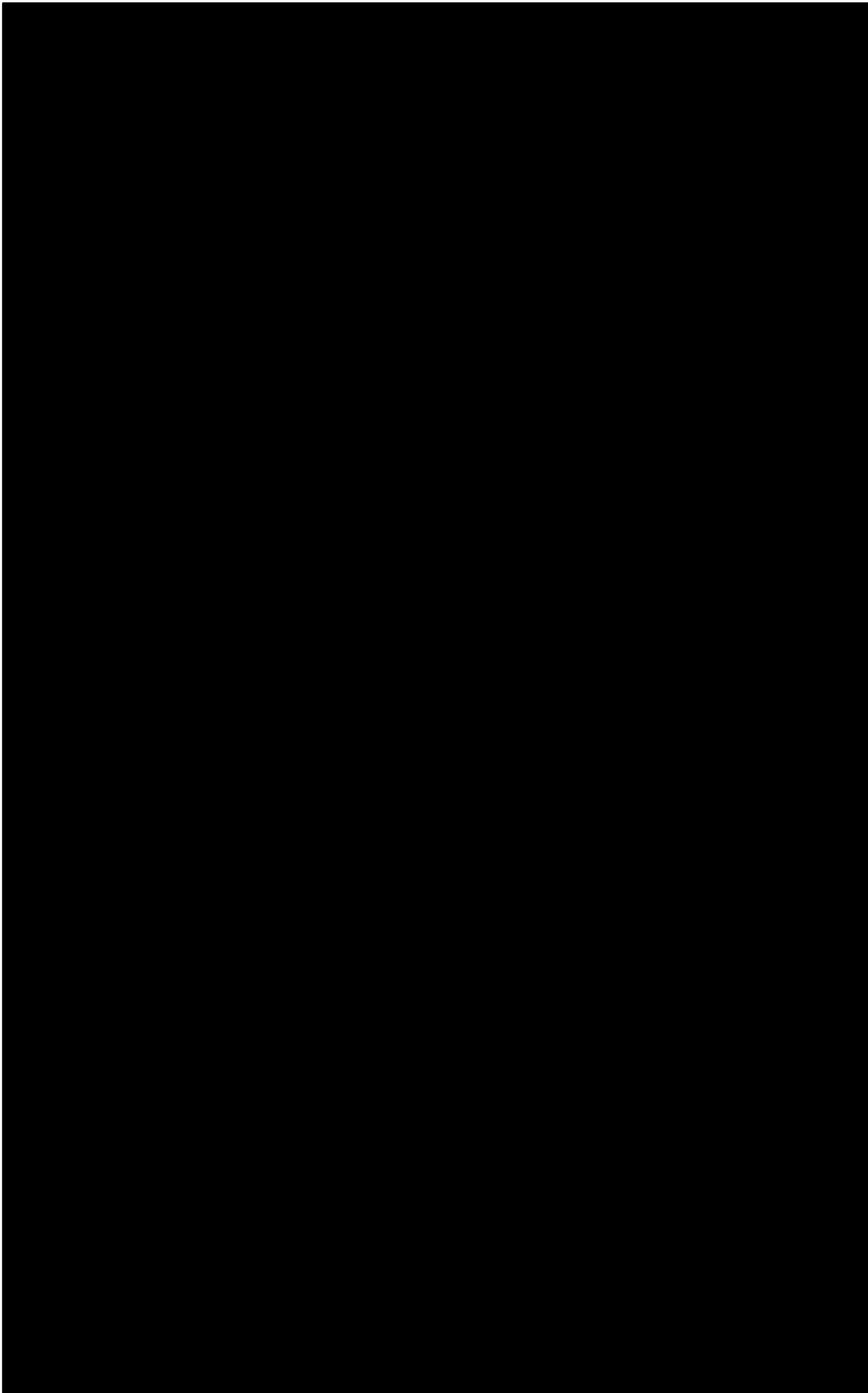


Figure VI. The Radio Times - Another Means of Audience Contact.
28 September 1923.



Part 4

The Localities

Chapter 9

'The speed at which sound travels is a constant source of amazement to those who take even the slightest interest in wireless. The boom of Big Ben, which is rung in London and heard by us in Derby almost any night we care to listen, is one of the wireless stunts which creates an impression. Of course, we have become so used to the wonder of wireless (when it is not playing tricks) that we are apt to say, "Oh, it is nothing; we often hear that." Yes, but ten years ago, if you had been told that such a thing would be possible in a million British homes, you would have been very hesitant to believe such scientific progress probable.' 1

This extract from the columns of a local newspaper effectively captures something of the flavour of the audience attitude towards radio in its early days. There is still a touch of awe and suspicion of the waves through the ether and the vibrations of the cats' whiskers. It is in a local study where the atmosphere of radio listening - the nuances and details are most likely to be observed in the most enlightening way.

On the other hand, the quotation reveals a certain level of familiarity and acceptance of the medium. It is this latter factor which makes a study of the radio audience so peculiarly difficult. All too often, the audience became blase as the novelty of the medium passed away and eventually it became largely unconscious of many of its effects, or at least, the audience felt less inclined to remark on the question, leaving fewer and fewer documentary traces of any responses. Thus, paradoxically, as the number of licence holders increased, so the level of comment on the effects of radio tended to decline. This was certainly true before 1939. Again the local study is likely to be the most productive in a search for comments of this kind: when scarcity would otherwise be the rule.

The local study is, potentially, a very efficient means of drawing together the themes developed on broadcasting and its audience - forming a composite picture - where the various themes are seen in relation to one another rather than in deceptive isolation. The comparative local study has further value since it can corroborate or refute assertions made on a national basis which would otherwise sweep over subtler variations within the whole. Variations in local culture may have interesting influences on the areas of audience activity which have been subject to analysis on a general level. The wireless organisation, the relay

exchanges, the press, the church and education all provided local examples which are worth examining as a check on any erroneous impressions which a nationally based view may have created.

But the real strength of the local study is the opportunity it provides for examining previously ignored or casually observed mechanics of social and cultural change in response to certain technological developments. A national study does not have the flexibility to examine areas which are often locally generated or influenced to a greater degree by local action. These include sport, charity, retailing and local authority action. Such social mechanisms which were stimulated by radio are very clearly seen in the context of local activity.

Any locality will possess many unique characteristics in its reaction to broadcasting but there is a need to choose areas carefully for a survey so that fairly normal, typical attitudes and responses to radio are obtained as well as the unusual or the unique. Eccentricity can be more fascinating but there seems little to be gained from a selection which concentrates unhealthily on the random or abnormal response to broadcasting.

Three areas have been chosen for analysis. Their selection was dependent on their ability to emphasise the common varieties of geographical, political, social and cultural forces which, because of their mediating qualities, were likely to yield evidence of any contrasting attitudes which a developing radio audience might possess.

Geography and population provide the most obvious contrasts. Derbyshire and the County Borough of Derby are thoroughly provincial, situated in the North Midlands, with a mixture of heavily industrialised urban development² and rural areas of the most isolated kind. In 1931 it had a population of 757,000, some 142,000 of whom lived in the borough.³ The Borough of Brentford and Chiswick was part of Middlesex and came decidedly within the sphere of metropolitan life. It was the smallest of the administrative areas to be examined and, in 1931, it had a population of 62,618.⁴ Oxfordshire and the City of Oxford is, geographically speaking and in terms of population, in an intermediate area. The

agricultural hinterland of the city possessed a decidedly provincial character but the city itself was close enough to London to be exposed to clear metropolitan influences, for instance, the city took London evening as well as morning newspapers. In 1931 it had a population of 209,000 of whom 80,000 lived in the city.⁵

The internal social composition of each area is more difficult to discover. The best that can be done from the available material is to examine the occupational information contained in the 1931 Census and then relate this to wage levels in the main occupational groups for each area. Crudely speaking, Oxford stood for agriculture, Derby for industry, Brentford and Chiswick for commerce: a traditional division in English society since the Industrial Revolution. The 1931 Census⁶ shows that for every 1,000 occupied males, aged fourteen and over in Derbyshire, there were 216 employed in the occupational group of mining and quarrying, one of the largest proportions in the country, and 108 were engaged in the manufacture of metal products. This compared with Oxfordshire's 5 and 65 respectively, despite the growth of new industry in the city. In agriculture, the relevant figures were 62 for Derbyshire and 172 in Oxfordshire. For Brentford and Chiswick the figures show 99 per thousand in metal products and one in agriculture. The main occupations here were in commerce and finance, 156 per thousand, compared with the 72 for Derbyshire and 81 for Oxfordshire, and in clerical work, 115 per thousand compared with 42 and 33 respectively.⁸

Where specific occupations are concerned, in Derbyshire 202 out of every thousand male workers were coal miners - easily the largest single category. In Oxfordshire, agricultural labourers were the largest group with 84 per thousand. In Brentford and Chiswick the largest group comprised general clerical workers at 98 per thousand. For women, the largest occupational groups were personal service in Oxfordshire and Brentford and Chiswick with 170 and 369 per thousand females over fourteen years of age. In Derbyshire this was also true at 82 per thousand but those engaged in the two related groups of textile and textile

products amounted to 88 per thousand.

Although of less value in demonstrating the economic basis of each area, it is important to note that, where radio was concerned, some significant groups would almost certainly be those which were classed as 'unoccupied'. These groups might not have the economic power to engage in set purchase but they had the leisure to make radio a more desirable means of filling available time and were, therefore, a potential means of influencing any related wage earners in the household. Of the 'unoccupied' groups, women formed the largest part in every area, being the largest specific group of all in the Census returns. Unemployment was only a moderate contributor to the 'unoccupied' population in any of the areas chosen. This has more economic significance where radio listening is concerned since unemployment affected heads of households and, therefore, many sole income earners. This would make set ownership more difficult to achieve, despite the incentive provided by the enforced expansion of leisure time. In Derby it might have had a slight effect. The national average for men in 1931, at the nadir of the economic depression was 12.7%. In Derbyshire it was 14.3%, Brentford and Chiswick, 7.4% and Oxfordshire only 5.4%.⁹

Actually, the rate of growth of licence holding was at its greatest in this period, even though it is impossible to determine whether the extra purchases were due to those desiring solace from radio, despite the hardship of purchase, or from those in work who gained concurrently from the falling cost of living.¹⁰ The national licence figures show that, despite the world economic crisis, licence issues grew fastest in the period December 1930 to December 1931, when they rose by nearly 27%. In Derbyshire the growth was slightly greater, 28.4%, in Brentford and Chiswick still greater at around 33%, whilst in Oxford it was much less at only 11%. The latter inconsistency was probably due to the higher level of licence holding in the area before 1930.¹¹ The figures for Brentford and Chiswick were almost certainly influenced by the provision of the Brookmans Park transmitter.¹²

Table I. Licence Statistics for Derbyshire, Oxfordshire and Middlesex.¹³

(i) Total of licences and % of licences compared with the population in each county.

Date	Derbyshire	%	Oxfordshire	%	Middlesex	%
31 Dec 1930	38,069	5	26,632	13	150,612	9
31 Dec 1931	48,913	6	29,562	14	200,390	12
31 Dec 1932	59,705	8	33,478	16	231,091	14
31 Dec 1933	67,974	9	35,660	17	247,606	15
31 Dec 1934	77,979	10	38,544	18	267,988	16
31 Dec 1935	86,622	11	41,572	20	295,656	18
31 Dec 1936	94,913	13	44,662	21	319,755	20

Chiswick and Brentford figures were not collected separately. Total population of the counties derived from the 1931 Census: Derbyshire, including Derby - 757,374; Oxfordshire, including Oxford - 209,621; Middlesex - 1,638,521.

Clearly, despite the lower total number of licences, there were more licences per head in Oxfordshire than in Derbyshire, with Middlesex in the middle range. To give these statistics more meaning, it is wise to multiply the licence figures by the average number of people in each family. This gives a more realistic guide to the spread and density of wireless listening.

(ii) Total of Listeners and % of Listeners compared with the population in each county.

Date	Derbyshire	%	Oxfordshire	%	Middlesex	%
31 Dec 1930	148,860	20	96,674	46	551,240	34
31 Dec 1931	191,250	25	107,310	51	733,427	45
31 Dec 1932	233,447	31	121,525	58	845,793	52
31 Dec 1933	274,778	36	129,446	62	906,238	55
31 Dec 1934	304,898	40	139,951	67	980,836	60
31 Dec 1935	338,692	45	150,906	72	1,082,101	66
31 Dec 1936	371,101	49	162,123	77	1,170,303	71

Persons per private family: Derbyshire - 3.91; Oxfordshire - 3.63; Middlesex - 3.66; United Kingdom 4.05 (in 1921).

Disposable income available for consumer purchase is extremely difficult to calculate but all the areas were dominated by income groups with restricted earnings. For agricultural workers - the largest single group in Oxfordshire - national average wages were as low as £68 per annum in 1923 and only rose above £80 per annum in 1937. Coal miners in Derbyshire had higher wages and the

national average was £134 per annum at its lowest during the strike year of 1926 and normally ranged from £140 to £150 throughout the rest of the period. Clerical workers in Brentford and Chiswick averaged between £100 and £110 throughout the period; these being money rather than real earnings.¹⁴

Inevitably, these figures can be interpreted in many ways. All kinds of factors decide if there is to be any income remaining for expenditure on consumer durables such as radio sets. Real money levels, rents, size of families and other similar factors come into play. Needless to say, even a nationally available crystal set such as the Gecophone, priced at £2.10s.0d.,¹⁵ would make it difficult for a person earning £2 per week or less to purchase, once basic necessities had been met. Nonetheless this did not make wireless listening a purely middle class preserve. There is evidence in the localities that poorer people acquired sets. Personal sacrifices, rigorous saving or hire purchase agreements could make ownership possible. Construction, piece by piece, was another method of spreading out costs for valve sets and particularly for crystal sets. The Oxford Chronicle observed during the course of the General Strike that even slum areas in Oxford, such as St. Aldates and Jericho, were already displaying the tell-tale wireless aerials in large numbers.¹⁶ In a study of communications in Derby carried out in 1950, Cauter and Downham found that the propensity to purchase consumer durables like televisions was definitely increased if there was more than one wage earner in the household. This was another means of producing surplus money in poorer communities and there seems little reason to doubt that the same explanation applied to some radio set purchases.¹⁷ In their study of Bristol, Jennings and Gill found that as late as 1939, people simply gave up other alternatives, often basic necessities, just to possess a set.¹⁸

Another influence on the amount of listening was hidden by the licence statistics. A genuine guide to the numbers able to listen is produced by multiplying the licence statistics by the average number of persons per private family in each area. In the County of Derby it was 3.9, in Oxfordshire, 3.6, and in Brentford and Chiswick, 3.66.¹⁹ In 1921 the average was considerably

higher and must be used in calculating the level of private listening at that time. Taking Derby as an example, in September 1924, the GPO in the area had issued 1,400 licences and, therefore, it can be assumed with some degree of certainty that there were at least 6,000 listeners, since the persons per private family average was 4.35.²⁰ With mass listening and licence evasion to take into account, it is likely that a good many more than this 4.5% of the population in the Borough heard programmes at that time. A simplistic view of the statistics can hide a real and much higher level of listening.²¹

The other potential variation in the development of listening was the provision of transmitter facilities. In this case the aim has been to choose the typical areas where this was not a serious problem. Apart from the hill areas of Derbyshire, all the areas followed the changes in the BBC service fairly precisely. All could hear Daventry 5XX and all had some proximity to a local or a regional transmitter soon after their installation. In the early days, 2LO served Oxford and the Brentford and Chiswick area, whilst the Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester and Sheffield stations served the various rural parts of Oxfordshire and Derbyshire. The Regional Scheme provided an overlapping service. Derbyshire fell between the North and Midland Regions, Oxfordshire overlapped the Midland and London Regions, whilst Brentford and Chiswick fell firmly into the London Region.

Contrasts between the areas exist: geographically they are certainly distributed widely; occupationally they are diverse. There were also many similarities. The areas shared urban concentrations either as the total of, or a large proportion of the whole population. Where rural populations existed, they were small and well scattered. Despite the variations in occupational groups the overriding impression is of the similarity of average income earned by the largest working groups in each area of around £2 per week. Where the social composition is concerned - each area had a large working class population with only the suggestion in Brentford and Chiswick that there was a considerably more affluent upper class minority.²² Social, cultural and political differences are not, however, so readily expressed in statistical terms and it still remains to be seen whether there may or may not be other, less evident, contrasts in the

attitudes of each locality towards radio. Perhaps the distinctions between the areas are, in fact, more decisive and if the surface of uniformity is scratched, then more substantial distinctions may emerge.

9.2 Local Wireless Societies

Before the advent of the Regional Scheme, the relatively cheap and simple crystal set ensured that the radio audience was not necessarily a middle class preserve. Provided that there were sufficient people in each area capable of constructing a simple crystal, or even a crude valve set, the advent of cheaper mass produced sets was not a necessary concomitant of a considerable audience. All of the areas, but particularly Derby and Oxford, had a substantial number of skilled and capable industrial workers who would have possessed the ability to construct a set and thus form a considerable working class radio ownership, despite the restrictions of the annual ten shilling licence.

Another influence on home construction was provided by the local wireless societies. In general terms, the fortunes of the societies reflected the rise and fall of the national organisations - such as the RSGB and the Wireless League - but it is interesting to pursue the role of these societies in their local communities and demonstrate the mechanism of their contribution in more detail. All of the areas in the study possessed at least one major society.

The Derby Wireless Club was the oldest in the country, having been founded in 1911²³ - the basis of a zealously defended tradition which had generated a remarkable store of historical records on the history of the society. Unfortunately, most societies did not keep good records or else those collected were lost or destroyed - either by the collapse of the society or the enforced closure of the societies between 1939 and 1945. In the rest of the county there were societies which can be traced in Burton-on-Trent²⁴, Chesterfield²⁵, Sheffield²⁶ and Swadlincote²⁷. Thus, even interested rural listeners had a reasonable chance of joining a society if they really desired.

In Oxford there were two societies, differentiating themselves by the use of the two interchangeable descriptions of 'wireless' and 'radio'. The Oxford Wireless Society soon merged with the Oxford Radio Society in 1923²⁸, simply because the population could not sustain two societies at once, even at the height of interest in radio. In the shire, rural dwellers do not appear to have formed any such organisations and any interested individuals must have worked independently or in very small groups. Thus radio society influence had, in this case, a largely urban character.

In London there was a wide array of societies. An inhabitant in Chiswick and Brentford could join the local Chiswick, Acton and District Amateur Wireless Association, or else join societies in neighbouring Hounslow, Richmond, Sheen, Hammersmith or Fulham. There was little local loyalty in this area, indeed, societies purposely chose names with wider catchment areas in mind, viz. The Thames Valley Radio and Physical Association²⁹ or - as the Chiswick Society was soon to become - The West London Wireless and Experimental Association.³⁰

Of the non-technical organisations, many of them containing substantial numbers of technical society members, the Wireless League had a brief presence with Derby and Oxford branches.³¹

There were three main types of technical society. One type, represented by the Derby, Burton, Sheffield and West London societies, was formed well before the creation of the BBC and survived when the surge of interest aroused by public broadcasting faded. These groups had a hard core of serious experimenters although it was generally assumed that even these wireless societies had a high turn-over of members.³² The next group grew up and died in the short burst of euphoria from 1922 until about 1928. Most of the other societies mentioned fell into this category. Organisationally they were weak and their influence was consequently that much more ephemeral. The third group was equally brief in existence. This type grew out of, or attached itself to, much older, existing social societies or technical groups.³³ Thus in Derby there was the Derby Railway Radio Society, an interesting case of an activity after work, organised around one industry. Meetings of this society were held in the local Railway

Table II. List of Wireless Societies and Memberships 1918-1939.

Society (and date of formation)	Membership (where known)
<u>(i) Derbyshire</u>	
Derby Wireless Club (1911)	1920:36, 1921:40, 1922:59, 1923:91 (147 with associates) 1924:54, 1925:44, 1926:24, 1927:29, 1928:28, 1929:33, 1930:37, 1931:23, 1932:60, 1937:71.
Derby Railway Radio Society (1922)	1923:60
Ripley Radio Society (existent in 1926)	
* Burton-on-Trent Wireless Club (1919)	1919:25, 1920:36
Chesterfield and District Wireless Society (1922)	1922:60
*Sheffield and District Wireless Society (1920)	1920:100
Swadlincote and District Radio Society (1922)	1922:36
<u>(ii) Oxfordshire</u>	
Oxford Radio Society (1922)) Oxford Wireless Society (1920)) Amalgamated 1923	
Oxford YMCA Radio Society (?)	
<u>(iii) Chiswick and Brentford</u>	
Chiswick, Acton and District Amateur Wireless Association (1920). (*West London Wireless and Experimental Association (1922)).	1921:40, 1922:54
*Hounslow Wireless Society (1921)	
Thames Valley Radio and Physical Association (1923)	

* Signed petition to the Postmaster-General in 1921.

Institute, which also catered for the various educational and social needs of the workers with a lending library, offices for the railway trade unions and rooms for other specialist societies.³⁴ The radio society had sixty members but did not survive much beyond 1926. In other cities wireless societies attached themselves to existing scientific societies as in Manchester³⁵ or to an existing social organisation such as the YMCA as in Oxford.³⁶ Chesterfield produced the oddest combination of all. Its radio society began as an offshoot of the Chesterfield Congregational Literary and Social Union.³⁷ A curious mixture of interests for one society to hold.

In spite of these contrasts, the societies had much in common. They were undoubtedly elites in the sense of the social backgrounds and technical skills of the average member. Direct memberships were rarely large. The Derby Wireless Club only reached 91 full members at its peak in 1923 and the West London Wireless and Experimental Association slightly fewer.³⁸ Entry for full membership was, however, restricted by the large annual membership fees demanded: five shillings in the case of the Burton society and as much as fifteen shillings for the West London Society. This restricted membership to the middle classes or the better skilled worker. In Derby the society leaders included a leading industrialist, town councillors and leading retailers.³⁹ Members tended to be senior Post Office engineers and similarly skilled electrical and engineering workers.⁴⁰

An obvious effect of this exclusiveness was that any influence that the societies wielded could only directly affect a few individuals in each area. Most of their influence would have to be of a quite direct kind, by permeating the public consciousness and arousing interest in wireless rather than by encouraging direct participation in amateur activities. Apart from satisfying the individual needs of their members, this was the essential role of a society in each locality as broadcasting got under way.

The extent of personal contact between wireless amateurs and other sections of the community is difficult to evaluate, particularly since evidence of this

form of contact is so elusive. It does seem safe to say that in the earliest days, this would have had a considerable part to play in spreading information about broadcasting. A neighbouring amateur in a street or colleague at work would naturally be in demand for advice and information would permeate in this way. The societies in fact compensated for casual interest by encouraging associate membership for the non-technically minded, organising introductory meetings and by forming junior sections to inspire school children and young adults.⁴¹

The educational role of the societies was very important in this respect - including the self-education of their own members. Interestingly, the educational chain began at the earliest stage. It is noticeable that many of the societies were formed soon after the visit of an academic lecturer, either on an ad hoc basis or under the auspices of a University Extra-Mural Department. The Derby Wireless Club was created after a series of Nottingham University Extension Lectures held in 1911.⁴² In Chesterfield, the Congregational Literary and Social Union invited a lecturer from London to lecture on the subject and this provided the catalyst needed to create interest in the formation of a society.⁴³ Curiously, Oxford provided no such clear example. Whereas Cambridge had a University Radio Society, no equivalent organisation existed in Oxford. Certainly, however, University personnel were involved in the creation and working of the Oxford Societies.⁴⁴

Most societies held meetings weekly throughout the winter season. Typically the aim would be to demonstrate details of set construction, the potential of new components or, more generally, simply to display the capacity of radio to all those interested enough to attend. Such was the interest at the beginning, that no further elaboration was necessary to attract a crowd. The atmosphere at such meetings is well displayed by a contemporary account of a West London Wireless Society meeting held in 1922:

'Lieutenant Walker had arranged for his transmitting station at Brentford to transmit at 8.30 p.m. music to the meeting. "Hullo! Hullo! Hullo! Brentford Calling", was heard. Then music followed, to the amazement of some of those present, who for the first time had heard the human voice transmitted by wireless. The music lasted about fifteen minutes, and was then terminated by the rendering of the National Anthem. The lecturer

then demonstrated the transmission of telephony from another room, and this was heard in the same way various circuits were explained by diagrams and questions were then invited. The lecturer was at once bombarded with various technical queries and he very fully replied.' 45

This was characteristic of society activity but represented in many respects an introverted part of their work. There was more. The Derby Wireless Club was very interested in engaging youth interest in radio. As early as 1913, there is evidence of cooperation between the society and Repton School.⁴⁶ There was also the junior section of the society.⁴⁷ In Oxford such a section had existed since 1920⁴⁸ and in Brentford and Chiswick one school, Arlington Park College, also established a wireless society.⁴⁹ Some of the societies also developed wireless libraries as a means of educating members and interested persons. Burton had one as early as 1920, as did the Derby Society⁵⁰, but these were expensive to run and of limited size.

Publicity was very important. The reporting of society meetings in the local press was a common but limited method of seeking attention, although this did at least keep readers in touch with the existence of radio. The main methods of publicising the potential of radio were demonstrations at special civic or local trade exhibitions and through the provision of public lectures supported by practical displays. At the Third Annual Conference of Affiliated Wireless Societies held in London in 1922, the Sheffield Society put the case for such lectures:

'We have felt that if, say, once at least during the session, we could get some very prominent man to come down either from London or elsewhere and give us a paper with practical demonstrations, it would be very much to the benefit of the Society. We have certainly proved that at Sheffield during this last session. We had one Marconi Company man down, and he gave us an excellent lecture with demonstrations, and when I say that we filled a hall with 400 people and we could have filled it twice over as we made it a semi-popular lecture, I think that indicates the general enthusiasm which would be shown in almost any town with a society, if such a scheme as the one proposed were carried out properly so that it would come on the ordinary programme.' 51

The Derbyshire Advertiser remarked on the value of exhibitions for the general public and the role the societies played in the introduction of the public broadcasting system:

'The Derby Wireless Club is holding an exhibition of wireless apparatus next week, when no doubt large numbers of people will take the opportunity of examining the various types of apparatus now on the market. How broadcasting apparatus will compare with the amateur made sets is a question which interests owners of both types, but judging from results the latter type is generally more efficient when tested on really long distance stations... It is to be hoped that the exhibition will result in a large influx of new members to the local wireless society. Not only was it the first of its kind in this country, but it is due to the exertions of the societies, affiliated together, that the present broadcasting originated. A great deal of opposition was met with, but the amateurs have succeeded in carrying through their project.' 52

Such exhibitions attracted good audiences and clearly helped to draw attention to radio and its potential as well as to demonstrate that reception was a practical proposition. Apart from invitations from wealthy purchasers of ready made sets or displays by the retail trade, this would have been one of the only means of making good radio reception known to a large proportion of the public.

The societies were not above drawing attention to their activities by more original publicity seeking stunts. The Sheffield society chose to emphasise the ability of radio waves to travel through solid objects - a phenomenon which was still widely regarded as miraculous by the less knowledgeable members of the public. The stunt mixed the scientific experiment with the atmosphere of adventure - as reported by Wireless World:

'In accordance with a pre-arranged programme on Sunday July 16th 1922, 20 members, including two ladies, of the society journeyed to Castleton for the purpose of carrying out experiments with a portable apparatus in the famous Blue John mines of Derbyshire ... a weird descent was made to the "Lords dining room" a cavern 300 feet below the surface. A short single wire aerial was erected across the cavern 10 feet from the floor and connected to a low power transmitting and three valve low frequency set.

The technical committee were quickly engrossed in the operation of getting into communication with Mr. Jakeman at his house in Hope, three miles away. Success was soon attained, and telegraphic messages freely exchanged.

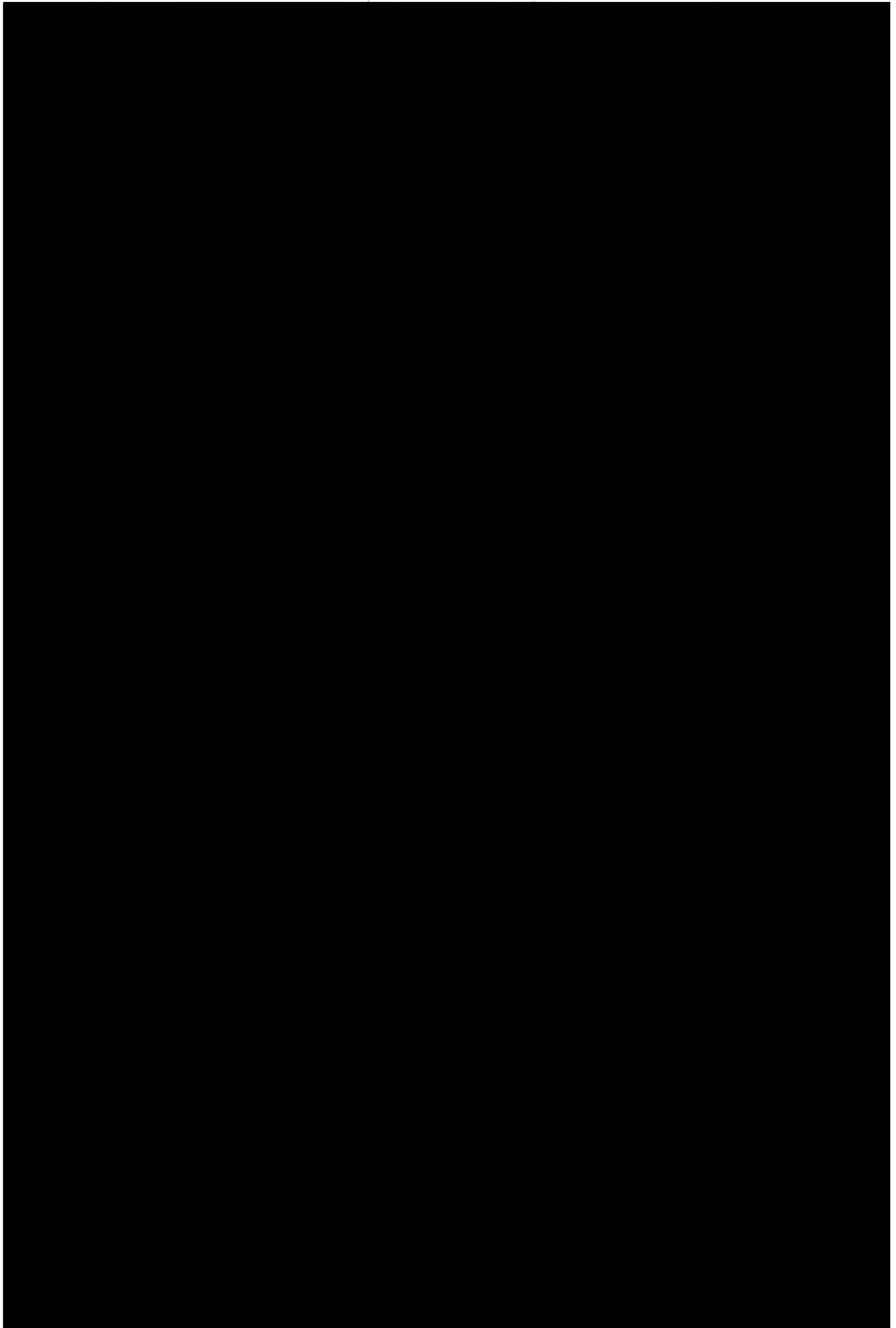
Those who had the unique experience of listening to messages to the accompaniment of the ceaseless noise of unseen underground rivers will not soon forget it.' 53

Publicity also came from certain tours de force in wireless transmission. Amateurs, for instance, were largely responsible for achieving the early feats of extremely long distance listening. These achievements attracted public attention towards the fullest prospects for radio, particularly at local level.

Reports of local contacts with American stations were regularly made by the press in each area - it was a solid inside page news item rather than anything spectacular for the front page. A typical headline read: 'Hullo America! New York Broadcasting heard in Derby,' thus emphasising the possibilities and also stressing the magnitude of achievement which even a local amateur could now attain.⁵⁴

Societies were also assiduous in allying their propaganda for the cause of radio with local philanthropic activities. Exhibitions could be combined with such work by making collections or by donating the entrance fees. In Derby one early broadcasting concert attracted nearly a thousand people in January 1923 and £50 was raised for a war memorial fund.⁵⁵ Later the societies became involved in raising money to buy sets for the sick or the blind. The highlight in Derby was the provision of sets for the local hospital, the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, during 1926. A committee formed from all the local societies, the Rotary Club and GPO Engineers fitted the hospital with a hand built set at half the estimated cost of £500 complete with headphones for 150 beds.⁵⁶

The active role of local wireless societies was concentrated into the early period 1920-1926 as far as serious public interest in their work was concerned. This should not militate against the estimation of their significant influence on public attitudes towards radio. Even the most ephemeral societies, where tiny memberships faded quickly were able to contribute something. This was because their influence concentrated on the critical introductory stage of broadcasting when a small nucleus of experts was able to serve a purpose by publicising radio, demonstrating it in practice and by exciting the public imagination for its future. One practical demonstration was worth reams of written descriptions in providing the impetus for an expanding radio audience.



6.3 Retailers

It would be wrong to imagine that social groups which were interested in radio acted quite independently of each other. On the contrary, active members of wireless societies were also active in pressing the cause through the course of their normal occupations. Local political dignitaries were often members and because of their position could publicise the value of radio more easily. Many members were also involved in manufacturing and trading. Just as Leslie McMichael of the RSGB set up his own radio manufacturing company, so too did Captain A.H. Shirley, a retired naval telegraphist, in Oxford. The scale was different but the guiding principle was the same. The market potential suggested that those with some special interest or knowledge could occupy a considerable share of the market before the existing electrical giants such as GEC or Metropolitan Vickers could apply all of their economic power to radio production.

The local entrepreneur thus had some scope and in Oxford the opportunity was readily taken. Derbyshire seems to have been limited to the provision of crude crystal set components and in Chiswick, the neighbouring GEC works in Hammersmith proved to be too dominating. In Oxford two firms made their own sets. Shirley's Oxford Wireless Telegraphy Company Limited (OWTCL), and F.W. Wootten Limited of High Street Oxford. The market for which such sets were intended was very diverse - as the prices reflect. A full cabinet set with accumulators cost as much as £73 and the cheapest valve set in 1923 cost £40.⁵⁸ Wootten's 'Wootophone' was a little cheaper, costing £24 in 1923.⁵⁹ (See Figure II). On the other hand, the bread and butter range of crystal sets made by the firms ranged from £1. 10s. Od. to £7.⁶⁰ Local manufacture was important for many reasons. The fact of local production was considered worthy of comment as an early sales incentive. It identified a new and rather strange product with a local producer, who, it may be presumed, was considered to be more trustworthy. Involvement in manufacture was also increased by this growth. In Chiswick, no doubt, the presence of workers at the large scale GEC works actively engaged in radio component production, must have aroused and increased level of

Figure II Wireless and Garages⁶¹

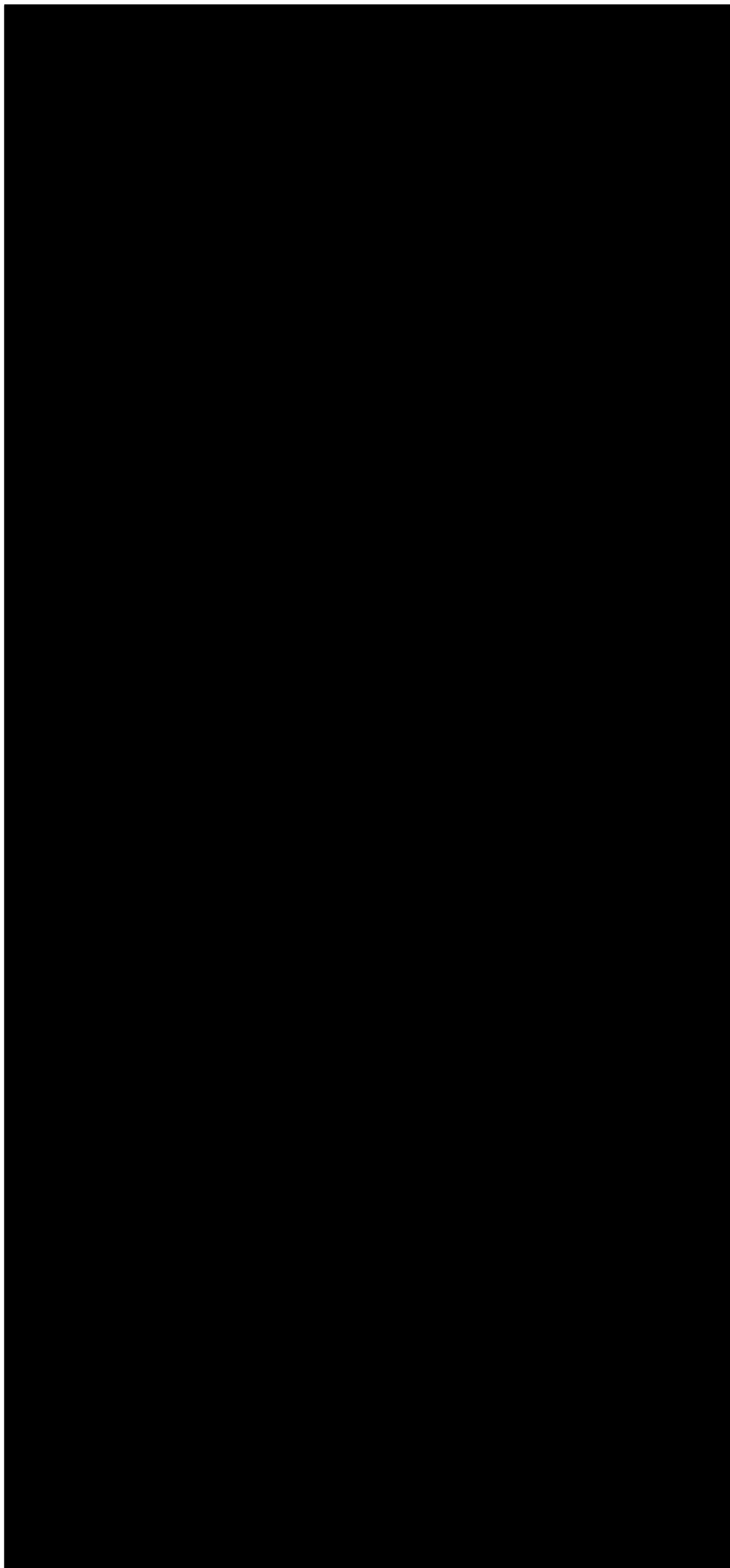
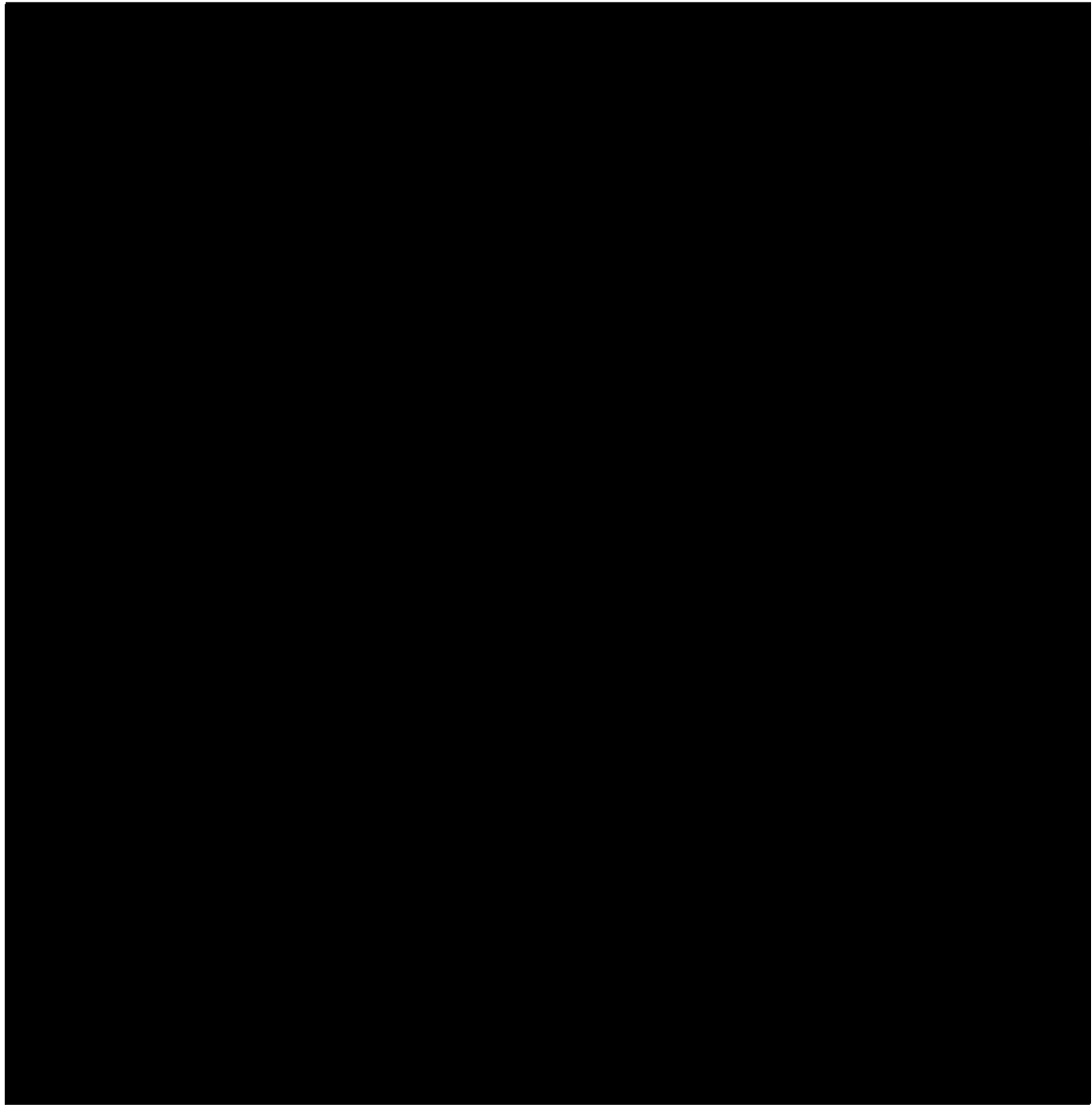


Figure III Wireless and Garages⁶²



awareness about radio. Where such nationally connected firms were not present, the small local industry provided the only alternative influence.

It was in retailing where most of this kind of influence could be brought to bear with maximum effect. Shirley and Wootten combined the functions of construction and sale but in most areas the two were decidedly distinct, particularly as valve sets became the basic requirement. The fortunes of the retail trade followed an interesting course. In the early days of wireless, sets were sold as part of some other specialist trade. Garages were a favourite companion - an interesting alliance of two technological innovations. Of course, there was a more profound logic in the relationship than that. The internal combustion engine shared with early radio sets the need for batteries or accumulators. There is some evidence that it was public pressure on garage proprietors to provide a combined service, which encouraged the diversification from simple recharging to a fuller interest in radio. Equally, garages were expanding into rural areas and the relationship between the two innovations was particularly suitable where demand for the provision of them separately might not have been adequate. In Chesterfield and North Derbyshire this was a common occurrence (see Figures II and III). Other, less frequent, associations included bicycle shops and ironmongers.⁶³

The evolution of the retailing business continued with the advent of public broadcasting. Then, especially in urban areas, specialist wireless shops emerged and they were generally sustained until wireless sales were checked by the increasing saturation of the market during the mid-thirties. Then the move was back towards diversification and a cycle had been completed. This time, encouraged by journals such as the Wireless Trader,⁶⁴ the retailer attempted to seduce customers by associating wireless with the rising trade in other household electrical appliances. A product which had once been so special that it could sustain a shop in its own right was now stressed as one essential amongst many.⁶⁵

Much as with manufacturing, members of wireless societies were also retailers. In Derby, Messrs. Jolley and Cowlshaw were active experimenters and

established a thriving business. As with the wireless societies, much of their social influence extended beyond the mere selling of sets, particularly because of their publicity effort. Advertising in the local press must not be underrated as a means of influencing readers to become listeners. In the provinces this was very important since it was not until the thirties that nationally based firms began to advertise in local papers. Until then, local effort was essential if sales were to be encouraged. Even in Chiswick and Brentford, it was important for local retailers to back up the national advertising in the London dailies by advertising their goods and supplementary services in the local weekly newspaper.⁶⁶

On the whole, the shops in Derby were slower than those in Oxford or Chiswick in seizing the opportunity to advertise. This may reflect the state of the market or simply a lack of local initiative. In 1922, the only advertisements are terse and unimaginative:

'Broadcasting Begins - complete sets ready for use, or parts for making own sets - Hulme and Son, 8, Sadler Gate, Derby.' 67

In Oxford the competitiveness between Wootten's and Shirley's encouraged much more original advertisements, including photographs and detailed descriptions of the sets and components. Only later did the Derby firms catch up and then the pattern of advertising followed fairly similar lines. National or religious occasions were the best selling points. Besides the general elections, it was usually a speech by the King, or more uniquely, the coronation which provided a keynote for an advertisement. The onset of autumn or the pre-Christmas period were also favourite advertising periods.

Advertising ranged across the whole gamut of these events. At the 1929 General Election, Jolley and Cowlshaw's advertisement read:

'Wireless Wisdom. The BBC are broadcasting the General Election results between 9 p.m. Thursday and 4 a.m. Friday. You will not have to wait for the morning paper if you have a wireless set. Install one now.' 71

This was typical - a mixture of factual comment and the allusion to radio's great advantage: immediacy.

Figure IV Local Advertising and the Coronation (i)⁶⁸

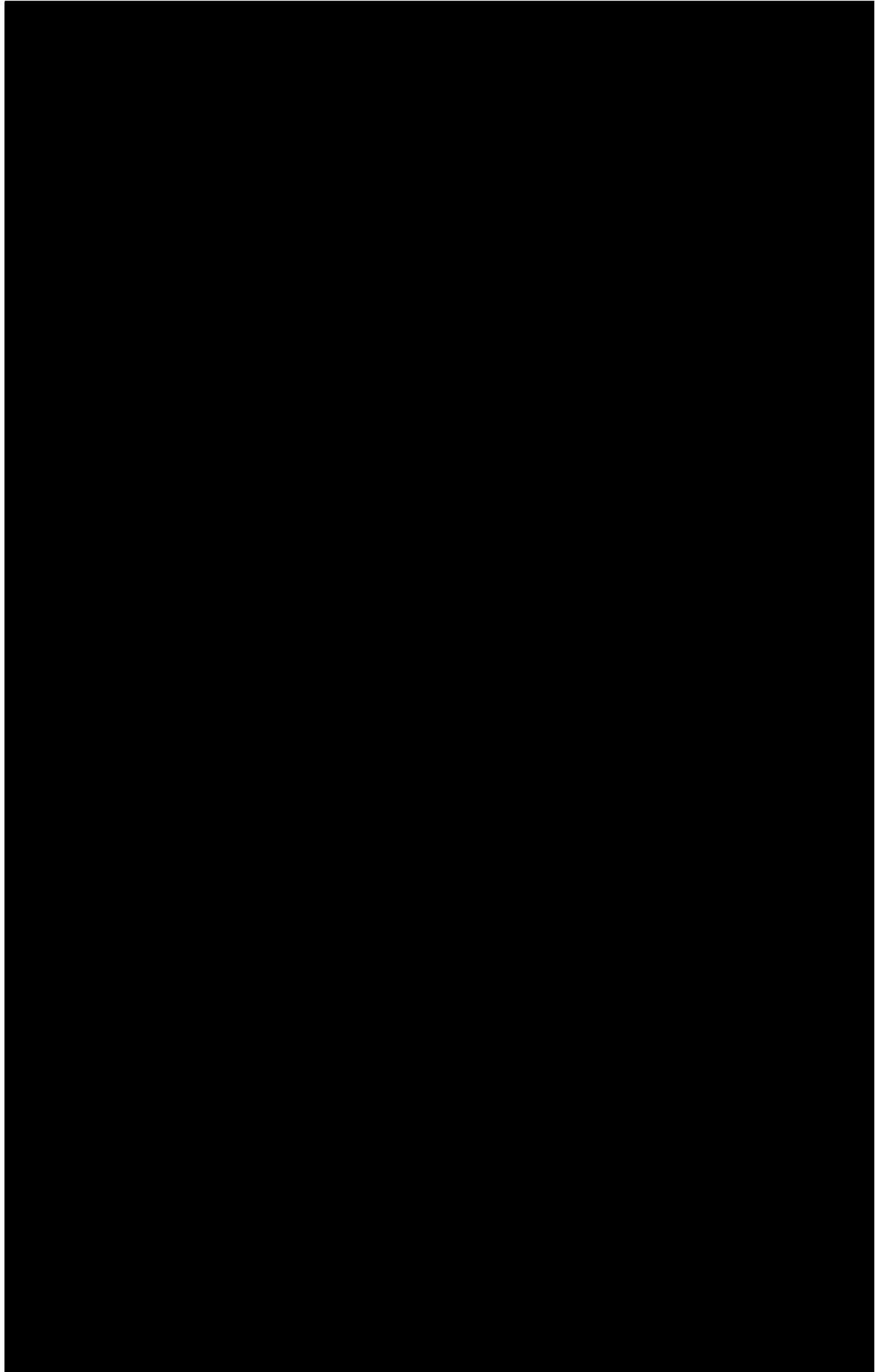


Figure V Local Advertising and the Coronation(ii) ⁶⁹

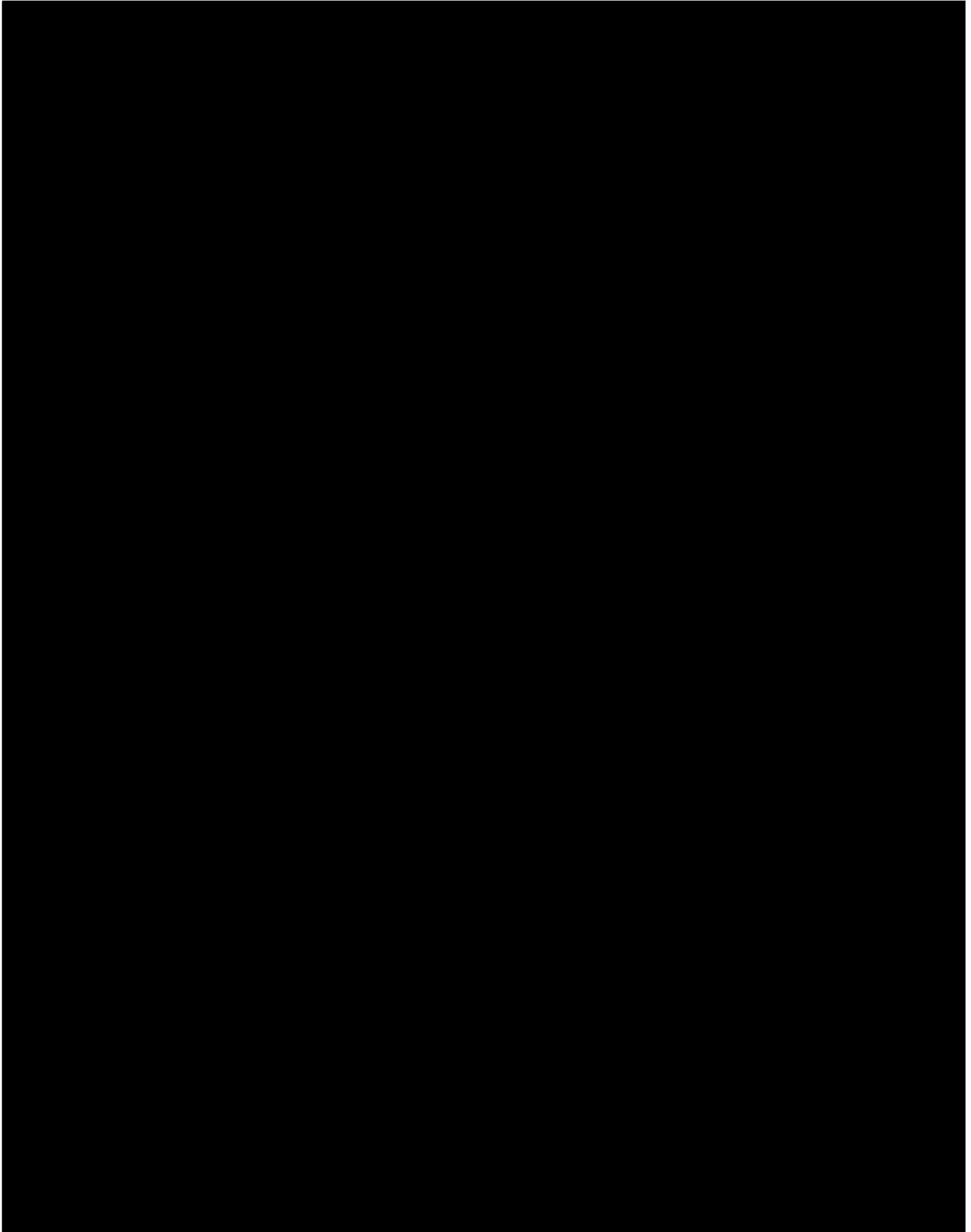


Figure VI Charabancs and Wireless 70



The peak was probably reached between 1930 and 1935, when national advertisements mingled with the local ones and the range of radio sets was larger than ever before. Thereafter a decline set in. Trading patterns dictated that advertisements should aim at features such as new models or high second-hand values for traded-in sets. However, national events still acted as a stimulus. In 1937, for instance, the HMV advertisement in many local papers stressed that listeners should sell their old sets and buy 'Coronation Year Radio' sets, priced at anything from 9½ to 38 guineas.⁷²

Retailers also employed the same tactics as the local wireless societies to gain publicity. One publicity stunt carried out by the two main Oxford firms included a return journey to London by charabancs fitted with wireless receivers.⁷³ As the Oxford Chronicle account remarked:

'Oxonians who went by charabanc to London on Whit Monday had music on the way. There are rival services of coaches and rival wireless firms, and each coach had its wireless equipment from one or other of these firms.

It was a matter for debate which set of passengers heard the music best.'⁷⁴

The travellers had time to go to a London theatre and then return in the late evening to the strains of an opera broadcast from 2LO. When one of the coaches stopped at Maidenhead, a crowd of more than 300 gathered around the vehicle - such was the novelty of the occasion.⁷⁵

This form of competitiveness created a good deal of interest and excitement but even day-to-day activities attracted considerable attention. Again the Oxford firms were particularly active in this respect. Captains Lawley and Shirley of the OWTCL made wireless tours in 1923 throughout the county, giving evening demonstrations in many Oxfordshire villages and towns which would not otherwise have heard broadcasting.⁷⁶ At one demonstration in Henley, the Oxford Chronicle observed:

'The reality of the reception may be realised when it is known that a large portion of the audience actually clapped and applauded ... The dance music was so greatly appreciated and was so loud and distinct that many couples danced to it.'⁷⁷

This description rather effectively captures the sense of surprise which the early broadcasts created.

A similar example can be found in Oxford just before the formation of the BBC in 1922. Lawley and Shirley gave a wireless concert and the press report mirrored the public reaction: a mixture of astonishment at the means of communication and awe at the results which could be achieved:

'With a receiving set and an aerial slung diagonally across the Town Hall, inside, messages were received from London, and some gramophone records played there came through distinctly. A small transmitter in the basement enabled Professor Turner and Miss Deneke to address the audience thence, the waves traversing the intervening floors of the building, these successful experiments being much appreciated.' 78

There were also trade exhibitions in each locality where radio shops could display and demonstrate their wares - usually by upstaging the other participants. All the areas studied held such exhibitions and, at least for the years 1922-1924, radio was the star attraction. In Chiswick, the Civic Association organised a fair at the Town Hall, which included, 'a wireless demonstration for the scientific.'⁷⁹ In Derby, the Chamber of Trade held an annual exhibition which contained some form of radio exhibition.⁸⁰ The Oxford Trades Exhibition attracted considerable crowds to listen to the radio exhibits.⁸¹

These forms of publicity were valuable but the most consistent contribution to public awareness was provided by the normal service in each shop. Such was the attention which wireless shops attracted, that almost every evening, for the first two or three years of public broadcasting, large crowds would gather just to hear broadcasts outside the shops. This contribution through mass listening must have made radio practicably realisable to most urban dwellers within months of the formation of the BBC.

Since most people could best listen after work and, as a consequence, most programmes were broadcast in the evening, then the shops also stayed open in the evenings. In Brentford and Chiswick the aim was to entice commuters. As the press report explained:

'Some tradesmen have fitted up loud speakers in their shop and the public - representing potential buyers - have free entertainments and linger on the pavement on their homeward journey at night to hear the broadcasted music from Marconi House.' 82

There is less evidence of similar practices in Derbyshire but in Oxford the local press showed considerably more interest. Here mass listening was a

regular activity. Crowds gathered just to hear news summaries or sporting results during the evening demonstrations given by the two rival wireless shops. The public listened in the street to such diverse things as opera broadcasts, including Dame Nellie Melba,⁸³ the news, the running commentary on the Boat Race and the eye witness accounts of the F.A. Cup Final. Most of these events could draw anything from 300 to 800 people in Queen Street and High Street, although less auspicious occasions could still cause large crowds to gather. In April 1923, for instance, the crowd which was only listening to a normal BBC programme of music became so large that the police were called to keep the road clear.⁸⁴

6.4 The Local Press

The nature of broadcasting, particularly its ephemerality, makes it very difficult to discover direct reference to it and its supposed effects. Without the local press, there would be an extreme shortage of information which could not be supplemented easily by alternatives such as oral history or bureaucratic sources. As a historical source the local press is invaluable. The primary purpose of the local newspaper was, naturally enough, to provide information for its readership and similarly, therefore, its absence would have made the publicising of broadcasting much more difficult - even if the lack of a local paper would have made the demand for radio that much greater. There would have been less opportunity for wireless clubs to publish their activities and slightly less opportunity for retailers to advertise their wares. Fortunately the local press satisfied this purpose and, in doing so, left a reasonably solid historical trace.

Broadcasting could have been seen as a serious potential rival to the local press. This might have led to a serious misrepresentation of the role of broadcasting because the omission of some references to broadcasting were made to avoid giving encouragement to a competitor. Newsprint was certainly under pressure

in the late twenties. Both Oxfordshire and Derby lost a weekly newspaper in 1929⁸⁵ and the overtly partisan phase of newspaper printing came to an end in the localities. Even in Brentford and Chiswick, which only had one newspaper of any importance throughout the period, the partisan nature of that paper was staunch and attempts were made to adopt the guise of neutrality. In general censorship of the relationship with radio does not seem to have occurred too frequently. There seemed to be much less jealousy of broadcasting from the local press than from the national press. For example, the national press attempted to ban the publication of programme details and times. In the localities there were examples of a much more rapid attempt to provide this service. The Oxford press produced some details of programmes but they were restricted by their weekly issue until the arrival of the Oxford Mail in 1929. In Derby, the local dailies were much more comprehensive - even including European stations. For instance, in the Derby Daily Telegraph of 14th August 1923,⁸⁶ it was possible to find the wavelength for all the BBC stations then broadcasting as well as the details of broadcasts and wavelengths for French stations such as Paris Radiola and Eiffel Tower and a Belgian station: Radio Antwerp. There was also a short article on the progress of simultaneous broadcasting by the BBC. The same paper also showed interest in broadcasting by publishing a weekly technical column dealing with elementary construction or radio equipment developments. Such columns appeared fairly frequently in the rival Derby Daily Express⁸⁷ but on a more random basis in most of the other local papers.⁸⁸

All the local papers attacked oscillators on many occasions. The Chiswick Times provided a typical example:

'Somebody in this district is spoiling the pleasure of dozens of wireless enthusiasts by shrieking valves. If they are sports they'll see to it that this stops. If they don't know how to stop it they should seek expert advice.' 89

Evidently this was assumed to be a popular local cause to adopt.

Licence evaders generally came in for criticism. The Derby Daily Telegraph supported the GPO campaign, using wireless detector vans to find licence evaders. The paper argued that, 'the mentality of people who engage in little "crimes" of this sort is amazing.'⁹⁰ However, the Brentford and Chiswick Times was less sure of the validity of this exercise:

'The BBC and the GPO may be right, and there may be 400,000 dishonest people using wireless sets in the London area. Also, it may be possible to induce wireless dealers to reveal names of customers and to forecast accurately what will happen when magistrates have offenders before them. We must wait and see. At present the only real evidence is that the officials of the BBC and the GPO have nasty suspicious minds. For ourselves, we do not like this wholesale assumption that so many British citizens are deliberately dishonest, and we see objections to the official frame of mind ... Really we want less, not more official interference in our homes and daily life, even though there may be some careless owners of wireless sets who have not taken out licences.' 91

This, however, was an exceptional opinion and the consensus was sympathetic towards the GPO efforts.

Support for the amateurs was considerably more equivocal. In Derby the amateurs wrote the technical columns and obviously influenced the editorial opinions. The Derby Mercury advocated the implementation of a silent period so that amateurs could continue to experiment alongside public broadcasting⁹² and, later, pointed out that the amateurs deserved such privileges because of their work in short waves and long distance propagation which could possibly alleviate the over-crowding of the airways. 'Perhaps the Post Office may now realise that by giving greater freedom to amateurs the possibilities of wireless may be enormously extended.' 93

The Derby Daily Telegraph shared this view and hoped that the Sykes report would end the BBC royalty system and free the amateurs from petty restrictions.⁹⁴ The Oxford press shared these beliefs to a certain extent⁹⁵ but in Chiswick there was rather more contempt. Although the amateurs had their meetings reported, there was less satisfaction with other facets of their work. The paper referred to the advertisement:

'which appeared in our column last week asking "listeners-in" in this district to give particulars of their disturbance during the broadcasting of concerts by 2LO by local amateurs talking to one another. I hope that after the broad hint given, the practice, which is, to say the least, selfish, will be discontinued. There is plenty of opportunity for experimenting in this way at other times.' 96

In short, the local press did not see the pattern of local broadcasting which initially existed or the national and regional broadcasting which eventually emerged as a threat to their newspapers. The demand for their specifically local news service and the strength of the printed word itself were considered to be sufficient to resist any possibility of damage to their circulations. Indeed the local press was a strong defender of radio at times when the national press was not.

As the Oxford Chronicle asserted:

'It is now becoming a popular pastime with the London daily press to unfavourably criticise wireless broadcasting with many sarcastic references and half-veiled sneers. This attitude, however, will not affect those who possess wireless receivers or are well acquainted with wireless reception. They will understand that one particular evening's entertainment, or one item of a programme, cannot be taken as representative of broadcasting as a whole.' 97

Part 4
(continued)

Chapter 10

Local Politics and Culture

10.1 Municipal Action

Municipal services such as education, libraries and some forms of administration were also affected by broadcasting. The educational use of broadcasting was particularly important because it increased awareness amongst the young of radio's potential and also because it exposed an impressionable age group to the BBC's centrally generated cultural and social values. For a brief period, educational broadcasting was the responsibility of the local stations: from the first broadcasts in 1924,¹ until the simultaneous broadcasting network was fully established. The main output was, however, very quickly centralised in London and hence the potential for programmes to encourage uniformity was soon established. Whether this potential was realised is difficult to verify but two factors in the chain of possible influences can be examined. Did schools actually equip themselves to listen to broadcast educational programmes and, if they did, how much use was made of the service provided?

In Brentford and Chiswick, listening in schools began almost immediately. There were several good reasons for this. It was due partly to the inspiration of local teachers but equally it owed a good deal to the proximity of 2LO at Savoy Hill and the relationship between Middlesex County Council and J.C. Stobart, the newly appointed Director of Educational Broadcasting. Stobart had been an Inspector of Schools in the County and visited many of the schools in the Brentford and Chiswick Urban District. The initial action by senior schools in the area was entirely voluntary. The log book for the Hogarth Senior Boys School in Chiswick provides the earliest direct reference:

'A broadcasting test organised by the British.B.C.Company (sic) was was (sic) heard this afternoon by boys of standard IIIa and VIb with the apparatus provided by Mr. Varley. It consisted of a lecture on school music given by Sir Henry Walford Davies at the Savoy Hill studio of the BBC.' 2

In Brentford, the Rothschild School for Boys recorded listening for the first time in May 1924, having been lent a five valve set.³ Later there is evidence at both schools of regular listening to BBC programmes - including

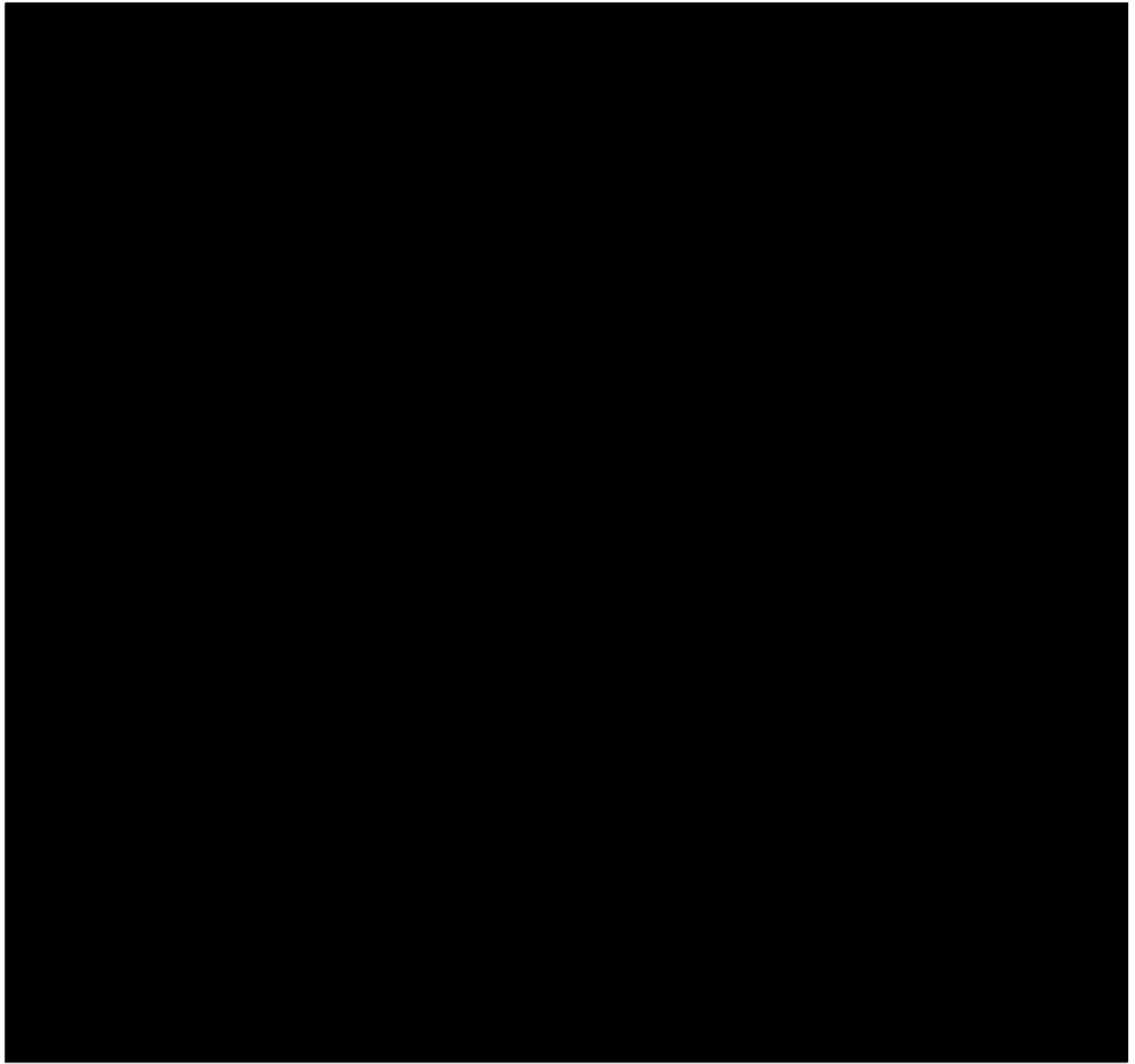
participation in essay tests and examinations organised by the BBC.⁴ Some pupils even accompanied their Headmaster on a visit to Savoy Hill.⁵ All of this activity was due to local initiative. Formal authorisation to purchase sets only came from the UDC's Education Committee for the first time in November 1924⁶ and uniformly throughout the senior schools in the area much later in March 1931.⁷

This pattern of publicly funded support following a voluntary initiative was followed fairly closely elsewhere - but with a wide divergence in the timing. In Derby and Derbyshire mention of the use of wireless in schools is much sparser. Fewer schools appear to have had their own sets, although some had possessed school societies from a very early date.⁸ The delay in public support for broadcasting as an aid to school education was ruefully noted by the Derby Evening Telegraph as late as 1939, when it heard of Burton-on-Trent's decision to fit radio sets as a standard fitting for a school rather than a 'privilege'.

'Praise ye Burton's progressive Education Committee, the first local authority properly to appreciate the importance of Broadcasts to Schools ... It is true that in Derby the senior schools have wireless sets and that they are used regularly, but it is true also that in only one case has the apparatus been supplied entirely by the Education Committee - and that these benefits are denied the great majority of the junior schools in the town - why?'.⁹

The article went on to observe that Derbyshire was yet to fit radio sets in either type of school. The general rule for the period was, therefore, that schools only possessed sets through the energy of masters and pupils, or through expenditure squeezed out of the block grant to the school. The only exception seems to have been the Derby Technical College, which was allowed an aerial and set in order to run an evening class on 'Wireless Telegraphy'.¹¹ From the minutes of meetings of the Derby Education Committee, it is clear that there was little interest in broadcasting for schools. No special funds were set aside and some direct requests for financial assistance for radio purchases were turned down¹² - despite representations from the BBC to relax the policy¹³ - although monies for gramophones and pianos were specifically allowed. BBC demonstrations at schools in Derby during 1929 could not convince the committee members to authorise any expenditure.¹⁴ Eventually a Special Advisory Committee of the

Figure I Wireless at School¹⁰



Elementary Education Sub-Committee was established in 1935 to examine the question.¹⁵ Any action on its conclusions were deferred and evidently no action was taken before 1939.

In Oxford the educational authorities were similarly apathetic. There is no trace of any discussion about the issue in the City Council Education Committee Minutes but it is noticeable in the lists of approved expenditure that radio equipment did not make an appearance until 1935 and 1936, when large sums were allocated for this purpose.¹⁶ Until that date it seems likely that where sets were fitted - such as in the Cowley Boys' School - they were attributable to the voluntary efforts of the teachers, parents and pupils.¹⁷ (See Figure I).

It is doubtful, therefore, whether the use of broadcasting in formal education had much impact, simply because sets were not provided in any numbers. Broadcast programmes rarely formed a regular part of the timetable. If they were used at all, they were far more likely to serve as a novelty or special treat. The exception was in the Brentford and Chiswick area, where the potential of broadcast education was realised to a much greater extent before 1939.

Municipal authorities had some concern for adult education uses of broadcasting. The Derby Technical College and Chiswick Polytechnic ran courses on wireless telegraphy or telephony, but the greatest use of broadcasting was in the evening classes which used public educational facilities, under the auspices of voluntary groups. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA), certainly used radio as an aid to study in Derbyshire and Oxfordshire. Evidence revealing the use of radio in this way is somewhat limited but in Derby there is evidence of the use of radio for a musical appreciation class in 1936,¹⁸ whilst in Oxfordshire there is rather more evidence of enthusiasm in starting WEA listening groups, if not on their actual durability. Noting the publication of the BBC 'Aids to Study' for the use of adult education groups, Mr. G.H.L. Fear, the Chairman of the Oxford branch of the WEA took the opportunity to explain the WEA's proposed role and provided some practical advice:

'Now while individuals as such may acquire a wealth of information from radio lectures such as these, the maximum harvest is only garnered, I suggest, by studying in groups, and the Workers' Educational Association will be delighted to lend its organisation to the formation of groups for this purpose. The WEA has already considered such a scheme, the main features of which are as follows: A group should consist of, say, from twelve to thirty members of either sex and should meet in a room situated centrally for its members. The WEA would undertake to place the necessary books on loan to any groups studying under its auspices. Each student would do a certain amount of reading prior to the radio lecture, and make notes at the time it is broadcast. A discussion would follow, in which the views, ideas and criticisms of each would be pooled, to the benefit of all.' 19

This description accurately predicted the style of listening adopted by the WEA and many other groups in the countryside. In the main urban areas such as Oxford, Derby and Chiswick, less evidence of such practices exists. Oxford had its eyes more closely attracted to the possibilities of adult education through broadcasting because of the publicity which the BBC's Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education received each year in the local papers. This was simply because a summer school was held at the University for the benefit of listening group leaders from all over the country. Their lectures and discussions were very fully covered but whether this led to more active local participation seems doubtful.²⁰ In fact the CCBAE was disbanded in July 1934 and none of the localities examined came under its full administrative control before that date. The main intention was to create area councils but only four of these were formed and none applied to the localities studied.

The CCBAE failed because of lack of support but some listening groups did emerge successfully in the localities. Their ultimate demise was more a reflection of the informal, ad hoc and ephemeral nature of many of the listening groups. They grew up to meet specific needs and ceased once the local spark of interest faded. Indeed, there was some hostility towards larger organisations which attempted to use radio listening as a means of adult education. Plebs, for instance, saw both the CCBAE and even the WEA as an instrument of reactionary state control:

'Our rulers and governors have not been slow to profit by the lesson they learned during the General Strike as to the usefulness of broadcasting. An Adult Educational Section of the BBC has been set up, and a prominent WEA er put in charge. So that, as J.P.M. Millar pointed out in his letter to the Daily Herald the other day, "the workers will now be educated by wireless on lines that have governing-class approval." Let us, to avoid misunderstanding frankly admit that a series of talks on English working-class history by a WEA lecturer which were broadcasted early this year were very good. But if anyone deduces from that that the general tone of the lessons-by-wireless which are now to be given under Government control is likely to be satisfactory from the workers' point of view, he must be an optimist indeed. It is one more proof, if such were needed, of the entire failure of the WEA to grasp the fundamental facts about the position of the workers under capitalism, and about their educational needs, that such a scheme under such auspices, should receive its sympathetic support.' 21

This was an extreme and largely political objection to educational broadcasting in the form, but much of the practice seems to have been based on a feeling that local needs were better met by the spontaneous voluntary action and more flexible coordination of local groups with a broad commitment to adult education and leisure rather than by a centralised structure. Thus the main evidence for adult education listening groups came from those such as the YMCA in Burton-on-Trent, where their wireless set was used to provide the facilities for a listening group,²² and in Oxfordshire from the Federation of Women's Institutes, where a Ford van was fitted up with a set so that it could tour from village to village, 'entertaining and educating.'²³

Two other areas of social concern normally aroused some local activity. One was unemployment. In other parts of the country, the Carnegie Trust made funds specifically available for the creation of listening groups for the unemployed.²⁴ None of the counties examined were included in these areas, probably because the level of unemployment was either about or lower than the average. Some areas of Derbyshire, particularly in the urban areas of East Derbyshire had pockets of very high unemployment so demand certainly existed. In response to this enforced leisure, The Miners' Welfare Adult Education Joint Committee for the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfield held listening classes at the height of the slump - helped considerably by the extra-mural departments of the Universities of Sheffield and Nottingham.²⁵ At Staveley near Chesterfield

the branch library ran a listening group and provided books for BBC talks in centres specially set up for the unemployed in the towns and villages in the vicinity.²⁶ This listening group continued to meet as late as the winter of 1937 - 1938, when the group listened to the 'Men Talking' series.²⁷

The other social activity was less easily defined and required a much greater degree of coordination amongst public and voluntary bodies. This was the strengthening of the rural community. In Oxfordshire, the Earl of Macclesfield was very keen to use radio as a means of reinvigorating the existing village clubs, then threatened financially by the agricultural depression and failing in their purpose to bring the community closer together. Again the emphasis was on radio as a general social aid - to encourage a community spirit by assisting the organisation of community entertainment rather than any specifically educational gathering. The Earl and Captain Shirley toured the villages to demonstrate the possibilities of radio and emphasising the economy of this method of rejuvenation.²⁸

But it was in Derbyshire where this form of action can best be seen in practice. Here the Rural Community Council used radio as a keystone of a coordinated policy to revive village culture. The Council set up a pilot listening group in one village, Eyam, in an attempt to strengthen communal spirit and integrated this trial with programmes to build or repair village halls, provide a better county library facility, encourage electrification and then draw Women's Institutes, Drama Clubs and other social gatherings back into the village halls throughout the county.²⁹ The group leader of the listening group was a school master and, of the thirty or so other participants, half were already engaged in some form of education. The remainder were working people. The distribution of the sexes was roughly equal: fifteen men to eighteen women on a typical evening. The size was, therefore, small but manageable. An article in the Manchester Guardian explained the practice of the group:

'Their method is to listen to the wireless speaker, then spend a week in thinking over the lecture, and on the following week meet an hour before the next installment is due and spend the waiting-time in discussing what they heard a week before.' 30

There was also some enthusiasm for future prospects - as the article remarked:

'The Derbyshire Rural Community Council, which launched Eyam on this movement, has recently secured, well in advance, from the BBC the syllabus of its educational talks, and has circulated this to the 165 villages with which it has now established some link. It is hoped to start other study groups in the near future.'

The fate of this policy and the number of groups formed is less certain.

Local evidence is elusive. Nationally there seems to be little doubt that these paternalistic, formal attempts to use wireless to revive village life, fill the leisure hours of the unemployed or provide some basis for adult education, were of indifferent or negligible effect. The CCBAE was disbanded, the Carnegie experiment of organising listening groups for the unemployed was not continued after the initial experiemnt in 1930-1932 and estimates of their value were mixed.³¹ The groups which were formed were reasonably well spread over the rural areas of Derbyshire and Oxfordshire, but memberships were usually small. Direct participation seems to have been limited to those already interested or involved in education. Precise statements are difficult because the groups formed and reformed very rapidly as each lecture series began and ended. Normally a course was pursued for an eight week period, and was usually held in the winter months. It seems reasonable to assume that this local pattern closely reflected the situation nationally.

This paucity of evidence on broadcast education can be supplemented to a certain extent by examining the influence of broadcasting on the related area of reading habits. Public libraries are the main source of this evidence. In each of the areas the use of public libraries increased greatly in the period - apart from a brief spell in the middle thirties. Therefore, it seems plausible to suggest that broadcasting stimulated the use of books. Sadly this statement is much too simplistic and does not provide a full explanation. All kinds of problems arise when the available data is examined. First, the collection and

Table I Lending Libraries: Number of Borrowers 1919 - 1940.

Date	Derby CB	Derbys C.C.	Oxford City	Oxford C.C.	Brentford & Chiswick
1919-20	c15,000				
1920-21	19 721				
1921-22	22,671				
1922-23					
1923-24	20,317		5,601		
1924-25		8,000			
1925-26		15,602		7,600	
1926-27		25,515			
1927-28		30,074			
1928-29		34,279			
1929-30		42,091			
1930-31	26,210	50,123		9,654	13,609
1931-32	31,395			10,710	16,602
1932-33	c37,300			c11,000	16,227
1933-34	33,763	62,396		12,240	
1934-35	32,347	67,115		14,450	
1935-36	30,144	73,377		13,680	
1936-37	28,852	77,609		15,025	13,651
1937-38	28,299	80,879			14,495
1938-39	29,160	85,772		c18,440	15,658
1939-40	30,671	94,069		19,803	

Some statistics are unavailable

Table II: Lending Libraries: Percentage of Borrowers to Population 1930-1937

Date	Derby C.B.	Derbys C.C.	Oxon C.C.	Brentford and Chiswick UDC
1930-31	18.6	11.6	8.7	21.7
1931-32	22.3	?	9.6	26.5
1932-33	26.5	?	9.9	25.9
1933-34	23.9	14.4	11.0	?
1934-35	22.9	15.5	13.0	?
1935-36	21.3	17.0	12.3	?
1936-37	20.5	18.0	13.5	21.8
Population	140,986	431,936	111,442	62,617

No figures available for Oxford City

Table III

Lending Libraries: Number of Issues per Head 1925-1936

Date	Derby CB	Derbys C.C.	Oxford City	Oxon. C.C.	Brentford & Chiswick
1925-26	3.31	0.46	3.03	0.47	3.80
1926-27	3.53	1.05	3.41	1.01	4.20
1927-28	3.66	1.37	3.73	1.25	4.43
1928-29	3.96	1.65	4.76	0.91	3.87
1929-30	4.59	2.28	5.56	0.99	4.15
1930-31	5.11	2.41	6.14	1.17	4.37
1931-32	5.82	2.74	7.05	1.37	6.02
1932-33	6.51	3.44	7.38	1.56	5.97
1933-34	6.18	3.89	7.42	1.63	5.68
1934-35	6.02	4.10	7.36	1.80	5.16
1935-36	5.67	4.63	7.66	1.66	5.18

Population in 1931

Derby County Borough: 140,986

Derbyshire County Council Library Area: 431,936

Oxford City: 80,539

Oxfordshire County Council Library Area: 11,442

Brentford and Chiswick: 62,617

County Councils have to be adapted to allow for UDC's, CB's, etc. with their own libraries.

Table IV Lending Libraries: Issues 1918-1940

Date	Derby CB	Derbys CC	Oxford C	Oxon CC	Brentford and Chiswick
1918-19			137,136		
1919-20	243,437		146,753		
1920-21	352,847		156,690		
1921-22	388,861		c175,000		
1922-23	355,176		184,446		203,082*
1923-24	388,034		194,445		220,192*
1924-25	432,813	76,619	207,459		233,043*
1925-26	467,418	197,589	244,080	52,497	237,764*
1926-27	497,777	455,982	c275,000	113 046	262,309
1927-28	516,297	590,550	300,291	139,600	277,456
1928-29	557,711	713,883	383,540	101,111	242,284
1929-30	647,674	984,693	447,924	110,235	260,130
1930-31	720,896	1,039,423	494,660	130,494	273,349
1931-32	821,104	1,183,858	567,416	152,495	377,109
1932-33	919,134	1,485,749	594,419	173,413	374,010
1933-34	871,904	1,679,887	c598,000	181,797	355,456
1934-35	849,144	1,772,129	592,862	200,420	322,965
1935-36	800,093	2,000,737	616,734	184,743	324,384
1936-37	780,771	2,136,681	622,471	250,593	327,432
1937-38	800,009	2,355,357	659,398	276,386	324,765
1938-39	852,667	2,591,326	696,853	271,085	353,841
1939-40	757,648	2,308,598	741,243	272,834	

*Compiled separately

preservation of data was undertaken incompetently by many libraries. Of the five shown, only four took care to show the number of borrowers using the library. Without this vital information it is impossible to prove categorically whether the expansion of borrowing is due to an increased intensity of borrowing by a similar number of borrowers or whether the expansion can be attributed to the addition of a greater number of borrowers. From the examples available it appears that the latter case is more likely.³² (See Tables I-IV).

The other problem concerns the establishment of a causal connection. In the rural shires, the expansion of book lending was expected because the provision of a service only began in 1924 in Derbyshire and 1925 in Oxfordshire. In these cases the number of centres where books were lent increased enormously. In other libraries there was usually some expansion but on a more modest scale. Often there was more public finance available for libraries, grants from voluntary bodies such as the Carnegie Trust were provided and the adoption of better facilities for readers such as the 'Open Access' system helped to stimulate demand. The libraries themselves were not slow to point out these self-created explanations for increased lending.³³

Without these complications there would still be other influences on lending. Unemployment was one. It is noticeable that the greatest increases in lending were from 1930 to 1933, when unemployment was at its height.³⁴ Other media had some effect on reading. The Brentford and Chiswick library made this point:

'That the cinema has an influence on reading must be acknowledged, and in this connection it is interesting to note that when a popular film is based on an old romance or novel, the public demand for the work is increased. An example may be given such as the film "Victoria the Great", the showing of which caused a surprising demand for books dealing with the Victorian era and biographies of the Queen and the Prince Consort and other books of the period ... So also with broadcasting. It was difficult to meet the great demand for Duma's "The Count of Monte Cristo" when the play was being broadcast. The trinity consisting of the public library, the wireless and the cinema have together an influence which is incalculable.' 35

The statistics can, therefore, only provide a general guide: broadcasting probably increased the amount of lending, it may also have encouraged an increase in the use of non-fiction - an area which all librarians noted as a sign of

increased literary and educational standards. The Oxfordshire librarian was more explicit in drawing a causal connection:

'The number of readers, especially in the rural districts is growing rapidly and the requisitions for special books are also increasing. There is a marked improvement in the choice of books, owing to the BBC Talks.' 36

Unfortunately even these generalised references were often complicated by the fact that a decline of fiction lending could have been caused by the growth of commercial lending libraries which blossomed briefly in the thirties and which succeeded for a time in reducing total lending from public libraries.³⁷

The statistics show that, assuming the most negative effect on reading, broadcasting could only have diminished the rate of growth in lending and certainly did not reduce the level of reading to the extent which some critics had feared.³⁸ Even then, most of the increase in reading could feasibly have been done by the unemployed without sets, disguising a decline in borrowing from those with sets. This hypothesis only serves to emphasise the difficulty faced in achieving any accurate test of cultural effects. The only solution is to return to direct reference - to learn what librarians had to report on the subject. Fortunately, in the midst of some caution and contradiction, there was a broad consensus in judging the role of broadcasting.

Librarians did possess some awareness about broadcasting. A reaction to broadcasting was shown - in most cases by a willingness to report on the provision of book displays related to BBC talks - either for general purposes or more specifically for group listening. Most of the displays began between 1929 and 1930. Derbyshire made its first provision in 1929, as the County Librarian reported:

'Wireless educational talks aim at arousing the interest of listeners and the demand for books recommended proves that this aim is realised. The Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education issues from time to time programmes of talks and lectures containing brief reading lists. The books contained in these lists have been purchased for the Library, and posters issued by the BBC stating that the County Library co-operates with that body have been distributed to all the larger Library centres. As a direct result there has been a large demand for these books which deal with a variety of subjects, for example, popular science, economics, history and politics.' 39

This was typical of the kind of provision made in Derby⁴⁰ and Oxford⁴¹.

In Oxford there is a good description of the facilities for those interested in broadcast education in both a casual and formal sense:

'Listeners-in are well catered for at the Oxford City Library at the Town Hall, thanks to the enlightened policy of the Librarian, Mr. E.E. Skuce. Librettos of opera broadcast by the BBC can be obtained from the Library for twopence, thus saving the trouble of writing to Savoy Hill and the cost of postage. The Library also has copies of the excellent little hard books issued by the BBC from time to time in connection with their quarterly programme of talks and lectures. These may be consulted in the Reference Department of the City Library. Those who would like to take up the subject of the lecture further, or who have formed themselves into study groups for that purpose, will find the Librarian and his staff ready to render assistance by suggesting helpful books on the subject and arranging for the same to be borrowed.' 42

The inference was that the effect of broadcasting on reading could usually be measured by the specific volumes which were lent. In Derbyshire, Oxford and Oxfordshire, the connection was made confidently.

In Oxfordshire there was an interesting analysis of the type of book in which the Library felt that broadcasting encouraged an interest:

'Unfortunately the BBC has recommended some of a very "modern" type, which would horrify the average reader - but in biography and travel, we are able to provide a good many of the books asked for. The usual demand is for a "nice love story" or a detective novel, or Priestley's novels. We have more demand for plays now and the omnibus volumes of plays are becoming popular. Essays are hardly ever read: history very rarely. The Lectures on science bring in some requests for modern scientific books, but not as many as one would expect.' 44

Apart from the interesting piece of censorship there was a confident feeling that libraries were sensitive to public tastes inspired by broadcasting. The exception was Derby. Initially, the Library seems to have adhered to the consensus, particularly that broadcasting contributed to the reading of more serious and non-fictional literature.⁴⁵ By 1931, there was much more doubt about the value of providing literary support for broadcasting. The Librarian would now only grudgingly concede that: 'Judging from the use made of our BBC books I should say that listeners are more interested in broadcast music than in adult education.' 46

By 1933, the value of BBC Talks was compared very unfavourably with other educational methods.

'Our experience is that the BBC talks have little or no effect on the reading of our borrowers. We make a special display of books recommended for various talks (BBC) and also for the University Extension Lectures, WEA and other special courses. We find that all the various groups are well used with the exception of the BBC. On March 31st last we had 31,395 borrowers, and our issues for a year totalled 821,104 and with numbers such as these better results should have been visible from our efforts to provide books for BBC listeners.' 47

This statement needs to be examined with some care. The Librarian had his own prejudices as he admitted:

'My personal experience, as one who is keenly interested in many subjects is that listening to wireless talks is the most ineffectual way of learning anything.' 48

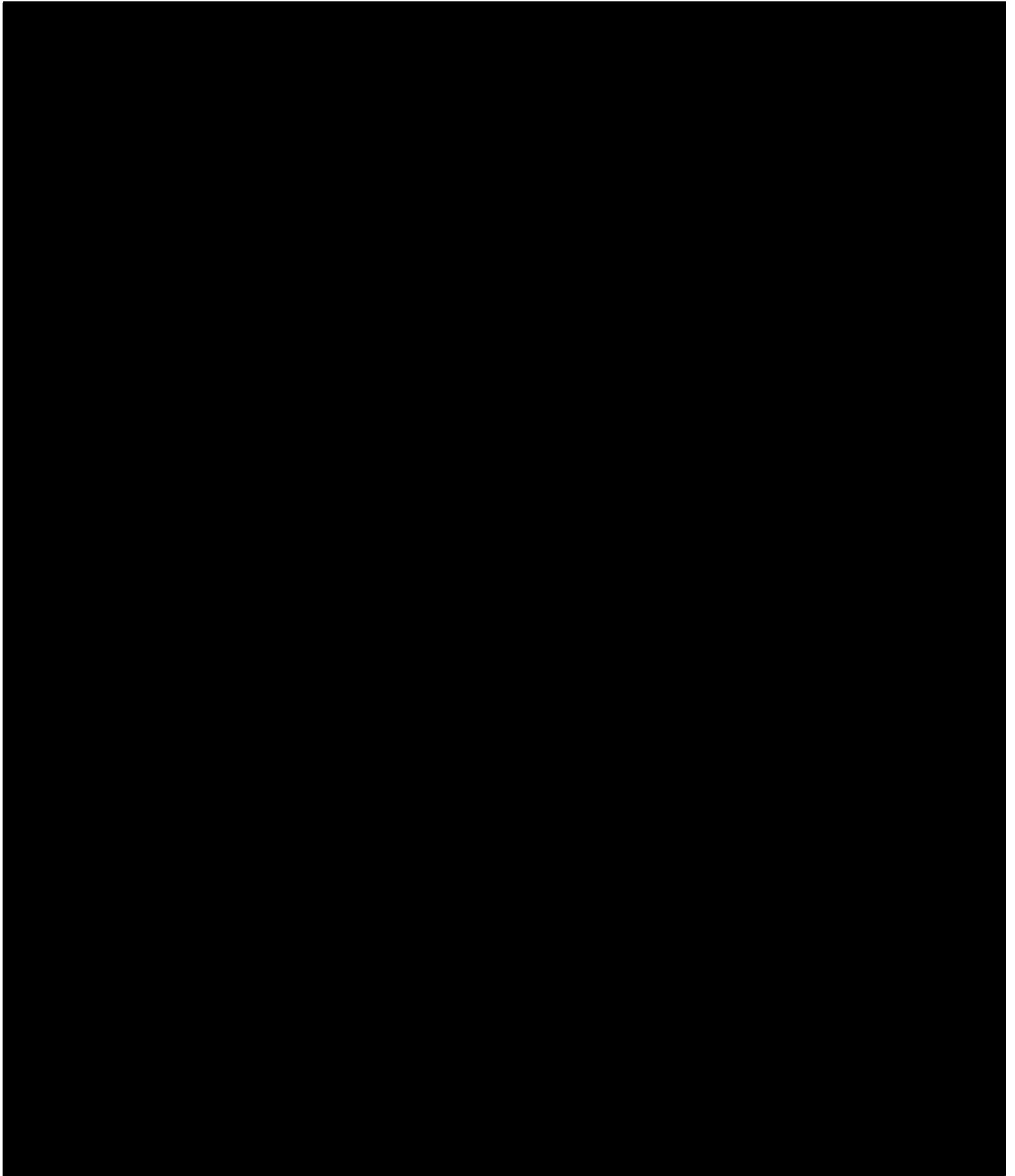
If an active involvement in broadcast adult education was suggested, then the Derby Library position on the issue was unequivocal:

'In some public libraries Wireless Discussion Groups have been organised in connection with the BBC; but lack of room and the necessary wireless equipment prevents this being done at Derby, and it is doubtful whether there are enough listeners interested in BBC talks to make the equipment worthwhile here. So far we have had only one request of this kind.⁴⁹ The best way in which we can cooperate is to supply the books recommended in the printed handbooks, as at present.' 50

This pre-judged lack of interest was not true in Derbyshire generally but the other libraries were similarly inactive. Chiswick and Brentford Library showed no real interest in helping listening groups, preferring instead to provide its own lecture series each winter.⁵¹ In Oxford an attempt was made⁵² but defeat was quickly conceded since the proposed listening group was cancelled due to lack of response.⁵³ In this respect the consensus was that group listening and other formal educational responses to broadcasting were not a success even when they were supported and any efforts in this direction were wasted. Libraries felt that the groups were a good thing on the whole but had to accept that their ideal of broadcast education could not be achieved. The concentration of resources was best aimed at the more casual, informal educational consequences of radio programmes - despite the difficulty of meeting the surges of demand which each passing excitement created.

Local authorities were also involved in many other miscellaneous but important consequences of broadcasting. In the Rural Community Councils the

Figure II: Ullswater Committee Report: Recommended Form of Byelaw.



social effort was shared with voluntary bodies and broadcasting was only a small component function. In other areas, the local council had direct responsibility. For instance, the profusion of wireless aerials which were erected to receive the signals for both crystal and early valve sets could be a public nuisance if they were stretched across public highways. The attitude of the local authority varied greatly towards them. In Chiswick, they were strictly forbidden: requests to erect them were refused and those which were erected without authorisation were ordered to be dismantled.⁵⁴ In Oxford it was possible to erect them if a good case could be made.⁵⁵

Similarly, local authorities had responsibility for dealing with local relay exchanges. Again the strengths of interests in each area varied, and these produced different reactions. In Chiswick requests to establish such exchanges were persistently refused before 1939. A special sub-committee of the Council's Works and Highways Committee was created to investigate the application and it advised that the request be denied on the grounds of the unsightly proliferation of overhead cables which would result.⁵⁶ In Derby a similar course was adopted except that the sub-committee was in favour of an exchange⁵⁷ and the full council was not.⁵⁸ In Oxford permission was granted for the exchanges to be formed. Apparently the resistance to such cables was not so acute here,⁵⁹ and in March 1936 there were 733 subscribers to the City's exchanges.⁶⁰

On the question of the nuisance caused by excessive loudspeaker noise, local authorities also had responsibility to act. Those that had not already taken action by approving the relevant byelaw were recommended to do so by the Ullswater Committee in 1935⁶¹ and a sample was attached to the Report for guidance. (See Figure II). In any case, many of the local authorities investigated had already taken such a course under the powers granted by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1933. Oxford, for instance, had its byelaw passed in 1933⁶², Brentford and Chiswick in 1934⁶³ and Derby in 1935.⁶⁴

Municipal authorities were disappointingly slow to respond to the new medium. With the notable exception of Chiswick and Brentford, there was little

sign of a speedy and positive response to exploit the advantages of broadcasting - whether formally in schools or indirectly by cooperation through the library and museum services. Normally broadcasting was ignored or actually despised. The lack of rapid action is quite clearly emphasised by the uncharacteristically slow moves to apply the restrictive measures on aerials, relay exchanges and noise. Evidently broadcasting usually had a very low priority in local government activity before 1939.

10.2 Local Politics

Broadcasting also made its mark on the way political events were received in the localities. Almost every permutation of political allegiance can be observed in the localities studied. Chiswick and Brentford remained solidly Conservative throughout the period, so too, did Oxfordshire. Oxford itself moved from Liberal to Conservative after 1924. Derbyshire and Derby provide a more complex picture. The shire combined Conservative, Liberal and Labour seats at various times throughout the period, epitomised by the changes in the county town. Derby was one of the rare double member constituencies. At first it had a Liberal and a Labour member after 1918, then two Labour members in 1924. After 1924 it had a Labour and a Conservative member, then two National Government members and finally, after a by-election in 1936, a National Government member and a Labour member. Thus if political allegiance had any influence on the way in which broadcasting was used, then most contingencies were provided for.

Although election broadcasting began in 1924, the first political event in which broadcasting played a serious part was not a simple party political clash. The General Strike of 1926 gave broadcasting an important opportunity to impress itself on the public. The role of broadcasting in this event has often been underrated because of the relatively low number of licence holders existant at that time.⁶⁵ Such a view not only misunderstands the mechanisms of early listening but also belittles the stimulus which the Strike gave to the sales of sets thereafter. The sudden cessation of traditional sources of information was virtually certain to place a much higher premium on radio - even assuming that it

had been ignored as a source before. The Oxford Chronicle captured the atmosphere which radio helped to generate at the beginning of the Strike on 3rd May 1926:

'The air of uncertainty hung over Oxford throughout the day, and in the evening when the evening papers, with the exception of the Star failed to appear, owing to the compositors having taken exception to certain passages in the strike comments anxiety deepened. The wireless bulletins were eagerly listened to, and the voice from the ether announcing the successive stages in the crisis had a dramatic quality. In the middle of the evening there was a hopeful note and it was announced that the general feeling in the House of Commons was that a settlement might be reached before midnight. Further bulletins rather dampened these hopes and at 11.15 the announcer's voice said: "I'm afraid this is the final news regarding the coal situation. All negotiations have broken down and the strike is fixed for 12 o'clock to-night".' 66

The local press was hard hit by the Strike. Many local papers failed to appear and, where they succeeded in producing an issue, it was normally in a truncated form. News was scarce. National news could often be collected by telephone from London but, in general, the local papers did not disguise their real source and quoted the BBC bulletins as fully as possible.⁶⁷ These emergency editions were often issued in short runs and hence, coupled with the lack of emergency editions of national papers, the shortage of printed news was severe.⁶⁸

Radio news bulletins helped to fill the gap in several other ways. The local newspapers in Derby could not bring out an edition between 4-12 May 1926, and they could only print bulletins from the radio for display in the local office windows.⁶⁹ In Brentford and Chiswick, where the local weekly continued to be printed, the demand for day to day news had to be met by the local authorities:

"A four-valve wireless set has been installed in the Town Hall. Six shorthand-typists, two at a time, working three shifts per day, take down all the wireless information. It is then printed and put on two posters outside the Town Hall. By this system the district is kept well informed of the situation from hour to hour.' 70

Clearly the indirect influence of wireless has to be taken into account. Even if there were less than two million licence holders out of a population of forty-five million in 1926, it seems safe to say that most of the population could have had contact with radio. People could listen in groups, read bulletins printed from radio as a source or, more crudely, exchange news by word of mouth.

The presence of only one set in a street would probably have been enough to keep neighbours well informed. The Oxford Chronicle was certain of radio's value:

'The situation was saved of course by wireless. Perhaps the BBC bulletins under Government control were unduly optimistic now and then, but they did give the news, and on the whole gave it fairly. And this news came regularly into hundred of Oxford homes, many of them the homes of very humble poeple.' 71

Not all listeners were so uncritical of what they heard. In Oxfordshire, a meeting of strikers at the village of Littlemore was addressed by speakers condemning the refusal of the BBC to allow the Archbishop of Canterbury to speak and in general, 'the meagre and one-sided information given by the BBC.' 72

In both Oxford and Derby the Trade Unions organised their own cyclostated bulletins to refer to radio news in more critical tones. In Derby the bulletin was sold daily from the first day of the strike to the last. It cost 1d. and raised £92.17s.6d. in income.⁷³ It was estimated to have sold 50,000 copies.⁷⁴

In Oxford a similar course was taken, distribution being arranged by the University Labour Club and Ruskin College. Between 18,000 and 20,000 copies were sold.⁷⁵ Bulletins were issued, too, in Chesterfield, Ilkeston and Belper in Derbyshire.⁷⁶ In his book on the Trades Councils in action during the General Strike, Emile Burns reviewed the attitude which dominated the production of these bulletins:

'The warning not to believe the wireless or capitalist publications is a universal feature, and there are also many denials of particular statements by the BBC, the British Gazette, or other papers'. 77

There seems little reason to doubt that this applied, at least in part, to the areas examined.

Fittingly, however, radio was able to demonstrate its strength as a news medium, whatever the view of its ideological stance, when it told the public that the Strike was over. The Chiswick Times amply reveals the value of broadcasting in this respect: "Thank God for that." This was the phrase reverently on many lips in Chiswick shortly after one o'clock on Wednesday, when rumours that had been floating around all the morning were confirmed by the announcement over the wireless. Those people who had gathered in large numbers outside premises which

had served a good purpose during the past week by broadcasting the official news of the great strike came up against an interruption of music from one of the London restaurants. A voice said, "The general strike was declared off at one o'clock", and immediately after the restaurant orchestra played the National Anthem and enthusiastic cheers came over the wire. There was little or no cheering by the listeners; it all seemed too sudden to be true.' 78

With other political activities the influence of broadcasting on local communities was rather mixed. Local government elections and even parliamentary by-elections were not covered in detail to any significant extent, although the BBC structured part of its news service on a regional basis soon after a developed interest in political matters was fully permitted with the ending of the rule prohibiting controversial broadcasts in 1928. It is in the case of general elections that broadcasting was able to produce noticeable changes. After the 1918 Representation of the People Act, the electorate had increased in size quite considerably and was expanded further with the enfranchisement of women aged 21 to 30 in 1928. The local papers were, therefore, already looking for some means of aiding candidates to get their message across before broadcasting became a reality.⁷⁹ This meant that radio was not spurned as an unnecessary intervention in the course of political activity and in many areas it was welcomed with open arms.⁸⁰

At first broadcasting tended to supplement rather than replace existing means of bringing election news - particularly on election nights. Normally, crowds would gather outside the Town Hall where the count was being undertaken and greet the candidates at the announcement of the result. This crowd was kept in touch with other results through lantern slide shows on a large screen, either in the open air - by courtesy of the local newspaper - or else indoors at the local cinema or theatre. Radio simply accelerated the process of providing this news, whilst the facilities remained the same. This was characteristic of all the major urban areas examined - Derby, Oxford and Chiswick.⁸¹

In Chiswick, for instance, the local paper reviewed the activities of

supporters during the 1931 Election. Outside the Town Hall, things were much quieter than in past elections and the paper assumed that:

'The supporters of the National Conservative (sic!) candidate were content, having recorded their opinion, to sit quietly at home and wait for the announcement of the results through the medium of wireless.'

Elsewhere, the party activists and supporters were also listening. At the count in the Town Hall, a portable set was used to keep supporters in touch with other results. 'These naturally pleased the supporters of the National Government, whose faces became wreathed in smiles as news of the fall of one leader of the opposition after another came through.'

Outside the Town Hall, 200 enthusiasts crowded into one theatre, listening to the results until 4 a.m., and nearby, with a touching combination of old and new forms of entertainment:

'Results were also announced on the loudspeakers at the "Chiswick Empire", and were heard by a good audience, who were amused at intervals by the playing of popular songs and choruses that were heartily joined-in.' 82

This example reveals the initial modification rather than thoroughgoing transformation which radio brought to electoral practice. There was some local optimism that radio would produce other beneficial effects. Many local newspapers hoped that the proceedings of Parliament would be broadcast.⁸³ There was also great expectancy when the first speeches by national leaders were broadcast. Then disillusionment set in. In 1929 the squabble over airtime for the first full series of party political broadcasts had soured the taste of these broadcasts. The local press, however, concentrated not on the political significance of this dispute but on the appalling quality of the broadcasts. As the Oxford Mail observed: 'The most comprehensive method of attracting the people has its limitations. Mr. Arthur Henderson on the wireless last night was not the same of the prime organiser of the Labour Party on the platform.' The Postmaster-General, Worthington-Evans was also written off - in this case as 'insufferably dull'.⁸⁴ Thus, the early novelty of these national broadcasts wore off very quickly. In 1926 the Oxford Chronicle was excitedly greeting the first broadcast by Lloyd George. By 1931 the Derby Daily Telegraph was forced to conclude

that the Liberal leader, 'though a capital platform speaker is not a good microphone subject.'⁸⁵ The only leading figures to escape condemnation were Baldwin⁸⁶ and particularly Snowden, whose speech on the Gold Standard in September 1931 was generally credited with attracting 'at least ninety per cent of homes equipped with wireless receiving sets.'⁸⁷

The early idealism had faded and the realisation that radios had wrought some unwelcome changes on electoral activity was now bemoaned powerlessly by the local papers. Their own grip on the electoral publicity machine was waning. People no longer stayed in the streets to view the Press displays - they stayed at home. Election night consequently became a lot quieter. In Chiswick this trend was observable as early as 1929.⁸⁸ At first the cause perplexed local observers: perhaps the presence of female voters had calmed down the unruly elements in the electorate; perhaps the damp weather was to blame for the empty streets?⁸⁹ In Derby, the Derby Daily Express accepted that party political broadcasts could penetrate the Englishman's castle but added, 'after all, we console ourselves; we can switch off when we have had enough.'⁹⁰ The paper also warned against lethargy: 'Last night they opened their assault on the firesides - firesides that will soon be deserted, we hope.'⁹¹ In this latter sentiment the paper was to be disappointed. All the local newspapers observed that the election had been the quietest for years.⁹² This could have been quite unrelated to the influence of broadcasting but in subsequent elections the connection became clearer and the pattern more firmly fixed. This is not to say that broadcasting cured the rowdism and violence previously associated with elections. Before broadcasting had made any impression, local papers were already comparing contemporary standards of behaviour most favourably with nineteenth century elections.⁹³

In 1931 it was observed that: 'A great many people, of course, preferred the comfort of their own fireside, listening to the news by wireless, the BBC having made special arrangements for sending the figures through the ether.'⁹⁴ In 1935 heavy rainfall made election night the quietest for ever. At Chiswick Town Hall nearly a thousand people gathered for the result⁹⁵ but this was

exceptional. In Oxford, Derby and Chesterfield the streets were deserted and meetings poorly attended throughout the campaign.⁹⁶ The close physical contact between the electorate and parliamentary candidates had been considerably diluted by the appeal from the party leadership, using radio to speak directly to voters over the heads of their party colleagues. Of course, canvassing and public meetings had continued during the course of the election campaign, but they were increasingly badly attended and their influence suffered a commensurate decline.

10.3 Local Culture and Society

Evidence revealing the influence of radio on local social life, leisure and its contribution to local culture is most elusive. Perhaps the most substantial evidence in this context relates to the evolution of the main social pattern of listening. In the beginning, much of the listening was done in groups or even in large crowds. By the mid-thirties this behaviour had translated itself into a private activity, with listening largely limited to the individual or the family within the confines of the home.

Examples of mass listening and its decline have been seen during parliamentary elections and in shops but the best examples concern the crowds which gathered to listen to the Monarch. Without doubt, the best example was the broadcast by the King and the Prince of Wales at the Empire Exhibition held at Wembley on 23rd April 1924. In Derby and Oxford special provision was made for large crowds to listen to the King and contemporary observers took the opportunity to wax lyrical with their impressions of this new miracle. In Oxford a huge crowd, several thousand strong, gathered to hear the King in St. Giles' and High Street. The Oxford Times described the importance of the speech in suitably glowing terms which, nonetheless, reflected the substantial impact which the association of radio and the monarchy brought to the event:

'Many people have realised the wonders of wireless in their own home if they have taken the full opportunity made possible by broadcasting but it was not until some great national function took place like the State opening of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, and the Oxford Times and the Oxford Wireless Telephony Company arranged to give citizens the chance to hear the King's speech in St. Giles', that the full force of the miracle of science was realised. For the uninitiated to imagine that broadcasting gives them the opportunity to hear spirited music and the spoken word is a very different thing to realising for the first time that it enables them to take part in some ceremony 60, 100 miles, or even greater distances away. It gave the sense of unity with a mighty people, the sense of participation in an unseen event.' 97

Similar arrangements applied to the High Street, where the rival Oxford Chronicle and F.W. Wootten's provided a similar attraction⁹⁸, and to other places throughout Oxfordshire and Derbyshire. The BBC estimated a national audience of five to six millions.⁹⁹

This obviously stimulated the desire to possess a personal set but, interestingly, it did not necessarily diminish the desire to listen to such broadcasts in groups. The Jubilee in 1935 saw the use of radio as a highlight after a traditional street party or fete.¹⁰⁰ The Coronation of 1937 also generated local celebrations which depended on good reception of radio broadcasts. In Derby, for instance, the day revolved around the radio set. Chapels and churches changed the times of their ceremonies to suit broadcasting times.¹⁰¹ Great emphasis was placed on the fact that this was the first time that people in Derbyshire had heard a King speak on his Coronation Day,¹⁰² Some churches laid on the broadcast as part of the service although instances of mass listening particularly in the open air, were much diminished - as one observer noted: 'The broadcast kept thousands of people indoors when they might have been expected to be abroad, and it was this, rather than the weather, that gave the streets at times an almost deserted appearance.'¹⁰³

It seems that this event closed an impressive period of evolution in the relationship of the monarch to the nation. First, he had been brought into direct contact with his subjects through the reception of his broadcast speech and, then, this contact had been transmitted from an act of communal veneration to a relationship between the family and the sovereign. The Brentford and Chiswick Times made this latter point strongly during the final illness of

George V. His Christmas broadcasts to the nation and empire were particularly cited as a means of increasing affection for the monarchy.¹⁰⁴ Comparing his death to the reaction of the public to the death of Edward VII, the paper noted the contribution of radio,

'ever since the first disquieting news of the King's illness was made known last week, practically every home in the kingdom has followed with keen anxiety every phase of the last hours of a loved monarch. This new fact in the life of the people has intensified the ties between the subject and the King, and in that measure the feeling of grief and the sense of loss are more poignant today.' 105

Other lesser events also attracted mass interest in radio and provided incentives for owning a set. In Oxford the Boat Race reigned supreme from the first broadcast in 1923 onwards.¹⁰⁶ Large crowds gathered in the streets for each of the races in the twenties and as late as 1937 reasonable crowds could still be observed in the streets for this purpose.¹⁰⁷ In a study of a similar addiction to the event in Bristol, Jennings found that radio had turned the race from an event of local significance to citizens of Oxford or Chiswick to one of national significance.¹⁰⁸

Other forms of mass listening were related rather more to the place where it occurred than to the content of a broadcast. Listening in public houses was a common phenomenon.¹⁰⁹ George Orwell described listening to the wartime news in this way and concluded from the apparent indifference of the clientele that radio news had little value and that music was the chief requirement in the pub.¹¹⁰

In Derby the practice began in 1922 and evidence of its use remains in the proceedings of the Licensing Bench. In March 1923 action was taken to regulate the growing number of installations and, following the debate in court, the Chairman of the Bench ruled in favour of granting a licence - but with this interesting reservation:

'Listening-in is in its infancy, and they did not know what the developments might be. It was possible that they might be undesirable, the experiment would be carefully watched, and if it were found necessary the licences would not be renewed.' 111

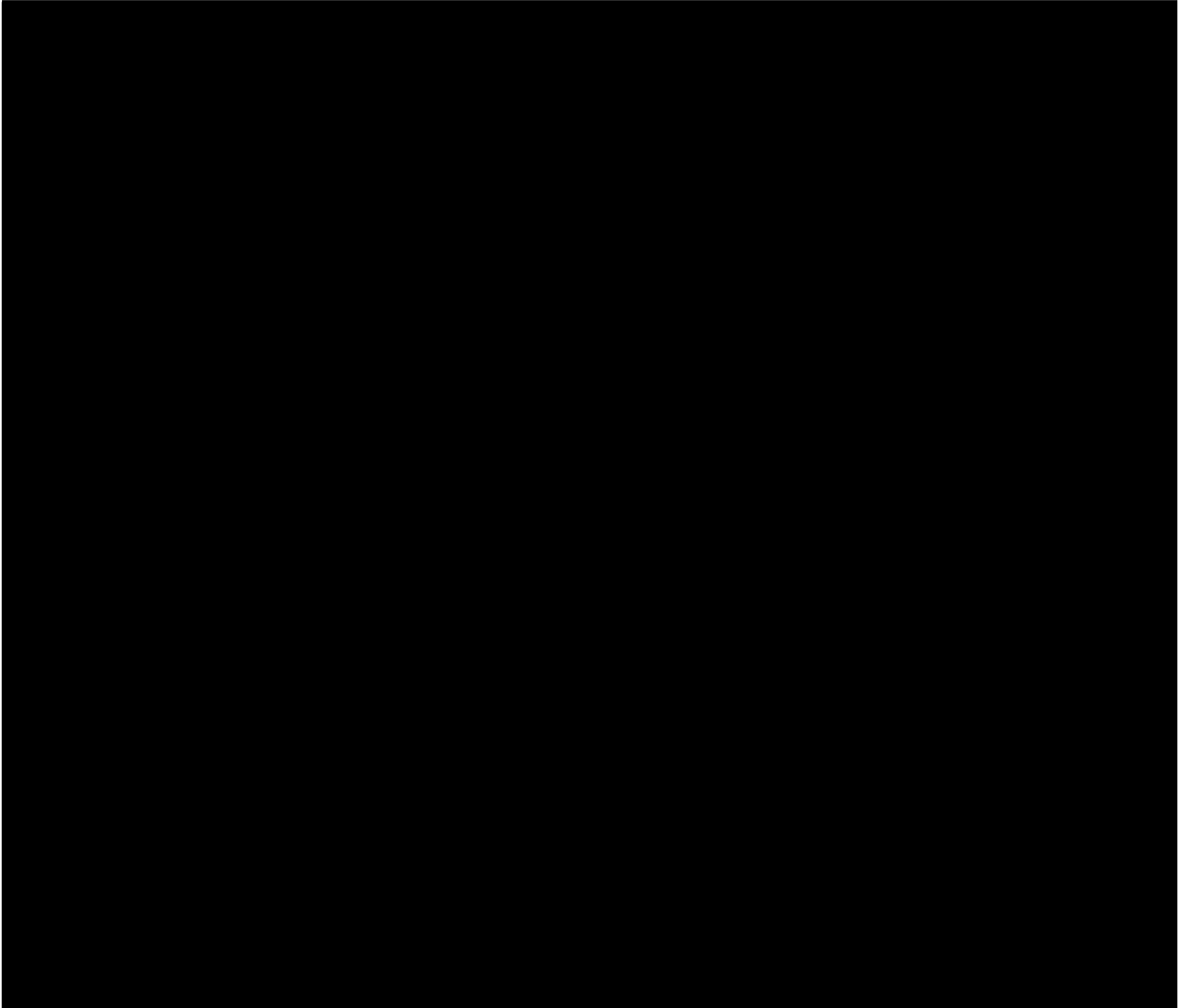
In the face of objections from the Temperance Society, the licensed victuallers argued rather disingenuously that broadcasts were of great educational value and

that control of their wireless sets was as careful as possible. The Chairman opted for a six day licence and, 'licences were granted to the Half-Moon, Globe and Tiger, all of which were stated to have had high-class sets for some time.' The commercial acumen of public houses was clearly demonstrated by the speed with which they seized on radio as a means of attracting custom. The same was true of Chiswick¹¹² and of Oxford - where several pubs, including the 'Welsh Pony' had fitted sets very soon after broadcasting commenced. This was a particularly interesting case because it was situated near the Gloucester Green cattle market and as the Oxford Chronicle observed: 'Many country people have gone to the house for the special purpose of "listening-in".¹¹³ Thus pubs were another means of spreading the example of radio amongst those who might not otherwise have come into contact with it at such an early stage.

The bench in Derby only granted a six day licence for other reasons. This was because of the successful objection to listening on Sundays raised by the Temperance Society, which had no doubts about the drawing power of radio. The magistrates' clerk argued with unwitting humour that, 'in view of my experience that sermons have been heard on Sundays, it would appear to be a desirable thing. It may be that people will hear sermons who have never heard one before.'¹¹⁴ This was not upheld and elsewhere religious authorities objected to such listening, whether in pubs or not, because of the deleterious effect on church attendances.

That there was some contribution to a decline in attendances seems to have been generally accepted but there is little trace of any firm local action in response. Certainly the programmes themselves were rarely criticised. All the areas had a good word to say for Dick Sheppard¹¹⁶ and his broadcasts from St. Martin-in-the-Fields and radio sermons were seen as valuable aids to the elderly and disabled who were unable to attend normal services. On great occasions, as has been seen, more advanced clergymen even brought the set into the church so that both ceremonies could be enjoyed simultaneously.¹¹⁷ It is worth mentioning here that the general dislike of the solemnity of the BBC's Sunday programmes should be seen in the context of a general ban on Sunday

Figure III: Wireless and Philanthropy¹¹⁵



entertainments. It was only in the late twenties that cinemas and other similar establishments were allowed to show performances on Sundays in many of the localities. The attempt to get more light entertainment on Sundays was therefore a wider issue rather than a concentrated attack on the ineptitude of the BBC.

Radio was an excellent aid to philanthropy. The example of the coordination between the various groups to supply radio to the Infirmary in Derby was but one example of many. In Oxford, the financial support of the Oxford Times and the technical efforts of Captain Shirley, achieved the incredible feat of fitting out a hundred hospitals by May 1926.¹¹⁸ Similar achievements were seen elsewhere. Other favourite efforts included the raising of money to provide sets for the blind - in Derby this was achieved by holding an Annual Ball¹¹⁹ - and the fitting of sets in institutions. In Derby one local charity fitted its almshouse with a set and the local press captured the occasion for posterity by photographing a splendid apposition of the technical marvel surrounded by venerable ladies dressed in the style of a much earlier age.¹²⁰ (See Figure III).

One possible social influence of broadcasting concern its effect on parochial attitudes: did radio break down local loyalties; did it push listeners towards uniformity and erode local distinctions? Already, in the case of the monarchy, it was claimed that direct communication from one important individual had helped to create a greater spirit of unity and national awareness. Elsewhere, too, there were signs of a determination to become more involved in national events - to listen to the party political broadcasts, running commentaries of major sporting events and major entertainments. Through the means of radio, celebrities were soon to become still more familiar. Dick Sheppard became a well known figure in all the localities, but so too did BBC announcers and performers like Stuart Hibberd, Sir Walford Davies, Arthur Burrows and Tommy Woodruffe. They owed their fame entirely to radio whilst leading performers, like Dame Nellie Melba, were known by a much wider audience than would otherwise have been possible.

Those who sought to block national and international broadcasts were assailed by listeners in the localities with great vigour, on several occasions. The broadcasts of such events as the Lewis-Carpentier fight in 1922¹²¹ and the Marconi broadcast of Melba in 1920 had been pre-public broadcasting highlights.¹²² Once the BBC began transmissions, it was inevitable that such events should be eagerly sought. Many local papers, for instance, gave good coverage to a speech by Lord Curzon attacking the theatre managers for preventing the appearances of famous artistes in broadcast programmes. The Oxford Chronicle¹²³ and the Derby Daily Telegraph¹²⁴ soundly condemned the banning of Dame Nellie Melba in 1923 as, in Curzon's words, 'an exhibition of meanness'. Evidently parochialism did not run so deep that the efforts of broadcasters to create a national pattern of listening were entirely resisted when this type of event was broadcast. Rather it was those who stood in the way who received the brunt of the protests. Perhaps the lack of such a wide choice of cultural activities explained the virulence of the attacks from the provinces. Major sporting events were similarly received. The efforts of the Football Association to prevent the provision of a running commentary for the 1929 F.A. Cup Final were universally condemned. Scorn was poured on the authorities and the BBC's contingency plans to broadcast eye witness accounts at regular intervals¹²⁵ were greeted with some sympathy.

In fact an increased interest in national broadcasting events was quite compatible with the preservation of many parochial predilections. Local artistes received considerable attention when they performed or became members of the BBC. Whereas national artistes were restrained by their managers or feared for their reputations if they appeared on the radio, local artistes leaped at the chance. In Derbyshire, the Midland Regional programme was the main source of these appearances. Musical activities were well favoured and local singers or, more particularly, brass bands¹²⁶ received considerable attention. In Oxford and Derby individuals could become local personalities after performing in a single broadcast¹²⁷ and a connection with radio, no matter how tenuous, was considered to be a social advantage. Arthur Burrows was a local celebrity because he had

once lived in Oxford,¹²⁸ whilst the radio dramatist, du Garde Peach, exploited his reputation when he stood as a Liberal candidate for Derby in the 1929 general election.¹²⁹

Great attention was paid to purely local issues or appearances in radio.

Richard Hoggart has observed the mood of this kind of listening:

'Notice how popular the "homely" programmes are ... often composed rather like the more old-fashioned papers, of a number of items linked only by the fact that they all deal with the ordinary lives of ordinary people ... They have no particular shape, they do not set out to be "art" or entertainment in the music-hall sense, they simply present the people to the people.' 130

Before the war this type of programme was to be found more often on the commercial stations - with the notable exception of programmes like 'In Town Tonight'. A good example of this taste can be seen at local level in the Derbyshire Advertiser in 1935. There were excited references to BBC Midland Regional visits to Ashbourne in West Derbyshire.

'Derbyshire is very much on the air just now. Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Patrick Monkhouse gave an interesting talk on the Peak in his broadcast to the schools and on Friday, October 25th, Ashbourne is to have a broadcast all to itself in the 'Microphone at Large' series'.

In the same issue the editorial headlined 'Derbyshire on the Air' warmed to the prospect of further plans by the BBC to get out into the shire and record the thoughts of the people themselves.¹³¹

Another example demonstrated the divisions of opinion which sometimes existed where local broadcasts were involved. The dispute arose after the BBC offered to broadcast the Derby Municipal and County Chamber concerts in September 1931. The committee of the Town Council responsible felt that this would reduce the number of tickets sold and left the decision open for public discussion. This was most unusual. The press report continued:

'apparently the majority of those who gave opinions to the committee were against the broadcast as also were the majority of the Committee. So there will be no broadcasts of these very excellent concerts.' 132

The local paper moved into the attack on the grounds that, on the contrary, the added publicity would have boosted sales:

'in any case experience in other centres has shown that people are attracted to concerts, football matches, etc., which are broadcast. The BBC might conceivably be able to supply statistics on this point to the committee

should they ever reconsider their decision.'

Even as late as 1935, the paper was still protesting that the music of the Derby Choral Union should be broadcast. The paper bemoaned the fact that, 'many choral societies in the Midlands are to be found in the broadcast programmes regularly each year, but Derby for all its splendid traditions remains a stranger to the microphone.'¹³³ Despite this interest, the response to the BBC's introduction of the Regional Scheme seems to have been muted in the localities examined. The scheme was probably an unqualified success in these areas since comparatively few places in the localities studied could receive a local station clearly under the arrangements before the implementation of the scheme. Comment on the subject is exceedingly difficult to discover and it must be assumed that this is a sign that strong emotions - for or against the new scheme were not aroused. Where opinion can be discerned, the attitude was normally favourable because of the greater choice which it was hoped would ensue.¹³⁴

Even in the case of spoken English, where there was room for conflict between local and national tastes, there was little discernable resistance or objection. In neither Oxfordshire nor Derbyshire was it a major issue. The Derbyshire dialect was probably the strongest - broad enough to render it incomprehensible to outsiders - and some saw a chance to improve the standard of spoken English and extend the range of vocabulary in the area rather than make efforts to preserve it in the face of an insidious tendency towards conformity.¹³⁵

Improvements in elocution by the use of radio in child education elsewhere in England were seen as a good example for Derbyshire to follow as early as 1924.¹³⁶ By 1931, schools in Derbyshire were participating in lessons organised by A. Lloyd James and the BBC, to improve pronunciation. With a coincidental comparison, the Derby Daily Telegraph reported:

'It is not hoped, or even intended to give these children what is sometimes described as the Oxford accent, but a better standard of English is aimed at than is possible where local dialects are at present too pronounced. The Derby accent, for instance, may be all very well here, but in other parts of the kingdom it can be a handicap in some walks of life. Good English will give nobody away and it is always a delight to hear it spoken.'¹³⁷

Of course, this was only one opinion and it might be summarised that a coal miner in the north-east of the county would not have been concerned about speaking 'Good English' when few in the local community could understand anything but dialect.

It seems surprising that there was so little response to the question in any of the areas. Perhaps the influence of the new, and readily available, form of model speech was sufficiently imperceptible for any changes to go unnoticed. Certainly dialects remained reasonably unchanged by the BBC service. As Hilda Jennings discovered in her survey of Bristol:

'Syntax remains unaffected, and in ordinary conversations in the home, especially among older people, the local colloquial mode of speech with its native raciness holds its own. In some instances, whether as a result mainly of broadcasting or of education in the schools there appears to be a conscious use of two distinct modes of speech in the homes and at business or for social purposes.' 138

In the absence of contemporary corroborating opinion in any of the areas analysed it must be presumed that similar circumstances applied.

Another social question concerns the contrast between rural and urban responses to broadcasting. Already it is clear that the isolation of rural dwellers and their communities, coupled with their inferior facilities for entertainment and education, led to heightened interest in broadcasting as a means of filling the void. The plan to save the village clubs and the role of radio in the work of the Rural Community Councils were both part of an attempted panacea for the rural malaise. The work of the National Federation of Women's Institutes has also been seen to touch on both rural shires with their work of fitting sets in village halls. The Women's Institutes were specifically created to provide for women in communities with a population under 4,000. In the evidence to the Crawford Committee on behalf of the Institutes, Mrs. Nugent Harris noted the friendliness which she felt radio had created in rural areas:

'When one person has got wireless it means that they ask neighbours to drop in, or neighbours ask if they may drop in, and it has created friendliness. It has kept the young people in, they do not go so much to the Town for cinemas and other things when they have wireless and everywhere they spoke of the pleasure it gives to old people and invalids.' 139

This facet of broadcasting may have been felt more acutely in rural areas but it was also reasonably true of behaviour in urban areas. The more obvious contrasts in the response of the respective audiences lay elsewhere. In Oxfordshire and Derbyshire the strength of the agricultural lobby was the key. In Oxfordshire, the lobby pressed for better weather forecasting details and more live-stock prices.¹⁴⁰ In Derbyshire the demands were similar and to inform the local farmers of the possibilities the Derby Mercury ran a series of syndicated articles by A. Lancaster Smith. He outlined the obvious advantages:

'The farmer is an isolated unit in the community and especially during the long autumn and winter evenings, the fact that he can be brought into touch with "Broadcast concerts", important news, educative lectures and 101 items of interest, renders it desirable that more agriculturalists should be able to "listen-in".' 141

In a second article, Smith argued that innate conservatism rather than expense or poor reception was responsible for the reluctance of rural inhabitants to listen to radio. 'Around the Metropolis and other large towns almost everybody is going in for receiving sets, whilst in country districts the sight of outside aerials is not so common.'¹⁴² Smith then compared the effect of the internal combustion engine with that of the radio as a new means of speeding communications. He stressed the value to farmers of weather forecasts and the social benefits of broadcast music for village life. He ended with a note of optimism, if not excessive idealism:

'Why if every NFU member has a receiving set installed in his homestead, he would always be good-tempered and always well-informed on current topics. Would not then the day dawn of perfect unanimity between local branches and headquarters and downright prosperity for agriculture?' 143

Of course the influences of poverty and poor reception should not be disregarded as deterrents too readily. They must have had some role to play in keeping the total level of listening lower than in urban areas. This is a particularly interesting phenomenon since the incentive for owning a set was otherwise so strong. For instance, the seasonal pattern of listening was often remarked to have a much greater effect on rural communities without the rival attractions of the town. By 1924 the Oxford Chronicle was certain that:

'With the coming of winter wireless will reign practically supreme in the countryside as an evening entertainment. It is not difficult to imagine that in a short time country people will wonder how they managed to beguile their time before wireless became a popular pastime.'

Even with mass listening in village halls this view seems to have been rather premature.¹⁴⁴

Even as late as 1937 there is still evidence for a distinct difference in attitude between rural and urban areas. In an article in the Derby Daily Telegraph of 11th May 1937 entitled: 'Radio's part in village rejoicing', H.P. Channon observed the much higher value which the wireless listener in a village placed on occasions such as the Coronation for reasons which he explained:

'Just imagine what this means to the lonely countryman. On every previous great ceremony, except the memorable Silver Jubilee, the rejoicings have perforce been somewhat abstract in their very isolation and modesty. After tomorrow he will sing "God save the King" in the knowledge that he has heard, in his own cottage parlour, the King speak; has heard, too, the voices of subjects in all corners of the globe. Here, surely, is the crowning glory of tomorrow's Coronation.' 145

This does not mean that all the people of rural Derbyshire were necessarily blindly monarchist or that the occasion was of purely rural significance. Rather, it is that radio provided a substitute community for the isolated villages and, therefore, emphasised the sense of contact with the monarchy rather more than for urban dwellers, who had many other more substantial means of celebrating such occasions together before the days of broadcasting. Similarly it is worth noting that as late as 1937 the rural inhabitants of both counties had not quite thrown off the astonishment at the achievement of broadcasting - an emotion long lost by many urban dwellers. Phrases such as 'The Wonder of Wireless' of the 'Miracle of Radio' still flew about. There was still an element of novelty in sitting by a fireside, turning a knob and being brought almost instantly into close contact with the ceremony in Westminster Abbey.¹⁴⁶ By 1937 the majority of rural homes were equipped with a set but before the mid-thirties there was a clear divergence between the allegedly greater need of rural dwellers to listen to radio compared with the relatively low proportion of rural inhabitants who actually had sets. It is hard to resolve whether this was due to a faulty assessment of need or a reflection of enthusiasm frustrated by poverty and poor reception.

It is also valuable to compare the behaviour of metropolitan with provincial listeners. This aspect influenced the choice of the areas studied. The comparison is remarkable for the lack of contrast between the areas. The main difference was that listening levels in Derbyshire were consistently much lower throughout the period. This is readily explained by the physical structure of the region which led to isolated communities and many areas of poor signal strength which were hardly conducive to the achievement of a high level of licence holding. On the basis of evidence from 1930-1937, the Borough of Derby itself showed very similar levels of licence holding to the other areas.¹⁴⁷ This, along with the higher licence holding in rural Oxfordshire, suggests that the level of income was not the dominant influence.

It might have been anticipated that the metropolitan area would have shown a greater propensity to listen, given the higher density of population and consequently greater opportunities for contact with the progress of radio. In fact Oxfordshire shows marginally higher levels of licence holding and had most nearly approached the saturation of households in 1936.¹⁴⁸ It could also be argued that Chiswick, with its greater access to national events and national newspapers, needed the service less. But the evidence shows that the broadcasting of national events was as popular in Chiswick as anywhere else - even when events took place in London.¹⁴⁹ Apart from other evident distinctions which were not necessarily due to the social influences of the conurbation, such as the greater interest in schools broadcasting, the response in Chiswick was very similar to that of any of the other main urban areas examined. This is very much in accord with the findings of BBC audience research - particularly in the Random Samples and the General Listening Barometer.¹⁵⁰

10.4 Conclusion

By 1939 the influence of broadcasting on each locality had passed into the background of public recognition. Broadcasting was simply one - admittedly powerful influence - amongst the many influences on British social behaviour. The audience grew accustomed to the presence of broadcasting so quickly that the

perception of its influence was not particularly strong. Sometimes the contribution of radio was not readily distinguished from that of other media and frequently an audience response would be as verbal and ephemeral as the medium itself. It is especially noticeable that the coverage of broadcasting in the local press declined significantly in the late 1920's. Papers were content to devote their attention to programme details and ceased to remark on the wider implications of broadcasting for changing social behaviour. The evidence for cultural changes as a result of broadcasting is, in any case, difficult to discover. Again it must be accepted that, even when a strong influence was felt, broadcasting was not necessarily the type of experience which moved listeners in the localities to record their thoughts. Admittedly, it has been relatively easy to demonstrate the clear desire for closer contact with national personalities, occasions, news and politics. At the same time, it can be shown that local loyalties survived - revealed by the continuing interest in programmes with a local connection - despite the competition of nationally created programmes. Yet it is not so simple to see any subtler changes in local tastes and preferences as a result of continuous exposure to these national programmes. The lack of recorded comment suggests that there was not a substantial movement to resist the quantity of national broadcasting and increase the level of locally generated programmes, but occasional traces of resistance have emerged.¹⁵¹ Similarly, it has not been possible to detect any considerable evidence of recorded thought on the influence of broadcasting on speech, music and entertainment in the localities. The potential for more local research, including oral history is enormous.

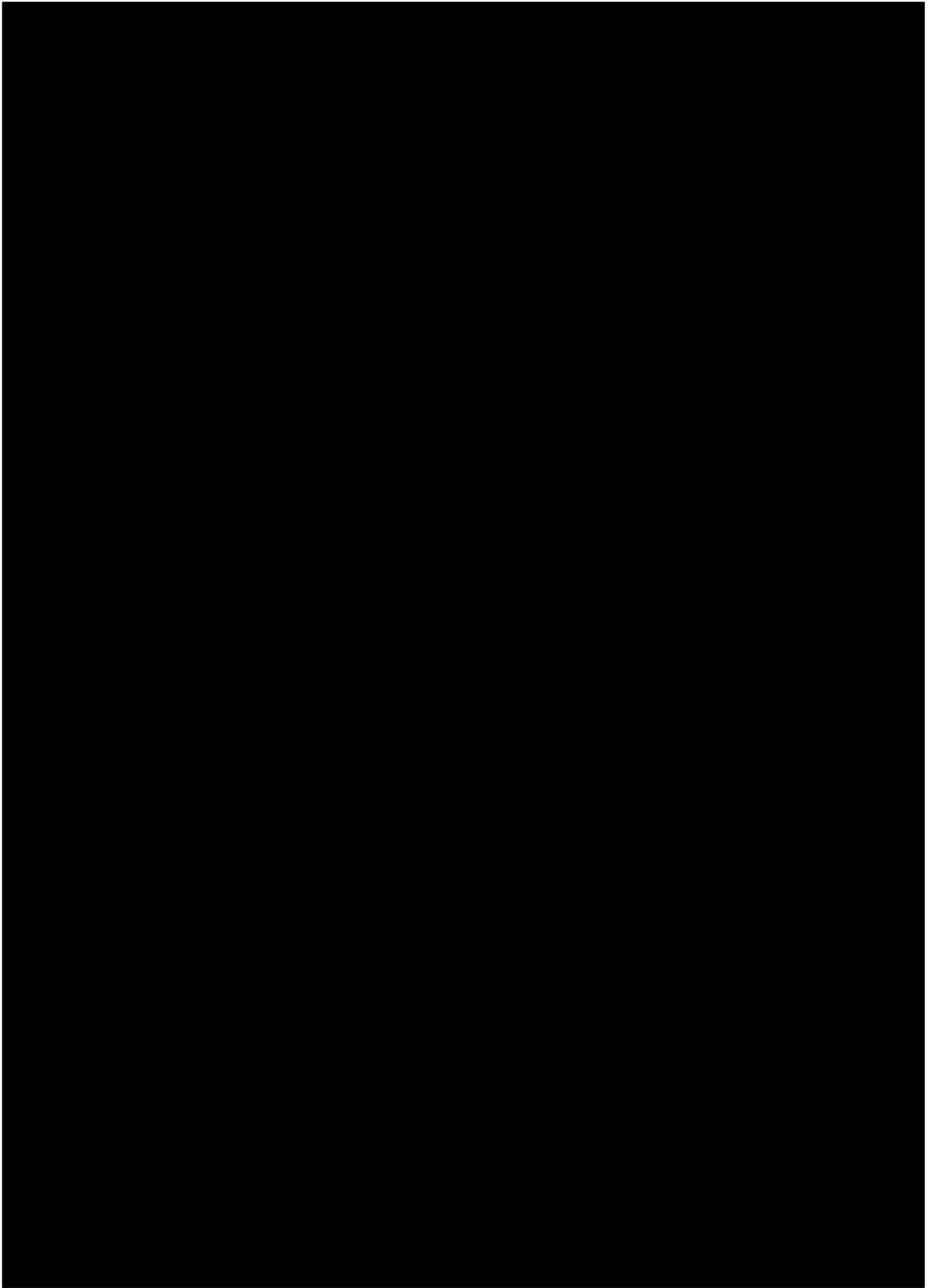
Of course, many other social and cultural changes have shown up more clearly. Audience research and licence returns can show the growth and distribution of the audience: in the 1930's, at least, the habits and tastes of listeners in urban or rural areas have also been made clearer. It is possible to see the early attempts to stimulate listening - by the local press, the wireless societies and the retailers. Broad social changes, including the change from the mass the largely home-centred basis for listening, show up reasonably well. Where educat-

ional influence is concerned, it was soon apparent that the localities were largely indifferent to the efforts made by the BBC to broadcast educational material for adults and schoolchildren and that the main educational contribution was informal, for instance, by stimulating greater public awareness through the provision of news bulletins.

This gradual and almost imperceptible influence was probably the most important, thoroughgoing contribution of broadcasting but, again and again, the recorded impressions of social changes surrounded the major events in British life. These events seemed to have made the most profound impact on the public consciousness. The power, influence and sense of community which broadcasting aroused in the localities was never more clearly espoused than in 1937, with the Coronation:

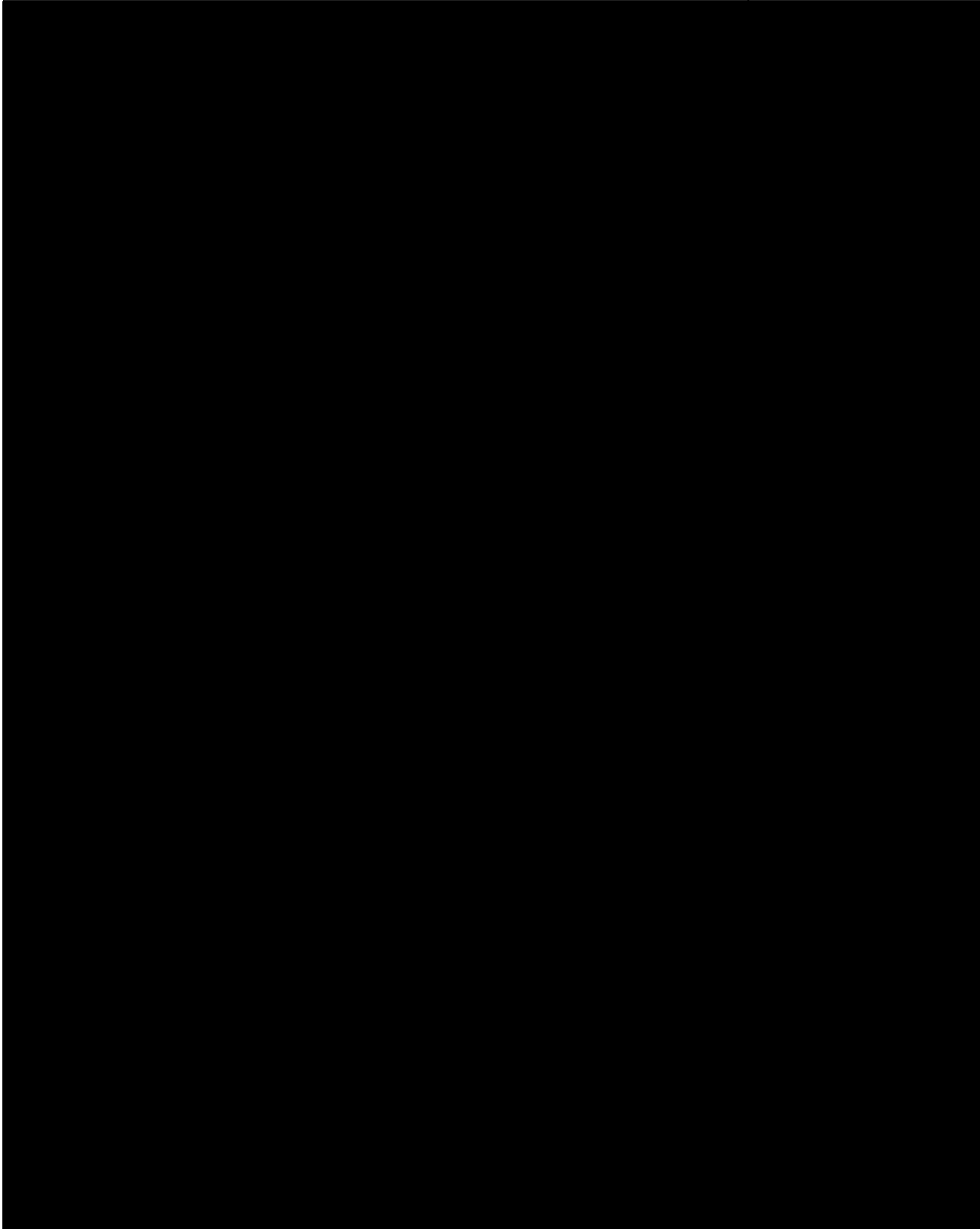
'there will be one great added attraction in every village this year, deepening the significance of the occasion, bringing the Throne far nearer to the simple country folk who have never seen a member of the Royal Family, or really grasped what the King means to the people of Britain and the Empire - brought to them by the wonder of wireless.' 152

Figure IV: Listening to the Boat Race.¹⁵³



'Our photographs show the crowds that came to hear the broadcasting of the progress of the race from the Oxford Chronicle office, by arrangement with the Daily Mail direct from the course.'

Figure V: The King Speaks.¹⁵⁴



Chapter 11

Assessment

On 5th August 1914, British citizens probably discovered that war had been declared by reading a newspaper. On 3rd September 1939, they almost certainly heard the news of the outbreak of hostilities from the Prime Minister himself. Such was the impact of broadcasting. In 1914, the citizen normally had to gather news of events, usually sometime after they had occurred, from an edition of a local or national newspaper. By 1939, he or she could more easily sit by the fireside, turn a switch on the wireless set and hear the news almost as soon as it was made - often from the lips of the very people who were making it. In the competition for instantaneous reporting between journalists and broadcasters, the written word was firmly returned to its familiar position in the shadow of the spoken word.

The central purpose in this analysis has been to discover how the technological revolution of radio changed the social behaviour of the nation in the era between two terrible and traumatic conflicts. Several important themes have emerged: broadcasting brought about changes in the pattern of leisure activity, it broadened the knowledge of listeners, it changed the structure of family life and, as the rather poignant example demonstrates, the power of immediacy was an important contribution to the creation of a cohesive sense of national identity before 1939.

This sense of national identity was a further development for a society united by the demands of industrial production and the considerable pressures of the Great War - broadcasting created a greater sense of participation in national events and engendered a closer cultural identity. However, the contribution of broadcasting must be placed in its proper context. Radio was not the first means of national communication: several newspapers had achieved extensive national circulations before the outbreak of war in 1914. The national railway system allowed the rapid distribution of the daily press and government legislation had helped to create an increasingly literate society which demanded more newspapers to read.

Similarly, the extensive network of railway lines² allowed the postal service to operate more smoothly and closer, physical contacts were encouraged. Accelerated by these better communications, industrial trade and the migration of labour³ brought about an increasing exchange of culture and custom between communities. In entertainment, touring artistes continued the practice of centuries but, by means of appearances in the music halls - over a wider area and with greater frequency⁴. Sports were steadily moving towards closer national competition and organisation. The Football League, created in 1888,⁵ was an excellent example of the influence of better physical communications. Like the County Championship in cricket, the League had continued to grow in strength well before the arrival of broadcasting. Furthermore, national and local government intervention had continued to expand into many new areas of activity and, in the process, had reinforced the tendency towards national conformity before 1914.⁶

Contemporaneously with the emergence of radio, the motor vehicle and the expanding metalled road system emerged to stimulate closer physical contacts.⁷ Through the provision of call-boxes, the public telephone system continued to rival radio as a readily available means of informational contact.⁸ At the cinema, the newsreel was created as a visual, albeit retrospective, display of current events.⁹ Thus radio was only a contributor to the trend towards a heightened sense of national community.

Broadcasting stood above most other influences because of its power of immediacy. The instantaneous contact with events and individuals of national importance gave radio an immeasurable advantage. Broadcasting could grasp the spirit and emotion of a speech or an event. It could create a sense of participation. This quality more than any other emerged as a motive for the acquisition of a radio set¹⁰ and, as the audience grew, so the power of broadcasting was extended and intensified. The influence of broadcasting on the emotions of listeners was clearly very considerable. There was a sense of involvement wherever radio broadcasts were heard and this in its turn created a sense of community which could not have been felt in the same way before.¹¹

The monarchy was an obvious centre of attraction. Great occasions such as the abdication speech of Edward VIII¹² and the Coronation of George VI,¹³ drew attention to the power of radio but a closer relationship between the monarch and his people was exemplified by the Christmas broadcasts of George V.¹⁴ These talks were widely cited as an instance of closer personal contact between the king and his subjects - not just in the United Kingdom but also throughout the British Empire.¹⁵

Political occasions were frequently translated from local into national occasions. Local activities and celebrations continued - as they did on royal occasions - but the real focus of the event was moved towards the broadcast speeches of national leaders.¹⁶ The local candidate soon found that his speeches were addressed to dwindling audiences.¹⁷ National entertainments and sporting occasions grew enormously in stature. Running commentaries of national sporting events began in 1927¹⁸, and were soon extremely popular.¹⁹ The F.A. Cup Final²⁰ and the Boat Race²¹ became thoroughly national occasions through the agency of radio and, in the case of some Boxing Championships, very popular, international occasions.²²

These broadcasting successes fully satisfied the express purpose of the BBC to provide national coverage of major occasions.²³ However, particularly in the case of broadcast music or entertainment, there were dangers. The excessive pursuit of national activities posed a serious threat to local cultures throughout Britain. This risk appeared to be of little concern to the BBC in the euphoria of national contact which the long-wave transmitter permitted.²⁴ Even in the days of the Regional Scheme, nationally generated material usually took precedence over local or regional contributions.²⁵ The possibility of irreversible damage to local identities and cultures was barely realised by listeners in the early days of broadcasting, partly because the national pattern took some time to develop from the original local transmitter pattern and partly because the initial sense of national participation was so exciting. In any case, some uniformity in speech and outlook was seen to be positively beneficial by most BBC personnel and most commentators.²⁶ Only a few were more cautious.²⁷ There is little doubt that broadcasting reduced physical contact in local politics and discouraged

locally produced entertainment.²⁸ The general, long term effect of broadcasting was definitely to substitute local contact for isolated, home-based, etherial contacts with an unseen national community - a spirit of involvement with national events in sharp contrast to the familiar physical surroundings of home and family.

It must be said that radio was used in some cases as a means of stimulating dying communities in rural areas²⁹ and of course the enjoyment of national events was compatible with the preservation of local communal activities even if some were seriously limited or modified by the competition of such a powerful medium. Communities could also be very resilient and they resisted many of the insidious influences of broadcasting.³⁰ Some qualities of broadcasting actually inspired listeners to participate in a wider range of local sports and entertainments. The domestic lethargy with broadcasting frequently encouraged must be matched against its capacity to introduce new interests and ideas to the most isolated community.

Broadcasting certainly had a considerable influence on the pattern of leisure and recreation in inter-war Britain. Largely because of the shorter working day, the time available for such human activities was expanding considerably throughout the period of broadcasting development and audience growth.³¹ This expansion of the available leisure time, particularly for the working class, meant that listening to broadcast programmes did not necessarily replace participation in other leisure activities. In some cases this replacement did occur: singing and music making were direct rivals for the attention of listeners and broadcasting often proved to be victorious because it was a satisfying improvement or a relatively palatable substitute.³² Normally, however, the effect was less severe. The increases in reading shown by the growth of public libraries revealed that the damage to a rival was selective and not necessarily regressive.³³ Broadcasting even stimulated demand for books heard in radio criticisms and dramatisations.³⁴ The circumstances of listeners were important: vulnerable groups, such as the old or the very young, were lured indoors and ceased to participate in more arduous alternatives, whilst the physically active were

encouraged to participate in new activities outside the home. However, the relationship was not usually so simple or so direct. Broadcasting was also a complementary activity - a good companion to housework or a background to other activities inside the home.³⁵ Broadcasting was rarely enjoyed in isolation but normally complemented play amongst children or provided the musical background to conversation and a myriad of indoor games, hobbies and domestic tasks.³⁶

It must be emphasised that broadcasting was never omnipresent in domestic life before 1939. Apart from those who were outside the transmitter reception areas and those too poor to own a set, those with sets could not hear a programme for a large part of the day. The BBC did not broadcast for most of the morning and the reception of commercial alternatives was often indifferent or totally absent.³⁷ Radio was definitely not a universal alternative to other leisure activities before 1939.

Radio had many other weaknesses. The lack of a visual quality would always be a disadvantage in the comparison between listening to the broadcast product and attending the actual activity or performance.³⁸ Moreover, broadcasting was not a serious substitute for active physical participation in sports and could never aspire to capture all the emotions aroused by mass spectator sports.³⁹ Broadcasting competed on quite different terms: the admission charges for sports such as cricket and horse racing were frequently too expensive for poor listeners to attend - certainly not on a regular basis - and broadcasting was the only recourse in such cases.⁴⁰ Running commentaries and results services were restricted by the press but as the BBC gradually broke down such obstructions the range of these programmes grew enormously throughout the thirties.⁴¹

As the example of broadcasting and leisure activities reveals, the ability of radio to introduce an enormous range of experiences to listeners was one of its most outstanding contributions. No other medium had the power to introduce such a vast array of activities in such a readily understandable and attractive form.⁴² The national press had begun the process of exchanging ideas and interests between hitherto isolated, inward-looking communities but only radio could express

the information in a palatable form for such a tremendous number of people at the same instant. Broadcasting was eagerly accepted as a source of news and within a very short time listeners unconsciously absorbed information supplied by radio - oblivious to its novelty and power. Only in the formative years of broadcasting was the process sufficiently fresh and exciting to arouse serious comments on the wide range of interests which had been introduced.⁴³

This educational and informational capacity of broadcasting was pointed decidedly towards the listening source in the confines of the home. Before broadcasting became a common phenomenon it would have been virtually impossible to combine a greater range of interests with a decline in direct physical contact and activity. Some leisure activities with strong emotional and visual qualities survived relatively untouched or were even stimulated by the new medium,⁴⁴ as were habitual social activities such as visits to public houses,⁴⁵ but attendance at political or other public meetings⁴⁶, voluntary activities, churches⁴⁷ and many other collective activities declined or stagnated before 1939.

Although the venture into formal adult education was a notable broadcasting failure, radio definitely helped to broaden the knowledge of listeners. Early commentators on broadcasting had expressed a keen interest in the prospects for a 'University of the Air'⁴⁸ but the shortage of wavelengths meant that this idealistic concept was never attempted. Instead, more modest efforts were made to educate the population. With Reith at the helm, the BBC was determined to make an assault on the tremendous gulf of ignorance which low educational standards had created.⁴⁹ Indeed, this purpose was a central tenet of the BBC's philosophy - Reith would not accept the use of broadcasting merely for so-called 'popular' entertainment.⁵⁰

This determination was not, however, matched by a similar level of skill or perception in the presentation of educational programmes. The formal didactic style used in talks programmes was intensely disliked.⁵¹ The feature programmes - which tried to soften the style and exploit the aural potential of radio - were poorly produced and often ignored as insufferably dull.⁵² The talks

programmes were disliked on several counts. There was a general distaste amongst working class and middle class listeners alike for the tone of officialdom and authority which the speakers adopted. All kinds of condescending connotations were sensed by critics when they listened to the familiar BBC talks for adults on weekday evenings.⁵³ Until the outbreak of war, and the arrival of speakers such as Wilfred Pickles who retained their regional accents, there were few BBC speakers who did not revulse dialect speaking listeners particularly working class ones with the tone of their voice, their pronunciation or their condescending manner.⁵⁴

Of course, there were isolated successes. Some of the adult listening groups served a useful social purpose.⁵⁵ Most listeners found a subject of some interest amongst the wide range of talks which the BBC provided - the esoteric nature of some of them created more amusement than criticism.⁵⁶ Also, some talks producers took the main criticisms on board and reformed the style of their programmes to broaden their appeal and exploit the technical potential of radio.⁵⁷

The real success was the informal educational influence of broadcasting. The extent of this influence is impossible to assess precisely but it is possible to gather an impression of the contribution which was made. It is clear that the national news bulletins helped to create a public which was better informed about national questions.⁵⁸ There was a greater appreciation of sporting activities, economics, politics and the wider contact with entertainment produced a musically knowledgeable audience.⁵⁹ In the thirties it was very noticeable that the general knowledge of international affairs was considerably expanded.⁶⁰ The events of the economic crisis of 1931 and, more particularly, the Munich crisis in 1938 were brought into the homes of the nation by the broadcasts of news and speeches. The outstanding example of this means of increasing awareness was not demonstrated by listening to the BBC but to the broadcasts of the enemy - by William Joyce from Radio Hamburg.⁶¹

Obviously there were tremendous variations in the level of general knowledge which listeners acquired and the BBC efforts to supply news were hampered by the national press; only in the late thirties could the BBC gather

its own news and prepare bulletins without press agency reports. Without the press restrictions still greater progress in the supply of information might have been possible. In May 1926 the BBC had shown that, given the power to collect news for itself, it could put up a creditable effort in the fight to keep the public informed. Even the majority without sets could receive information indirectly - idle talk could not be suppressed but conversation could be based less on rumour and rather more on an attributable and fairly reliable source.⁶² Similarly, during the thirties the diminishing number of citizens without sets were kept in contact and those with sets were presented with more and more opportunities for learning about a wide range of national and international affairs.⁶³

The BBC had more success in providing educational programmes for children. Schools broadcasting was not wholly successful but it became a regular feature in the curriculum of many schools, only limited by ignorance, a shortage of finance or, occasionally, the suspicion that broadcasting could not be applied successfully because it could not provide the reciprocal relationship between pupil and teacher.⁶⁴ Again, it was through the more informal educative programmes that the BBC achieved the greatest success. For instance, 'Children's Hour' was soon accepted as a part of everyday family life. The combination of entertainment with educational material proved to be an extremely successful method of reaching the young audience⁶⁵ and of spreading the message to a wider body of parents and other adults.⁶⁶ The success of the programmes was revealed by the fame which the presenters achieved.⁶⁷ The 'Uncles' and, to a lesser extent, the 'Aunts' were household names from the very beginning of the programmes in 1923.⁶⁸

Despite the obvious preference of the largest part of the audience for entertainment from the broadcasters, listeners to the BBC before 1939 were exposed to a fairly substantial quantity of purely educational or informational programmes. The BBC only gradually and very reluctantly made concessions to the audience dissatisfied with the overtly didactic style of talks programmes, the dominance of religious material throughout Sunday and the general programme balance in favour of educational programmes.⁶⁹ But the process proceeded with

a glacial momentum and the BBC zealously defended its educational and cultural standards. Until the outbreak of war the Corporation steadfastly refused to concede to anything so vulgar as the frequently repeated request for the creation of a separate network for popular music and variety.⁷⁰

It is clear that broadcasting contributed to numerous social changes - often in a secondary or peripheral way. However, in the changing structure of the family, broadcasting was a decidedly influential force. Even with the introduction of portable sets, listening remained a home-centred and certainly family experience. Strictly speaking, listening to early sets in the home was an individual experience because of the need to employ headphones.⁷¹ Furthermore, most people could only listen in a crowd to commercial or public loudspeakers outside the home.⁷² The decline of the crystal set and the rise of valve sets with loudspeakers opened listening to the family unit.⁷³ Economic and technical developments ensured the progress of this kind of listening and the radio set became the most powerful influence amongst the vast array of products which emerged to provide the domestic basis for the consumer society. This revolution could not dictate the place or time for the increased leisure which was produced but broadcasting ensured that much of it was taken up in the home- as the sole or accompanied activity in the evenings.

In the daytime the social composition of listeners was quite different to the largely homogeneous audience after 6 p.m. Apart from the lunch hour, the audience was largely restricted to women, children, the sick, handicapped and the elderly.⁷⁴ Despite the limitation on BBC broadcasting hours a large proportion of female listeners were exposed to broadcasting for a considerable part of the day.

Before the war, women were still largely homebound. Social prejudices towards women produced a neglected education and a restriction of their opportunities outside the home. Child bearing and other routine domestic activities also held women away from the labour market.⁷⁵ The BBC was presented with a unique opportunity to raise the neglected intellectual standards of an enormous, captive section of society. In fact orthodoxy prevented the full realisation of this potential but the simple fact of broadcasting in the daytime contributed a little towards expanding the knowledge and depth of experience for those confined to

the home.⁷⁶ Certainly on weekdays during the late morning and early afternoon the BBC did provide a range of talks, plays and musical offerings which it was expected would appeal to women,⁷⁷ and these were appreciated - often as a background to routine domestic tasks.⁷⁸ However, listener research was less certain that daytime listening had influenced women more than men.⁷⁹ Broadcasting may have considerably extended the range of interests and depth of knowledge of women but detailed research came too late to plot such a change more accurately. Perhaps broadcasting had brought their preferences closer together.

Women's organisations recognised the value of broadcasting, especially in rural areas but also occasionally in towns. In Oxfordshire, the Women's Institutes organised a mobile wireless van as part of the plan to revitalise the village communities. Throughout the country the NFWI was active in many similar social or philanthropic activities.⁸⁰ In the towns the Townswoman's Guild organised listening groups⁸¹ and worked very closely with the BBC.⁸² However, mention of the work of these organisations must not deflect too much attention from the general contribution which broadcasting made to the enlightenment of women. Because women were excluded from so many areas of activity the contact which broadcasting brought to them was felt much more strongly.

Apart from the salient themes which have been outlined, broadcasting touched upon and influenced many other facets of audience activity. It has not always been possible to give some areas of activity the sort of attention which they deserve - either because of the need to limit the scope of the analysis or because adequate research is lacking.⁸³ The possibilities for further work are tremendous and a great deal must be done to gain a real understanding of the subject. The signposts for further research point towards some of the detailed deficiencies which still remain. Many specific questions need to be studied. For instance, further inspiration is needed to examine the relationship between broadcasting and the development of musical knowledge. Similarly, the relationships between broadcasting and drama, the spoken word, religion or education would each provide the basis for a serious study. More work is also needed on the influence of broadcasting on local communities to support the initial efforts to examine

Oxford, Derby and Chiswick. Most astonishingly of all, the inter-war period of radio and its relationship with political activity-from the highest level to the grass roots-still awaits a significant contribution. This analysis has tapped a great deal of new evidence but the material for still more research is available for examination, even if it is difficult to draw together, distributed as it is through many disparate activities. Many new techniques for extracting this evidence must be used. Post-war social research has suggested many alternative approaches to the means of extracting and understanding new information about the relationship between the audience and the broadcasters.⁸⁴ Moreover, traditional historical tools still have much to offer and it is possible to use oral techniques-to interview listeners who were active in the retail trade, wireless organisations or the wireless press.

An underlying theme throughout this investigation has been the mixed fortunes of the relationship between listeners and the broadcasters. In 1939 the editorial control of the programme output was still held firmly in the hands of the broadcasters. The audience continued to have little actual power to bring about changes in programmes or the programme structure. This did not mean that changes did not occur because of audience pressure or that the emerging audience did not influence the broadcasters.⁸⁵ Indeed the relationship gradually grew closer and the BBC reluctantly conceded that the opinions of listeners were worth more active consideration and extended its contacts to supplement the decidedly selective impression which it gained from the programme correspondence and the social contacts of its employees.⁸⁶ The Advisory Councils and Listener Research Section were proof of this,⁸⁷ although these concessions did not include any suggestion of participation in the ultimate editorial control of programmes.⁸⁸

The philosophy propounded by Reith was easily shielded behind the structure of public service broadcasting sustained before 1939. Broadcasting was still an extremely expensive undertaking (although the pessimistic forecasts of the original six manufacturers were not sustained)⁸⁹ and the consensus deemed the 'brute force of monopoly' to be a necessary safeguard against the avaricious and allegedly unscrupulous commercial interests which were the only viable alternatives.⁹⁰

The public service obligation emerged from the consensus of the submissions to the Crawford Committee of 1926 and satisfied most of the criticisms voiced about the structure of control.⁹¹ Criticisms of a lack of democratic public accountability were deflected by pointing to the ministerial appointment of the Board of Governors and their responsibility to Parliament. But this theoretical responsibility was never really put to the test. Some complaints at the lack of real accountability to the licence holder were made at the time of the Ullswater Committee on Broadcasting but they were completely ignored.⁹² One suggestion was for the creation of a Minister for Broadcasting but, of course, closer contact with politicians would not please critics who had denounced the 'capitulation' to government authority during the General Strike and, in any case, this idea was also rejected.⁹³ Alternative forms of editorial control were considered to be neither technically nor economically feasible.⁹⁴

However, broad acceptance of the public service did not prevent listeners from demanding a more responsive corporation. Pressure for some concessions to public tastes was almost constantly applied without any real success throughout the thirties,⁹⁵ but annoyance at the refusal of the BBC to concede to 'majority' preferences for more light entertainment, particularly on Sunday, never spilled over into an organised campaign for more consultation.⁹⁶

There were many good economic and technological as well as political reasons to justify the inter-war approach to the control of broadcasting. The limited supply of wavelengths and the deficiencies of radio equipment made strict regulation essential. In historical terms the technological development of radio was extremely rapidly but certain technical limitations on the supply of wavelengths still remained in 1939.⁹⁷ Changes in social and political attitudes associated with broadcasting normally ensued some time after each stage of technological advance. Sometimes the delay was due to political or legislative obstruction of the full application of an invention, particularly in the case of cable or relay exchange systems.⁹⁸ Usually, however, the delay was necessary for listeners to realise the potential and for the new influence to take effect. This could explain the lack of any large-scale, organised protests against the main assumptions of broadcasting control.

The ideal of public service was a new departure from the orthodox pattern of political control in inter-war Britain,⁹⁹ - theories of consultation or participation in politics were decidedly limited¹⁰⁰ - but the practice of the BBC control proved to be very little different from that employed by most contemporary institutions.¹⁰¹

Paradoxically the BBC enlightened its listeners and broadened their knowledge but it did not fully adapt to the society that it was helping to change. Concessions to listener opinion were made but they were limited and did very little to cement a closer relationship.¹⁰² The Wireless Organisations Advisory Committee was totally ignored by the BBC and, apart from consultation with the rather impotent Advisory Councils¹⁰³ very few listeners were asked to give their consent to new programmes or to express their opinions on the programme structure and the pattern of broadcasting control.

By 1939, the BBC had successfully reached an enormously wide variety of social groups by exploiting the great power of broadcasting. However, this very success also exposed the weaknesses in its relationship with this audience. The BBC effectively represented the tremendous social void which existed between political authority and most of the working class in British Society.¹⁰⁴ Despite the politically independent, public service status which it resolutely defended, the social composition of its employees and speakers meant that the BBC nearly always represented the voice of a ruling élite when it transmitted to the audience.¹⁰⁵ The BBC always insisted on the varied composition of the audience and pointed to the greater efforts which it had made to discover the views and behaviour of other social groups, but it still failed to bridge the gap between the broadcasters and the majority of listeners. The audience had been composed predominantly of middle class listeners in the early stages of its development and the failure of the BBC to widen its social contact and understanding had been of less consequence.¹⁰⁶ The rapid expansion of licence holding brought most of the population into the audience by 1939 and the need to build a greater understanding of other social,

non-metropolitan cultures was imperative. This was not just a matter of concession to majority opinion by producing a greater proportion of popular music or variety programmes - although they were undoubtedly important considerations - but of showing more sympathy and understanding of the rich variety of working class life throughout the country. Neither of these qualities were properly reflected in the programmes produced before war was declared in September 1939.

Footnotes and References.

Chapter 1.
Footnotes.

Chapter 1.

- 1) Ibid., p. 253.
 - 2) BBC Archives File 123.3 1924-26. Wireless Receiving Licences. Table Showing Development of BBC Services 16th July 1926.
 - 3) BBC Archives Listener Research File LR/75 26th June 1939.
 - 4) Briggs, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. II. The Golden Age of Wireless 1965. pp. 519-622 for an excellent account.
 - 5) Ibid., 14th October 1922 pp 58-63.
 - 6) Marconi filed his first patent in 1896.
 - 7) Wireless Telegraphy Act 15th August 1904. In force 1 Jan 1905.
 - 8) Reith passed judgement on some other words - the use of 'listening-in' and 'broadcasted' was officially discouraged. A. Briggs, Vol. I. The Birth of Broadcasting. 1961. p.242.
 - 9) Briggs, Vol. I. p.7.
 - 10) Briggs. Four volumes: Volume III. The War of Words. 1970
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 - 11) R.H. Coase. British Broadcasting: A Study in Monopoly. 1950
 - 12) B. Paulu. British Broadcasting: Radio and Television in the United Kingdom. 1956
 - 13) Briggs. Vol.I. p.7.
 - 14) Ibid., pp 6-7.
 - 15) J.H. Goldthorpe. Economic History Review. 1962-63 p 566.
 - 16) D.C. Thomson. Radio is Changing Us 1937.
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 - 23) J. Tunstall. Media Sociology. 1970 Introduction p. 23.

- 24) J.D. Halloran. The Effects of Mass Communication. Television Research Committee Working Paper No. 1. Leicester 1970.
- 25) T. Hagerstrand. Innovation Diffusion as a Spatial Process. 1967 p. 12 and pp. 163-4.
- 26) For a clear exposition of this see E.L.E. Pawley. BBC Engineering 1922-72. 1972.
- 27) B. Seebohm Rowntree. Poverty and Progress. A second social survey of York. 1941. pp.406-12. p.530 and Chapter III pp 329-449.
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- 28) R.H.Eckersley. The BBC and all That 1946.
- 29) M. Gorham. Sound and Fury. 1948.
H. Matheson. Broadcasting. 1933.
R.S. Lambert. Ariel and all his Quality. 1940.

Chapter 2.

Footnotes.

Chapter 2.

1) BBC Handbook 1937. p. 59 and BBC Handbook 1938 p. 73.

2) Persons per Private Family derived from:

1921-1925 1921 Census P.P.P.F.: 4.14.

1926-1931 Estimate P.P.P.F.: 4.00.

1931-1935 1931 Census P.P.P.F.: 3.77.

1936-1939 BBC Estimate P.P.P.F.: 3.82.

Population Figures derived from:

Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom Vol. 79. March 1936. pp 4-5 Table 5.
Estimated population of the U.K. at the middle point of each year. 1921-1935.
Except 1921 and 1931 derived from the respective censuses.

Annual Abstract of Statistics. Vol. 88. 1938-1950. 1952. Population of U.K.
Table 6 p. 7.

3) BBC Yearbook 1931 pp 32-33

BBC Yearbook 1932 pp 32-34

BBC Yearbook 1933 pp 84-88

BBC Yearbook 1934 pp 22-24

BBC Annual 1935 pp 87-90

BBC Annual 1936 pp 72-74

BBC Annual 1937 pp 59-61

4) BBC Handbook 1938 pp 72-75

BBC Handbook 1939 pp 156-158

BBC Handbook 1940 pp 113-115

There is a variable date for these estimates due to the outbreak of war in 1939. The original sources for the estimates are, for population, the Registrar-General, for the P.P.P.F., the London Press Exchange. The figures for Northern Ireland are derived from the 1937 Census. 1939 figures are readjusted for the sake of comparison. In reality, the Channel Islands were moved to the West Region and North Nottinghamshire to the North Region.

5) BBC-GPO Comptroller and Accountant-General. 29th April 1937.
An example of the type of information supplied.

6) For instance: Wireless and Gramophone Trader. Supplement 17th March 1934.

7) See Chapter 9.

8) BBC Yearbook 1931. pp 32-33

BBC Annual 1936. pp 72-74.

BBC Handbook 1939. pp 156-158.

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10) A contrary opinion is expressed in Filson Young. Shall I Listen? 1933 p. 184.

11) See The Times 7th Nov 1977 p. 4 The First station was Leicester, opened on 8th November 1967.

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13) E.L.E. Pawley BBC Engineering 1922-1972. p. 57.

For a glossary of technical terms and their uses see:

- 14) BBC Handbook 1928. pp 265-282
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A.R.R.L. The Radio Amateur's Handbook. 1974.
- 15) For terms of the agreement see Wireless Receiving Licence. Cmd 1822. 1923.
- 16) P.P. Eckersley. The Distribution of the Service. 6th Nov. 1925. p.2.
- 17) P.P. Eckersley. The Power Behind the Microphone. 1941 p. 116.
- 18) Pawley. pp 50-51. Also BBC Handbook 1928. p. 234. Line diagram in Figs. I and IV.
- 19) Pawley. pp 21-36.
- 20) Table Shewing Development of BBC Service. 16th July 1926.
- 21) Wireless Constructor. July 1927. p.147 and Feb. 1927 p. 350.
- 22) Pawley. pp 21-23.
- 23) K. Geddes. Guglielmo Marconi 1874-1937. 1974. For account of the international character of early broadcasting.
- 24) Wireless World 1st October 1921. pp 415-417. Supported by British Listeners long before other commercial stations.
- 25) BBC Listener Research Report LR/74. 16th May 1939. 29% had heard the German broadcasts in English from Hamburg. 7% admitted regular listening - probably much below the actual figure.
- 26) Pawley. P.67.
- 27) Ibid., p. 69
- 28) Ibid., p. 30.
- 29) Asa Briggs. Vol. II pp 342-344.
- 30) Guardian. 28th October 1977. p. 13 for good account.
- 31) The Power Behind the Microphone, p. 116.
- 32) BBC Board Minute. 17th Nov 1926.
- 33) Conference at the GPO. 19th July 1927.
- 34) Postmaster-General - Director-General. 22nd July 1927.
- 35) Briggs, Vol. II. pp 300-301
- 36) Ibid., p. 300.
- 37) P.P. Eckersley. Report on Proposed Regional Scheme for BBC by Chief Engineer. 1929.
- 38) Pawley, p. 27.
- 39) Chairman's speech to A.G.M. of BBC on 19th June 1924.

- 40) For an account of the struggle over the licence, see the Chapter on the wireless organisations.
- 41) Licence and Agreement. 1st Jan 1927. Appendix C. p. 69.
The Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935. February 1936 Cmd. 5091.
- 42) Briggs. Vol. II p. 380
- 43) Pawley Ibid., p. 85
- 44) The Distribution of the Service pp 1-2.
- 45) The Spectator 22nd Nov 1930 p. 765 'Broadcasting and a Better World.'
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- 54) The Power behind the Microphone, p.122.
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- 57) Pawley, p. 24
- 58) Ibid., p. 69 and p. 97
- 59) Ibid., p. 167
- 60) Crystal Sets and the Brookmans Park Transmitter. 1929.
- 61) BBC Handbook 1929. pp 342-348. Also Modern Wireless Oct. 1929.
- 62) Power behind the Microphone. p. 118.
- 63) Pawley. p. 97.
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- 65) Wireless Constructor. Sept. 1929. pp 257-258.
- 66) BBC Yearbook. 1931 pp 387-393
- 67) Evening Standard. 7 March 1930.
- 68) Daily Mail. 1 Feb 1930
- 69) Ibid.,
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- 71) Manchester Evening Chronicle 8 Mar 1931. Also complained at the loss of the Northern Wireless Orchestra.
- 72) Leeds Mercury. 8 Aug 1930. 'Big Wipe-out Area'.
- 73) The Manchester Guardian. 9th June 1931.
- 74) Yorkshire Post. 11 Oct 1930. Yorkshire Observer. 4 Oct 1930.
Yorkshire Herald. 24 Mar 1931 Yorkshire Evening News. 22nd January 1931
- 75) Yorkshire Post. 1st April 1931.
- 76) Yorkshire Evening News. 1st April 1931.
- 77) Daily Herald. 26th March 1931.
- 78) Ibid.
- 79) 25 May 1931.
- 80) Northern Mail., 5th August 1931
- 81) Evening World. 17 August 1931.
- 82) South Wales Echo and Evening Express. 23rd May 1931.
- 83) Devon Daily Herald. 7th April 1931.
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- 85) Report on the Regions. 1936.
- 86) Ibid., p.2.
- 87) Ibid., p. 5 and p. 11.
- 88) Ibid., p. 12.
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- 90) Daily Herald 5th August 1931. p.13.
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- 92) Siepmann. Op.Cit. p.3.
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- 95) West Regional Director, E.R. Appleton - Siepmann. 18 Feb 1936.
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- 101) Ariel. June 1938 p. 25. Oxford Mail, 14th May 1929. p.1.
- 102) Later Radios 1,2,3 and 4 in 1967 - A separation of programmes which would have been unimaginable in the days of Reith.
- 103) The World Administrative Radio Conference continues to meet to order to resolve the conflicts which arise from the acute international shortage of wavebands.

Chapter 3
Footnotes

Chapter 3.

- 1) Wireless Weekly. 11th April 1923. A typical example
- 2) See Chapter 4 Table VI and pp 98-100.
- 3) Wireless Weekly. 11th April 1923 p 25 and p.27.
- 4) Wireless Constructor. Nov. 1924. p.7.
- 5) An example of the licence attached in Figure VI.
- 6) Details of the restrictions were attached to the reverse of the Broadcast Licence. See details attached in Figures X.
- 7) BBC Handbook 1929. pp 342-348. Reasons for a wave-trap and the method of building one.
- 8) Manchester Guardian. 30 Sept 1929.
- 9) Modern Wireless. 1923-1933. Wireless Constructor. 1924-1934.
But also see News of the World. 27 Dec 1925. p. 10. 'The Fireside Two'.
- 10) Pawley, p.9.
- 11) The Power behind the Microphone. p.122. The BBC gave crystal set demonstrations to prove their point.
- 12) BBC Yearbook 1932. p.30. Notes that headphone sets had almost disappeared from Radiolympia.
- 13) Wireless and Gramophone Trader. 17 March 1934. pp 264-265. Good Summary of Changes.
- 14) Ibid., 25 March 1933, p 320.
- 15) Wireless World. 1st May 1936. pp 433-445 - Excellent summary of changes.
- 16) Oxford English Dictionary definition: To heterodyne: "Production of a lower frequency from the combination of two high frequencies."
- 17) The Spectator. 11th July 1925. p.65.
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- 20) Ibid., pp 28-29.
- 21) BBC Yearbook 1933 pp 421-426. In the year ending 30 June 1932, there were 4,738 such complaints to the BBC.
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- 29) Autobiography: Whereas I was Blind. 1942. pp 156-161.
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- 31) Notes to BBC File 123.3 Wireless Receiving Licences 1922-1923.
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- 33) Evening Standard. 10 March 1923:
- 34) Wireless Weekly. 11 April 1923 p. 2. 18th April 1923, p. 68 and 2 May 1923 p200
- 35) Note by GPO 19 April 1923. Also the Broadcasting Committee Report August 1923. Cmd. 1951.
- 36) Speech by the Chairman (Lord Gainford) at A.G.M. of the BBC 19 June 1924.
- 37) Wireless Constructor April 1925, p. 539.
- 38) Reith - R.A. Dalzell 26 May 1926.
- 39) Daily Herald 2nd October 1931 p.2. Estimated 400,000 evaders, or approximately 10%. Compared with a 1977 estimate. The Times 1 Dec 1977. p.4. 750,000 evaders - with 18,000,000 licences issued - or an evasion rate of 4.7% Likely average for 1922-1939 is 5-7%
- 40) On evasion: Reith - Postmaster-General. 4 Dec 1924.
On installment scheme: F.J. Brown - Reith. 17 July 1924 and BBC - Sir Evelyn Murray 18 Sept 1925.
- 41) BBC - Dalzell. 25 Feb 1925.
- 42) Reith - F.J. Brown 4th Nov 1924.
- 43) Reith - BBC Station Directors. 24 Nov 1924.
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- 45) Oxford Chronicle. 19 Jan 1923. p.4.
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- 47) Derby Daily Telegraph. 31 Oct 1924. p.4.
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- 49) G. Bussey. Vintage Crystal Sets 1922-1927. 1976 An excellent guide. Full list of manufacturers, prices, trademarks and an explanation of crystal set construction and operation.
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- 54) Briggs. Vol.I p.219.
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- 57) Wireless Constructor. March 1925 p.491
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- 60) Ibid., May 1925, p.607.
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- 62) Prices derived from advertisements in Wireless World during 1924.
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- 65) R. Stone and D.A. Rowe. The Measurement of Consumers' Expenditure and Behaviour in the United Kingdom 1920-1938. Vol. II Cambridge 1966. p.112 fig10.
- 66) Ibid., p. 17. Separated only in Fifth Census of Production. 1935 Some clues to prices in Wireless and Gramophone Trader 28 March 1931, p.346. 'Cheaper Radios
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- 80) BBC Handbook 1928. p.377. Sturmev p.161
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- 82) Everyman. 17 Dec 1932.
- 83) Bussey, p.43-69. List of companies 1922-1927.
- 84) Wireless and Gramophone Trader 25 March 1933. p.324. 500,000 home constructed sets were estimated to be in use in 1932. 50,000 new ones were built in that year - many from kits.
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- 106) Oxford Times 7 May 1937 p.15.
- 107) Bussey p.100.
- 108) Manufactured by A.B. Jones and Son Limited, Longton, Staffs Probably in 1922.
- 109) Manufactured by Kenmac Radio Limited, Hammersmith, London. See photograph in figure XXI.
- 110) Hill, Op.Cit. p.73.
- 111) Illustrations of sets and advertisements in:
Philips Post V & A Supplement. Oct 1977.
Sunday Times Colour Magazine 16 Oct 1977. pp 28-29.

Also permanent exhibitions in the Science Museum, Kensington, London and National Wireless Museum, Arretton Manor, Newport, I.o.W.
 Also see Figures XVI and XVII attached.

- 112) N. Pevsner. An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England. 1937. pp 101-106.
- 113) Ibid. pp 105.
- 114) Victoria and Albert Museum. Pamphlet. The Wireless Show! p.5.
 Prepared for an exhibition of sets held Oct-Dec 1977.
- 115) Wireless World 1 Sept 1926. Special Show Number pp 337-356.
 The first National Wireless Exhibition was held at the Royal Horticultural Hall in 1922. See News of the World 1 Oct 1922. p.3. for description of events
- 116) BBC Yearbook 1934. p.29. Attendance figures were as follows:

Year	Days of Duration	Stand Area (sq.ft.)	Demonstration Room Area (sq.ft.)	Attendance
1924	10	11,700	-	46,000
1925	10	15,000	-	54,500
1926	13	34,053	-	116,570
1927	7	34,642	-	99,315
1928	7	40,445	-	123,593
1929	10	42,177	7,006	140,627
1930	8	54,464	8,769	161,128
1931	8	70,993	15,129	198,070
1932	8	74,154	19,368	180,750

Also from Wireless and Electrical Trader 29 Jan 1938 p.153.
 Radiolympia attendances:

- 1935: 192,202
- 1936: 202,517
- 1937: 174,818
- 1938: 144,363* * 14 Jan 1939. p.46.

- 117) Ibid., pp 29-33. Photograph of a review p.32.
- 118) New Statesman 5 Oct 1929. p.773. and News of the World 13 Sept 1925. p.9.
+ Cartoon.
- 119) The Power Behind the Microphone pp 211-2
- 120) BBC Archives File 133.3 Ullswater Committee. Paper 49 Memorandum on Wireless Broadcasting by Lt. Col. A.G. Lee Engineer - in - Chief, GPO. 29 May 1935, p.2.
- 121) Wireless and Gramophone Trader 25 Mar 1933. p.324. There were approximately a third of homes with mains supply in 1932. 4,433,000 out of 12,300,000 homes.
- 122) Paper 49.
- 123) The Power Behind the Microphone. p.212.
- 124) GPO Archives but see also R.H. Coase. British Broadcasting: A Study in Monopoly. 1950 pp 70, 76, 90 and 93.
- 125) Table VII
- 126) Table VIII
- 127) Table IX
- 128) BBC Archives File 133.7 Ullswater. Debate and Government White Paper Feb -
April 1936
- 129) Paper 49
- 130) Ibid and Paper 68. Supplementary Memorandum (Wireless Exchanges) Submitted to the Broadcasting Committee 1935 by the BBC (undated). The BBC was certainly in little doubt about the general lack of competitiveness. It disputed the claim of economy made to Ullswater by the R.S.A.G.B.: 'The plea of serving the poor man is, it is submitted, largely "political"!
- 131) Paper 69. Evidence by the Relay Services Association of Great Britain
31 May 1935.
- 132) Rowntree. Poverty and Progress p 409-10.
- 133) BBC Listener Research Department LR/65 Variety Listening Barometer.
- 134) BBC Archives Listener Research File 172.2 File 2. Filed 11 Dec 1935.
- 135) Ibid., Filed 20 March 1936. Nottingham Evening News cutting, reference to 15 April 1935, for Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Radio Relay Company.
- 136) Paper 69. Appendix. Examples of Municipal Agreements.
- 137) pp 69-101.
- 138) Briggs. Volume II. pp 356-60.
- 139) Paper 69. pp 1-4.
- 140) Briggs. Vol.II p.359.

- 141) Paper 38. Postmaster-General's Committee of Inquiry. Memorandum presented by the Relay Services Association of Great Britain. Paper 42. Supplementary Memorandum presented by the R.S.A.G.B. Folio E(b) Broadcasting Committee. Minutes of Evidence 6th Meeting 22nd May 1935.
- 142) Paper 33. British Insulated Cables Limited 'Electric Mains' Rediffusion. Memorandum for submission to BBC Advisory Committee (sic!) May 1935.
- 143) Paper 68.
- 144) Folio Q(b) Broadcasting Committee. Minutes of Evidence. 17th Meeting. 4th July 1935. pp 791-3.
- 145) Ullswater. p.40 para 134.
- 146) Ibid., Reservations by Lord Selston. pp 52-3.
- 147) Ibid., p.39 para 132 and p.41 para 136.
- 148) Memorandum by the Postmaster-General on the Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935. Cmd. 5207. June 1936.
- 149) Coase p.69.
- 150) Ibid., pp 72-3
- 151) Ibid., pp 77-8 Also BBC Yearbook 1933 pp 71-2 for details of the licence and a BBC critique.
- 152) Ibid., p 90
- 153) Ibid., p.91
- 154) The Power Behind the Microphone, p.213.: 'This rediffusion business, convenient as it is a method of reception, does not give programmes any different character, nor does it represent any increased facility for the programme builder.'
- 155) p.40 para 135.
- 156) pp 194-234 are particularly relevant.
- 157) Coase pp 79-80
- 158) The Power Behind the Microphone p 212 and pp 231 - 4.
- 159) The Times 30 Apr 1936 p.15 'The Middlemen'.
- 160) BBC Archives File 133.7. Ullswater: Debate and Government White Paper. February-April 1936.

Chapter 4

Footnotes

Chapter 4.

- 1) See for instance the debate at the First Annual Conference of Amateur Wireless Societies. Wireless World 3 April 1920 pp 16-22.
- 2) Wireless World 18 Nov 1922 pp 219-20
- 3) See for instance: The Sunday Times 15 Jan 1978 p.2. 'Hancock's ghost stalks fans at Marconi jubilee.'
- 4) Daily Express 12 March 1925 p.1.
- 5) Wireless World. August 1913 p.340.
- 6) English Mechanic 6th June 1913 p.430 Letter by R H. Klein.
- 7) Clarricoats. World at Their Fingertips. 1967. p.35.
- 8) Ibid. p.40.
- 9) Wireless World Nov. 1919 p.480. Letter from former member of R.N.V.R. 'The Amateur Position'
- 10) Ibid. May 1919, p.89.
- 11) Ibid., Dec 1919 p.521 and March 1920 p.711.
- 12) Ibid., 3rd April 1920 p.16.
- 13) Ibid p.21.
- 14) Ibid., p.22 and 16 April 1921 p.52.
- 15) Ibid., March 1919 pp 667-671. Appeal by Marconi, Dr. J.A. Fleming and Professor W.H. Eccles for the relaxation of wartime controls.
- 16) Clarricoats, OpCit. pp 40-3 For a good summary of the position.
- 17) Wireless World May 1919, p.89.
- 18) Ibid., Supplement to Nov 1919 issue.
- 19) Wireless World 16 April 1921 p.51.
- 20) Ibid., 6th August 1921 p.292.
- 21) Ibid., 5th March 1921 pp 823-6 and Jan 1920 pp 607-8.
- 22) Ibid., 2 April 1921. pvi.
- 23) News of the World 1 Oct 1922 p.8. 'Wireless Wonders.
- 24) Begun April 1913 pxxxiv.
- 25) Wireless World 20 Aug 1921 pp 325-331
- 26) Ibid., 16 April 1921 pp 42-52
- 27) A.Briggs. Vol.I pp 45-6
- 28) Wireless World 11 July 1920, pp 268-9.

- 29) Ibid., p.47 and Wireless World 10 July 1920, pp 268-9.
- 30) Daily Mail 16 June 1920 p.7. The paper sponsored the broadcast.
- 31) Hansard. 23 Nov 1920. Vol.135. Col 204.
- 32) Wireless World. 1 Oct 1921. pp 415-7.
- 33) Ibid., 29 April 1922, pp 143-4. For a more favourable view.
- 34) Ibid., 16 Apr 1921, p.51.
- 35) Ibid., 21 Jan 1922, p.649.
- 36) Clarricoats. Op.Cit. pp 57-60 and pp 295-6. Also Wireless World 21 Jan 1922. pp 649 and pp 665-6.
- 37) Wireless World 4 March 1922 pp 754-5.
- 38) Ibid., 4 March 1922 p.750.
- 39) Figure I. Also Wireless World 22 April 1922 pp 129-31.
- 40) Ibid., 13 Feb 1922, p.772.
- 41) 1913: W.S.L. Rules and List of Members 1913.
1914-24: Wireless World.
1925: BBC Archives File 129.03. Sykes Committee on Broadcasting.
Sir Capel Holden gave this figure in his evidence to the Committee.
11 Jan 1926.
1930-39: T & R Bulletin. Jan 1935 and Jan issues to 1939.
1978: R.S.G.B.
- 42) H.G. Wells. The Sleeper Awakes. 1910. Revised Edition.
- 43) Wireless World 13 May 1922. pp 204-5. Kellaway's speech to House of Commons on 4 May 1922. Also, ibid., 5 Aug 1922 p.594. Kellaway's speech to House of Commons on 27 July 1922.
- 44) Derby Wireless Club. See Wireless World 22 July 1922, p.529.
- 45) Ibid., p.xxx.
- 46) Ibid., 19 May 1922 p.204.
- 47) The Ordinary General Meeting of the W.S.L. 27 Sept 1922 discussed the question. See Wireless World 14 Oct 1922 p.61-2.
- 48) Ibid., p.220.
- 49) Ibid., 25 Dec 1922 p.394-5.
- 50) Ibid., 25 Nov 1922, p.257.
- 51) Ibid., 28 Oct 1922 p.117.
- 52) Ibid., 8 Aug 1923, p.616 and pp 640-1.
- 53) Wireless Weekly 18 April 1923 pp 112-3.
- 54) Hansard 19 April 1923. Vol 162.Cols 2440-6. The terms of reference were extremely broad.

- 55) BBC Archives. File 128.04. The Broadcasting Committee. 7 June 1923. Precis of evidence. Paragraph 10.
- 56) Ibid., paras 4-5.
- 57) Ibid., para 8.
- 58) Ibid., para 9.
- 59) Ibid., para 11.
- 60) Wireless Weekly 30 May 1923. pp 503-4.
- 61) BBC Archives. File 128.02. The Broadcasting Committee 29 May 1923. Precis of Evidence given by Lord Riddell on behalf of the N.P.A.
- 62) The Times 21 April 1923 p.7.
- 63) The Daily Express 14 April 1923 p.1.
- 64) Ibid., 25 April 1923, p.1.: 'It is the duty of the new committee to start again from the beginning to review the progress already made, to forecast its future, to safeguard it from aerial barbed wire entanglements, and, above all, to put wireless back into the hands of the people as free and unfettered as the air through which it moves and has its being.'
- 65) The Broadcasting Committee Report. Cmd. 1951. August 1923.
- 66) BBC Archives File 123.3 Joynson-Hicks to BBC Board 13 April 1923.
- 67) Report of the Broadcasting Committee Cmd 2599 1925 p.22.
- 68) Clarricoats Op.Cit. pp 84-9. T & R Section created.
- 69) Wireless World 8 August 1923 p.616
- 70) Cmd 2599
- 71) Captain Ian Fraser was the only representative of the R.S.G.B. on the Committee. He was also a member of the Wireless League and a former member of the R.T.S. which merged with the R.S.G.B. to form the T & R Section.
- 72) BBC Archives File 129-01. Minutes of the Broadcasting Committee 1925. 6th Meeting, p.10.
- 73) Ibid., p.8.
- 74) BBC Archives File 129-03. Memorandum of the R.S.G.B. to the Crawford Committee 11 Jan 1926 p.3 para 9.
- 75) Briggs Vol I., pp 327-38.
- 76) See below.
- 77) Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935. Cmd 5091. Feb 1936. Appendix A p.54-5
- 78) Derby Daily Telegraph 26 Nov 1923 p.2 and 27 Nov 1923 p.2.
- 79) Wireless Weekly 30 May 1923 p.463. A list of the main European stations.
- 80) Wireless World 27 Dec 1923 pp 412-3.
- 81) The R.S.G.B. moved into the international arena by organising the

- International Amateur Radio Union (I.A.R.U.) which held its first conference on 14 April 1925 and also created the British Empire Radio Union (B.E.R.U.).
- 82) Clarricoats pp 130-2.
 - 83) Briggs Vol.II. pp 369-77.
 - 84) Ibid., pp 380-1.
 - 85) Asserted as the date of foundation by Lt.Cmdr. J.M. Kenworthy. GPO File M15796/1926. Minutes of evidence to the Crawford Committee. 7th Meeting 21 Jan 1926.
 - 86) For an account of activities see Popular Wireless 5 Dec 1925, p.823.
 - 87) BBC Archives File 129.01. Broadcasting Committee 1925. Minutes of the 3rd Meeting. 4th December 1925 p.2. 'The need for some such body is the more pressing by the very nature of Broadcasting. There is no effective method of communication by which the listener can express his approval or disapproval, except by means of a letter addressed to the BBC., which is a much too cumbersome process to be useful.'
 - 88) BBC Archives File 129.03. Memorandum of the Radio Association to the Crawford Committee on Broadcasting, Jan 1926. pp 2-4.
 - 89) Table V for
 - 90) BBC Archives File 129.03. Evidence before the Select Committee on the Future of Broadcasting. 7th Meeting. 21 Jan 1926. p.14.
 - 91) GPO File M11253/1924. In June 1923.
 - 92) Radio Association Handbook 1925. GPO File M15796/1926.
 - 93) For the general tone of the Wireless League objections see the Wireless League Prospectus. GPO File M11253.1924.
 - 94) There were branches in Oxford and Derby. See Chapter 6.
 - 95) BBC Archives File 129.01. Minutes of the 3rd Meeting. Evidence given by the Wireless League 4th December 1925, p.4.
 - 96) 40,000 paid only 1/- subscription compared with the 2/- charged after the initial membership drive. See Daily Express 20 March 1925 pl.
 - 97) Financial News 23 Jan 1926. p.6.
 - 98) The GPO rejected applications on the grounds that the organisation had been founded too recently. GPO file M11253/1924.
 - 99) The BBC also produced the Braille Radio Times. For details see the BBC Handbook 1928, pp 362-3.
 - 100) BBC Year-Book 1932 p.469.
 - 101) Table III: BBC Handbooks. Table IV: Wireless and Gramophone Trader.
 - 102) Minutes of the 3rd Meeting 4th December 1925, p.3.
 - 103) Authorised dealers displayed the emblems of the respective societies. Radio Association Handbook 1925.
 - 104) The Wireless League also used this opportunity to draft collective letters

- to the BBC. 3rd Meeting 4th Dec 1925. p.14.
- 105) For a contrast see the proposals of the National Federation of Women's Institutes. BBC Archives File 129-01. Evidence to Crawford Committee by Mrs. Nugent Harris.
 - 106) 3rd Meeting, 4th Dec 1925 pp11-14.
 - 107) Professor Low. Ibid., pp 7-8.
 - 108) Wireless World 24 March 1926, to 6 June 1928. Supplement entitled The Listener.
 - 109) GPO File M15796/1926. Crawford Committee.
 - 110) BBC Handbook 1928 pp 347-8 and BBC Yearbook 1933, pp 73-6.
 - 111) Daily Dispatch 29 Oct 1936, p.8.
 - 112) BBC Archives File 129-01. Gladstone Murray to Stanley 4 Jan 1927. See also File 129-03. Assistant Director of Publicity to Reith (undated but probably Dec 1925).
 - 113) GPO File M14019/1923. Broadcasting Board. Includes a complete set of membership, minutes and correspondence.
 - 114) Ibid., Postmaster-General (Mitchell Thomson) to Sykes 15 Nov 1926.
 - 115) Ibid., Director General's report to the Board to Governors 9 Feb 1927. Meeting held 31 Jan 1927, p.3.
 - 116) Ibid., 9 March 1927, pp 9-10. Wireless Organisations Advisory Committee Meeting held 28 Feb 1927.
 - 117) Evening Standard 23 Nov 1933.
 - 118) 3rd Meeting 4th Dec 1925. p.5.
 - 119) Ibid., p.6.
 - 120) 3rd Meeting 4th Dec 1925. p.12.
 - 121) Ibid., p.10.
 - 122) Ibid., p.11.
 - 123) Ibid.
 - 124) BBC Archives File 129-03. Radio Association Evidence. 21 Jan 1926, p.4.
 - 125) Ibid., p1.
 - 126) BBC Archives File 129.03. Wireless Association of Great Britain: Memorandum of Information - on the scope and conduct of the Broadcasting Service submitted as evidence to the Broadcasting Committee 1925.
 - 127) A.T. Fleming, General Secretary of the Wireless League to Ullswater, 5th June 1935, BBC File 133.3 Ullswater. Paper 79.

- 128) Copy of Charter attached to Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935. Appendix A.
- 129) Wireless and Electrical Trader 7th Jan 1939. pp 6-7.
- 130) Listeners' League Report on Relays. June 1938. GPO File M804/1939.
- 131) Ibid., Tallents to H.G.G. Welch 3rd May 1938.
- 132) Ibid., GPO Memorandum 25 May 1938.
- 133) Activities chronicled and Memberships listed in BBC Handbooks.
- 134) BBC Archives File Acc No 7235. GAC Preliminary Correspondence 1934.
- 135) Minutes of the 7th Meeting 21 Jan 1926, p.20.
- 136) Ibid., p.18.
- 137) Ibid.
- 138) pp 17-8.
- 139) Wireless and Electrical Trader 7 Jan 1939, p.7. Quoting M.E. Cavendish, General Secretary of the Wireless Retailers' Association.
- 140) Willing's Press Guide and Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory 1918-1939.

Chapter 5

Footnotes

Chapter 5.

- 1) New Statesman 8 May 1926 p.103.
- 2) This was admitted as a weakness in the Royal Commission on the Press Analysis of Newspaper Content. Cmnd. 6810 -6814. 1977. ed D.McQuail. p.104.

"A drawback of the method is that it does take the day's news in isolation from what preceded and might follow and consequently fails to capture important aspects of story development. Another effect of the method is that relatively few different news events get sampled, since the same story is being looked at over and over again in different newspapers. The sampling method is thus better suited to the purpose of comparing newspapers than to providing the widest range of different sorts of story. It is an intrinsic weakness of any such sampling procedure that significant and revealing cases of news events are liable to be omitted. The focus is, inevitably, on the general character of news reporting."
- 3) See Chapter 3, pp 100-104.
- 4) The People: Monthly Averages Printed in the Paper itself. 1937. Annual Average in Report of the Royal Commission on the Press. 1949. Cmd. 7700. Appendix III, p. 191.
The New Statesman: Printed in Paper 1938-39. Remainder in E. Hyams.
The New Statesman: The First Fifty Years 1913-1963. 1963.
The Spectator: Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Press 18th Day. 22nd Jan 1948. Cmd. 7379. p.12. paras 5656-8.
- 5) R. Williams, Communications. 3rd Edition 1976. pp 184-206. For details of style.
- 6) There is a good guide to the advances in: Francis Williams: Dangerous Estate 1957
- 7) McQuail. Ibid. Also Royal Commission on the Press 1949. Appendix III pp190-91.
- 8) One example is: H.Cox and D.Morgan. City Politics and the Press. Cambridge 1973. Chapter V, pp 46-72.
- 9) McQuail pp 8-31. An excellent example of a coding method.
- 10) Observed in: Williams, p.100 and Royal Commission on the Press. 1947-1949. Appendix VII, part II. pp 262-267.
- 11) Derived from samples used in Table II.
- 12) The Spectator 14 May 1927 p(i)
- 13) The New Statesman, 14 Nov 1925 p. 155.
- 14) Ibid., 7 April 1928 p. 833.
- 15) Ibid., 11 Feb 1929, p. 573.
- 16) The New Statesman 4 March 1933. p. 243.
- 17) For an exception see The Spectator 30 March 1929 p.(i)
- 18) The People 27 Nov 1938, p.15. Vidor batteries advertisement.
- 19) Ibid., 17 June 1934, p.17.
- 20) Ibid., 27 Feb 1938, p.18.

- 21) Ibid., 20 Dec 1931 p.8.
- 22) Ibid., 13 Dec 1931, p.15.
- 23) Ibid., 15 Nov 1931, p.9 or 25 Sept 1927 p.13.
- 24) Ibid., 15 April 1923, p.4. Radio celebrities on Cards 23 Sept 1934 p.4.
- 25) Ibid., 1 Feb 1931, p.16. Daily Herald. Drinking chocolate 29 Oct 1933. p.2.
- 26) Ibid., 14 Sept 1930, pp 4, 14 and 16.
- 27) Ibid., 30 Aug 1936, p.15.
- 28) See, for instance, a full page advertisement 20 Dec 1931, p.8.
- 29) The People 3rd Jan 1932, p.3.
- 30) R. Williams, pp 99-100 for a similar observation in post-war Britain.
- 31) New Statesman 5 Oct 1929 p.773.
- 32) The People 20 Sept 1931. pp 1, 7 and 8.
- 33) 'This Week's Special Broadcasts.' 11th December 1926, p. 1086.
- 34) 12th March 1927, p.459.
- 35) 1st October 1932, pviii to 31 March 1933 p 484.
- 36) 6th October 1933, p.462 to 28 Dec 1934 p. 998.
- 37) 29 Sept 1933 p.402 for a rationale behind the Broadcasting Calendar.
- 38) The People 13 Dec 1931 p.15.
- 39) The New Statesman 27 June 1931, pp 8 ,and 9.
- 40) Ibid., 20 Feb 1932, p 223.
- 41) Ibid., 6 Feb 1932, p.158.
- 42) The People 25 Jan 1931, p.11.
- 43) Cinemas for instance. The People, 8Feb 1931, pl.
- 44) Ibid., 6 Dec 1931. p.15.
- 45) Ibid., 29 May 1932, p.2.
- 46) Ibid., 26 Apr 1936 p.11.
- 47) The New Statesman 8 Feb 1936, pp 186-187.
- 48) The People 23 Jan 1927. p.10.
- 49) The New Statesman 22nd July 1933. p.99.
- 50) The Spectator. 18 June 1932, p.856.

- 51) The People 30 Sept 1934, p.12.
- 52) The NewStatesman 6May 1933, p.564.
- 53) The Spectator, 20 Jan 1933, p.68. For a similar view see New Statesman 12 Feb 1927 pp 531-532.
- 54) The Spectator 20 March 1935, p.501.
- 55) Ibid., 19 Dec 1931 p.839.
- 56) The People, 23 Jan 1927, p.10.
- 57) Ibid., 22 Sept 1929, p.10.
- 58) Ibid., 29 Sept 1929 pp 6 and 10
- 59) Ibid., 10 Jan 1932 p.3.
- 60) Ibid., 10 April 1938, p.19.
- 61) Ibid., 9 Aug 1936, p.9.
- 62) The New Statesman 11 May 1928 p.551 and 6 May 1933 p.534. Also The Spectator 20 March 1930 p.501.
- 63) The People 12 June 1927 p.16.
- 64) Ibid., 18 Jan 1931, p.8.
- 65) Ibid., 8 Feb 1931, p.8.
- 66) Ibid., 4 Dec 1938, p.9.
- 67) Ibid., 7 Nov 1937, p.15.
- 68) Ibid., 19 Sept 1937, pl and 23 April 1933, pl.
- 69) The New Statesman 18 August 1934 p. 199 and the Spectator 24 August 1934 p.245.
- 70) The Spectator 19 Nov 1937 pp 892-3.
- 71) The New Statesman 14 August 1934 p. 199
- 72) The Spectator 24th August 1934, p. 245.
- 73) Ibid., p.245.
- 74) Ibid., p.246.
- 75) Ibid., 12 July 1935, pp 49-50.
- 76) Ibid., 15 Sept 1939. p.376.
- 77) Ibid.
- 78) Hansard 11 October 1939. Vol 352 Cols. 382-6.
- 79) The People 12 July 1931, p.14.

- 80) The Spectator 20 Oct 1939 pp 538-9.
- 81) The New Statesman 16 Sept 1939. p. 398.
- 82) The Spectator 12 Dec 1925. p. 1075.
- 83) A summary of the views held by the New Statesman is to be found in R. Postgate: What to do with the BBC. 1935, p.52.
- 84) The Spectator 2nd Feb 1934. p. 150.
- 85) The New Statesman 7th Sept 1935 p. 1075.
- 86) Ibid., 29 Jan 1938, p.39.
- 87) The Spectator 20 Jan 1933, p.68.
- 88) Ibid., 3rd March 1933, p.278.
- 89) The People 2 Nov 1924 p.5.
- 90) Ibid., 15 Feb 1925 p.7.
- 91) Ibid., 27 Jan 1927 p.10.
- 92) The New Statesman 2 Jan 1923 p.6.
- 93) The Spectator 21 Nov 1931 p.670.
- 94) Ibid., 13 Dec 1930 p.932.
- 95) Ibid., 22 Dec 1933 p.922.
- 96) Ibid., 3 July 1936 pp 5-6.
- 97) The New Statesman 19 Nov 1932 p. 615.
- 98) The Spectator 21 Nov 1931 p.670.
- 99) Ibid.
- 100) The New Statesman 22 July 1933 p.100 'Etherial Problems.'
- 101) The Spectator 13 Dec 1930 pp 931-2 'Democracy Listens In'.
- 102) The New Statesman 4 April 1931 p.209.
- 103) The Spectator 13 Oct 1928 p 494 'A National Institution'.
- 104) The People 4 Feb 1934 p.12.
- 105) Ibid., 22 March 1936 p.12.
- 106) Ibid., 3 May 1936 p.12.
- 107) The Spectator 21 June 1935 pp 1055-6
- 108) Ibid., 10 June 1931 p.37.
- 109) The New Statesman 24 March 1934 p.466.

- 110) Ibid., 31 March 1934, p.476.
- 111) The Spectator 6th July 1934, p.9.
- 112) The New Statesman 22 Dec 1928 p.346
- 113) The Spectator 12 Jan 1929 pp 35-7
- 114) The New Statesman 19 Jan 1929 p.458.
- 115) Ibid., 31 Jan 1925, p.463.
- 116) Ibid., 20 Mar 1926, p.699.
- 117) The Spectator 25 Feb 1928 p.255.
- 118) The New Statesman 4 April 1931 p.210.
- 119) The Spectator 24 August 1934 p.245.
- 120) The New Statesman 15 August 1931 p.187.
- 121) Ibid., 3 Feb 1934, p.154.
- 122) The Spectator 15 Aug 1931 p.203.
- 123) The People 11 March 1934 p.12.
- 124) The New Statesman 17 March 1934 pp 398-9.
- 125) Ibid., 26 May 1934, p.787.
- 126) The People 10 June 1934 p.12.
- 127) The New Statesman 31 March 1934 p.476.
- 128) The Spectator 28 July 1933 p.117. See also Marshall McLuhan. Understanding Media. 1964. pp 317-328.
- 129) The Spectator. Ibid.
- 130) The People 14 May 1922 p.5.
- 131) The Spectator 22 June 1934, p. 956. Also see the People 1 Dec 1935 p.12. and the New Statesman 20 March 1926, p.699 - with provisions.
- 132) The Spectator 10 Jan 1931 p. 36 .
- 133) Ibid., 28 July 1933, p.117
- 134) The New Statesman 31 March 1934, p.476.
- 135) Ibid.
- 136) The People 29 Jan 1939 p.3 and 16 April 1939 p.3.
- 137) Ibid., 19 April 1936, p.6.
- 138) The Spectator 29 Nov 1935, pp 896-7.
- 139) The New Statesman 1 Oct 1938 p.481 and the Spectator 24 March 1939 p.473.

- 140) The Spectator 24 Feb 1939 p.294.
- 141) The People 14 May 1922 p.5.
- 142) The Spectator 1st Nov 1935 p.709.
- 143) The People 18 Oct 1936 p.12.
- 144) The New Statesman 22 May 1937 p.839.
- 145) Ibid., 19 Oct 1935, p.551.
- 146) The Spectator 21 Nov 1931 p.670.
- 147) The New Statesman 26 Oct 1935, p.591.
- 148) The Spectator. Ibid.
- 149) The People 17 Feb 1924 p.9.
- 150) Ibid., 26 Jan 1930 p1.
- 151) Ibid., 29 May 1938 p.11.
- 152) Ibid., 27 Nov 1938 p.6.
- 153) Ibid., 26 Sept 1926 p.6 and 3 Apr 1932 p.2.
- 154) Ibid., 15 Nov 1931 p.1.
- 155) Ibid., For instance 3 Apr 1932 p.11 and 17 Apr 1932 p.11.
- 156) Ibid., 3 Dec 1939 p.9.
- 157) Ibid., 20 Dec 1936, p.10. See also Lambert. Op.Cit. for details of the case.
- 158) Ibid., 3 June 1934, p.5. and Ibid 6 June 1926, p.1.
- 159) Ibid., 7 Feb 1932, p.4.
- 160) Ibid., 1 Dec 1935 p.12.
- 161) The Spectator 3 July 1936 pp 5-6 and the New Statesman 2 May 1936 p.655.
- 162) A typical instance: an article by Tallents 24 March 1939 pp 478-9.
- 163) The Spectator 22 Nov 1930 pp 765-6.
- 164) The New Statesman 11 Nov 1933 p 581-2.
- 165) Ibid., Supplement.
- 166) Ibid.
- 167) Ibid., 20 Aug 1927, p.593.
- 168) Ibid., 15 Sept 1928, p.708, 20 Oct 1928, p.62 and 22 Dec 1928 p.366.
- 169) The People 21 Jan 1923 p.12 and 30 Sept 1923 p.3.
- 170) Ibid., 17 Aug 1924 p.7 and 19 June 1927 p.16.
- 171) Ibid., 20 Oct 1935 p.19.

- 172) Ibid., 26 Oct 1930 p.5.
- 173) Ibid., 23 Nov 1930 p.9.
- 174) Ibid., 21 Sept 1930 p.8.
- 175) The People 7 May 1922 p.10.
- 176) Ibid., 8 Aug 1937 pl.
- 177) Ibid., 15 May 1938 pl.
- 178) Ibid., 16 May 1937, pl.
- 179) Ibid., 11 Oct 1931 pl.
- 180) Ibid., 10 May 1925 p.5.
- 181) Ibid., 6 Jan 1929 pl.
- 182) The New Statesman 15 Sept 1928 pp 708-710.
- 183) The Spectator 18 Jan 1935 pp 177-8
- 184) The New Statesman 21 Nov 1936 p.829.
- 185) The People 18 March 1923, p.11.
- 186) Ibid., 9 Mar 1930, p.2.
- 187) Ibid., 23 Nov 1924, p.6.
- 188) Ibid., 11 June 1922 p.6.
- 189) Ibid., 7 Jan 1923, p.6.
- 190) Ibid., 18 Oct 1931 p.9.
- 191) Ibid., 3 Apr 1927 p.7.
- 192) Ibid., 21 Oct 1928 p.11.
- 193) The New Statesman 27 Aug 1927 p.593
- 194) The Spectator 24 May 1930 p.856.
- 195) Ibid., 29 Oct 1937 pp 738-9
- 196) Lord Southwood's appeal: The People , 25 Dec 1938 p.9.
- 197) The Spectator 17 Dec 1937 p.1099 and 14 Jan 1937 p.99.
- 198) Ibid., 10 May 1935, p.761.
- 199) The People 11 Sept 1927 p.11.
- 200) Ibid., 23 Dec 1934 p.1 .
- 201) The New Statesman 14 July 1934 p.69.
- 202) The People 16 Sept 1934 p.10.
- 203) The New Statesman 26 Feb 1927 pp598-9 and the Spectator 19 May 1928 pp 753-4

- 204) The Spectator 17 Nov 1928 p.733.
- 205) The New Statesman 26 April 1930 pp 74-5
- 206) The People 4 Oct 1931 p.10.
- 207) The New Statesman Op.Cit.
- 208) The People 31 Jan 1937 p.14.
- 209) Ibid., 10 April 1932 p.10.
- 210) 30 July 1932, p.131.
- 211) The People 14 Dec 1924 p.3.
- 212) The Spectator 3 August 1929 pp 151-2
- 213) The New Statesman 6 Jan 1934 pp 7-8
- 214) Ibid., 19 Jan 1929, p.464.
- 215) The Spectator 24 March 1933 p.444.
- 216) The Spectator 12 Jan 1934 pp 43-44.
- 217) The People 17 Sept 1933 p.11.
- 218) Ibid., 5 Dec 1937, p.19.
- 219) Ibid., 4 June 1939 p.20.
- 220) Ibid., 13 Sept 1931 p.3.
- 221) Ibid., 27 Dec 1925 p.9.
- 222) Ibid., 26 Sept 1926 p.6.
- 223) The Spectator 26 July 1930 p.118.
- 224) The Spectator 10 Feb 1923 p.242.
- 225) The People 26 Apr 1931 p.3.
- 226) The People 7 Nov 1926 p.10.
- 227) The Spectator 6 Sept 1930. pp 301-2.
- 228) The New Statesman 13 Nov 1926 p.141.
- 229) The Spectator 5 July 1935 p.8.
- 230) The New Statesman 13 Sept 1930 p.705.
- 231) The Spectator 12 March 1927 pp 413-4.
- 232) The People 3 March 1929 p.5.
- 233) The Spectator 20 April 1929 p.616.

- 234) The People 28 March 1937 p.16.
- 235) Ibid., 10 March 1929 p.11.
- 236) The Spectator 5 April 1924, p.539 'Music for the Masses', by Cecil Hann.
- 237) The New Statesman 29 August 1925 p.550.
- 238) Ibid., 22 July 1933, p.100.
- 239) Ibid., 16 Nov 1935 p.732.
- 240) Ibid., 19 Sept 1936 pp 390-1
- 241) Ibid., 16 Nov 1935, p.733.
- 242) Ibid., 25 March 1939 p.457
- 243) Hyams. p.143.
- 244) New Statesman 8 Nov 1930 p.145.
- 245) 23 Apr 1922 p.3.
- 246) 7 May 1922. p.7 and p.10.
- 247) 30 Apr 1922 p.3.
- 248) 21 May 1922 p.10.
- 249) 30 Dec 1922 p.992.
- 250) Ibid.
- 251) 10 Feb 1923 p.242 and 5 Apr 1924 p.539.
- 252) The Spectator 30 Sept 1938 p.502.
- 253) See Figure I.

Chapter 6

Footnotes

Chapter 6.

- 1) Since shockingly destroyed for 1922-27. Figures for some years afterwards are available - see Chapters II and VII.
- 2) Rowntree. Poverty and Progress.
- 3) Llewellyn Smith New Survey of London Life and Labour.
- 4) Caradog Jones. Survey of Merseyside.
- 5) Listener Research Committee Meetings. 22 Feb and 23 May 1938.
- 6) For instance: Mass Observation. May the Twelfth 1937.
- 7) Broadcasting in Everyday Life: A Study of the Social Effects of the Coming of Broadcasting. 1939.
- 8) W. Beveridge. Changes in Family Life. 1932. p.138. (Questionnaire 1931)
- 9) 50,000 Returns. Ibid., pp 11 and 13.
- 10) Beveridge p.139.
- 11) Jennings and Gill p.6.
- 12) Rowntree p.411.
- 13) A disputed point. M. Young and P. Willmott in their Family and Kinship in East London. 1957. Show how other social factors would resist such home-centredness.
- 14) Jennings and Gill. p.23.
- 15) Ibid.
- 16) Ibid., p.7.
- 17) Ibid., p.40.
- 18) Radio Times Vol.I No I 28 Sept 1923 p.15.
- 19) Ibid., 26 Sept 1929. For all programmes including 2LO, 5XX and 5GB.
- 20) Briggs Vol II p.26.
- 21) Radio Times. 28 and 29 Sept 1935. For a sample of hours.
- 22) International Broadcasting Company. Unknown Date.
- 23) Sir William Crawford with H. Broadley, The People's Food 1939.
- 24) Ibid., pp 37-8.
- 25) Ibid., p.36.
- 26) Ibid., p.49.
- 27) Ibid., pp 60-1
- 28) Ibid., p.59.
- 29) Ibid., p.69.

- 30) See, for instance, Listener Research Report LR/67 1 Sept 1938 'First Random Sample'.
- 31) Listener Research Report LR/68. 21 Oct 1938. 'The Time of Meals'.
- 32) K. Roberts. Leisure 1970.
- 33) J. Durmazedier. Towards a Society of Leisure. New York 1967. p.14.
- 34) Llewellyn Smith. Vol. I. p.297.
- 35) N. Dennis, F. Henriques and C. Slaughter. Coal is Our Life. 1956. pp 168-70
- 36) Jennings and Gill. Op.Cit. pp 24-8. 67% engaged in other activities when listening to the wireless.
- 37) Rowntree. Op.Cit. pp 411-2.
- 38) Ibid., 407-8.
- 39) Llewellyn Smith. Vol. IX. Life and Leisure. p.8.
- 40) Caradog Jones. Vol.III Table V. p.275.
- 41) Rowntree pp 406-12 and p.530.
- 42) Jennings and Gill Op.Cit. p.8.
- 43) Ibid., p.12.
- 44) Rowntree Op.Cit. pp 411-2.
- 45) Ibid., p.33.
- 46) Jennings and Gill p.33.
- 47) Ibid., p.37.
- 48) Wireless World 20 May 1922 p.237.
- 49) News of the World 7 April 1931 p.12.
- 50) Jennings and Gill p.38.
- 51) Ibid., p.19.
- 52) Ibid., p.15.
- 53) Llewellyn Smith Vol. IX p.50.
- 54) BBC Archives File 441.4 Carnegie Experiments Reports. Sept 1930.- March 1932.
- 55) Ibid., Yorkshire Area Council for Broadcast Adult Education. Report of the Carnegie Experiment in Yorkshire. 1930-2. Appendix.
- 56) Ibid., Report of the Scottish Committee on the Carnegie Experiment in Scotland. Sept 1930-March 1932.
- 57) Ibid., Report of the Carnegie Experiment in Yorkshire 1930-32.

- 58) Ibid., Appendix.
- 59) Ibid., Report on the Carnegie Experiment in the West Midlands.
1 Jan 1930- 30 Apr 1931.
- 60) BBC Archives File 441. Press Release 14 Dec 1934.
- 61) Jennings and Gill p.13.
- 62) Ibid., pp 17-8.
- 63) Rowntree pp 409-10, p.472 and p.530.
- 64) Jennings and Gill p.15.
- 65) New Statesman 18 August 1934 p.202.
- 66) Rowntree p.409. The most popular programme for the relay company's service was for the Littlewood's Pools Programme, broadcast on Luxembourg at 1.30 p.m. each Sunday. It had a 100% load.
- 67) Jennings and Gill pp 34-7.
- 68) Llewellyn Smith. Vol. IX. p.11.
- 69) New Statesman 13 Nov 1926 p.141.
- 70) Jennings and Gill p.27.
- 71) Ibid., p.36.
- 72) Rowntree p.410-1.
- 73) Jennings and Gill p.37.
- 74) Rowntree p.410. Jennings and Gill p.39.

Chapter 7

Footnotes

Chapter 7.

- 1) Broadcast over Britain p.57.
- 2) Ibid., p.17.
- 3) Ibid., p.34.
- 4) Ibid., p.35.
- 5) Ibid., p.32.
- 6) Detailed in BBC Archives. File 441 Adult Education. Papers and Reports 1924-1940.
- 7) Reith Diaries. 14 May 1924.
- 8) New Statesman 15 June 1935 p.893. 'Conduit Street' Controversy.
- 9) Broadcast over Britain p.19.
- 10) Ibid., p.205.
- 11) Ibid. p.119.
- 12) Draft of a Talk on Listener Research. Audience Research Policy File 1, 1937. 14 October 1937.
- 13) Broadcast over Britain p.119.
- 14) Ibid. p.120.
- 15) Shall I Listen? 1933. p.206.
- 16) Ibid. p.205 - an example of his cordial relationship.
- 17) Into the Wind. 1949 p.99.
- 18) Interview with Silvey 24 Mar 1976.
- 19) Seven Talks broadcast 17 Feb to 7 Apr 1932.
- 20) Programme Board Minute 11. 9 May 1930.
- 21) Gielgud to R.H. Eckersley (Director of Programmes) 12 May 1930.
- 22) Ibid.
- 23) For example. London Press Exchange. The Home Market and Reader Interest Survey.
- 24) Who's Listening? 1974. pp 51-52.
- 25) B. Nicholls to C. Carpendale. Listener Survey. 14 August 1935.
- 26) Memorandum by Cecil Graves, 17 July 1930.
- 27) 9 Dec 1930.

- 28) Board Meeting Minute 2, 14 Jan 1931.
- 29) Yearbook 1932, p.161
- 30) Memorandum on Survey of Listening Public.
- 31) Educational Broadcasting: Report of a Special Investigation in the County of Kent during the Year 1927. Dunfermline 1928. Carnegie U.K. Trustees.
- 32) BBC Archives. File 441.4. Carnegie Experiment Reports. 1930-32.
- 33) Memorandum by C.A. Siepmann. 26 May 1930.
- 34) H. Matheson to R.H. Eckersley, 28 May 1930.
- 35) V.H. Goldsmith to Director General, 19 Jan 1931.
- 36) Note on a Talks Listening Panel, 12 Nov 1934.
- 37) Rose-Troup to Pocock, 14 Nov 1934.
- 38) V. Gielgud to R.H. Eckersley, 18 Nov 1933.
- 39) Ibid.
- 40) Memorandum by R.E.L. Wellington, 21 Nov 1934.
- 41) Gorham to Murray, 15 Nov 1934. See also LR/78, 11 July 1939.
- 42) Memorandum by C.F. Atkinson, 2 August 1935. See also 1 March 1935.
- 43) Into the Wind. 1949. p.89.
- 44) See Asa Briggs, Vol.II. pp 152-160.
- 45) See also Broadcast over Britain, p.205.
- 46) Daily Herald 1 March 1927, p.9. Daily Mail 1 Feb 1927, p.9. and Table I.
- 47) Yorkshire Observer Feb 1936. Birmingham Gazette. Jan 1936.
- 48) Sir Stephen Tallents. Memorandum, 3 April 1936.
- 49) Wireless Constructor May 1927 pp 53-4 for critique of these results and a table of the replies.
- 50) Interview with R.J.E. Silvey, 24 March 1976.
- 51) A.P. Ryan to M. Farquharson, 16 March 1936.
- 52) Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising. Radio Research. March 1936.
- 53) Radio Manufacturers Association. Memorandum, Nov 1935.
- 54) Atkinson to Carpendale et al, 19 Jan 1931 and Sir Noel Ashbridge to Murray, 11 September 1930.

- 55) Maurice Gorham. Note on a conversation with Pear, 20 August 1934.
- 56) Appendix to a paper for the General Advisory Council. GAC 23, 3 Jan 1936.
- 57) Ibid.
- 58) 6 March 1936.
- 59) Ibid.
- 60) Control Board Minute 155, 10 March 1936.
- 61) Press Release 14 Sept 1936, Silvey began work on 1 Oct 1936.
- 62) Remark often attributed to Frank Muir.
- 63) Siepmann, 29 May 1930.
- 64) The Natural Bent. 1960, p.109.
- 65) Director-General to Graves, 12 June 1930.
- 66) Director-General to Tallents, 8 July 1937.
- 67) Exemplified by his work on the Home Market 1936. With Mark Abrams.
- 68) Control Board Minute 155.
- 69) Farquharson. Paper for Discussion. 25 March 1936.
- 70) Undated Paper by Silvey. Probably for first meeting of the committee 15 October 1936.
- 71) Interview with Silvey, 24 March 1976.

Chapter 8

Footnotes

Chapter 8.

- 1) LR/56. General Summary, 25 June 1937.
- 2) Listener Research Committee Minute 69, 19 April 1937. Quoting Gielgud.
- 3) LR/29. Second General Questionnaire, 16 April 1937.
- 4) LR/56, 25 June 1937.
- 5) LR/43, 24 May 1937.
- 6) LR/28, 13 April 1937.
- 7) LR/56.
- 8) The Listener, 21 July 1937, p.121, What About It?
- 9) See good summary in the editorial: Ibid., p.122, Testing Listeners' Tastes.
- 10) ie LR/60, 18 Nov 1937, LR/61, 13 Dec 1937, LR/63, 26 April 1938, LR/64, 13 May 1938, and LR/70, March 1939.
- 11) LR/60. See Figure I for graph of listening times.
- 12) LR/70.
- 13) Ibid.
- 14) Ibid.
- 15) LR/62, 14 March 1938.
- 16) Listener Research Committee Minutes, 23 May 1938.
- 17) LR/69, 9 January 1939.
- 18) LR/58 24 August 1937.
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) Ibid.
- 21) Who's Listening? p.81 for details of the control group.
- 22) LR/65, 29 Nov 1938.
- 23) Ibid., see the two questionnaires. Figures II and III attached.
- 24) Ibid.
- 25) Interim Report 4, 8 Feb 1938.
- 26) Interim Reports 3 (a) to 3 (e), Jan to Feb 1938.
- 27) Interim Report 3(d), 2 Feb 1938.
- 28) Interim Report 3 (e), 2 Feb 1938.
- 29) LR/65.
- 30) Interim Report 3 (a), 4 Jan 1938.

- 31) Interim Report 4, 8 Feb 1938.
- 32) Interim Report 12, 31 March 1938.
- 33) Interim Report 9, 22 Feb 1938.
- 34) Interim Report 6, 9 March 1938.
- 35) LR/65.
- 36) Who's Listening? p.84.
- 37) LR/79, 20 July 1939.
- 38) LR/77, 5 July 1939, LR/81, 11 Oct 1939, LR/86, 22 Dec 1939.
- 39) LR/74, 16 May 1939.
- 40) Ibid.
- 41) Interim Report 1(b), 8 Feb 1939.
- 42) Interim Report 9, 17 March 1939.
- 43) Interim Report 16, 28 April 1939.
- 44) Interview with Silvey, 24 March 1976.
- 45) Who's Listening? p.89.
- 46) LR/67, Appendix I, 1 Sept 1938.
- 47) Ibid.
- 48) Ibid.
- 49) LR/71, Table I, 15 Feb 1939.
- 50) Ibid., see Figure IV.
- 51) LR/71.
- 52) Taken from First Random Sample, Table V(a) and Second Random Sample, Table III(a).
- 53) Taken from First Random Sample, Tables V(b) and (c), and Second Random Sample, Tables III(b) and (c).
- 54) LR/71.
- 55) LR/67.
- 56) See also LR/68, 21 Oct 1938.
- 57) LR/67.
- 58) Who's Listening? p.70.
- 59) LR/71, Table I, Programme Preferences.

- 60) Who's Listening? p.70.
- 61) Ibid.
- 62) LR/78 11 July 1939.
- 63) LR/86, 22 Dec 1939.
- 64) Ibid.
- 65) LR/67
- 66) Crossley Incorporated, Radio Listening Habits, Feb. 1939.
Social Surveys Ltd. (Gallup) The Radio Luxembourg Audience Reports 1-10.
- 67) Who's Listening? p.75-76.
- 68) BBC Archives File 133.4 Ullswater. Broadcasting Committee 1935.
Minutes of Evidence. Folio M. 13th Meeting 20 June 1935.
- 69) M. Baron. Independent Radio: The Story of Commercial Radio in the United Kingdom. Lavenham, Suffolk, 1975.
- 70) Crossley Incorporated. Op.Cit.
- 71) Ibid., p.13.
- 72) Ibid., p.17.
- 73) Ibid., p.20.
- 74) Radio Times. 16 Dec 1938 p.6. 'The BBC Taps the Barometer.'
- 75) Paper for the General Advisory Council GAC 92, 8 March 1938.
Audience Research Policy File 172.2 1938-44.
- 76) Birmingham Daily Mail 2 Mar 1938 and the Observer 31 Oct 1937.
- 77) M. Gorham Sound and Fury. p.166.
- 78) Briggs. Vol. III. pp 125-140.

Chapter 9

Footnotes

Chapter 9.

- 1) Derby Daily Telegraph 24 Oct 1924, p.4.
- 2) 21 Urban District Councils in Derbyshire A.C., 4 in Oxfordshire A.C.
- 3) Census, 1931. Counties Volume. H.M.S.O. 1933. County of Derby, Part I, p.vii.
- 4) Ibid., County of Middlesex, Part p.vii. Originally two separate U.D.C's combined in 1928, incorporated in 1932.
- 5) Ibid., County of Oxford, Part I, p.vii.
- 6) Census, 1931. General Report. 1950, p.8. 'Action was taken in 1921 through the agency of the Press and otherwise to explain to the public the objects of Census-taking and the importance of the results, but the development of wireless communication made possible in 1931, the dissemination of information on this subject in general, and the giving of oral advice on the subject of filling up the Census schedule in the evening of the day on which this duty was to be performed. These opportunities of imparting both general and particular information and advice without doubt played a most valuable part in the education of the public and resulted in a gratifying improvement in the quality of the Census Returns.'
- The BBC arranged six Talks between 17 Feb and 24 March 1931, accompanied by a pamphlet entitled 'The Census'. The series covered the use, method and confidentiality of the Census.
- 7) Census, 1931, Occupations Volume. 1934, p.283-297.
- 8) Ibid., pp 660-6. Tables A and B.
- 9) Census, 1931. General Report. p.160. Table LXVI. Occupations Volume p.283, Tb.16
- 10) See Chapter III, pp 100-104.
- 11) See Chapter II, Table II.
- 12) First Channel opened, August 1929, second channel opened March 1930.
- 13) BBC Handbooks, Yearbooks and Annuals.
Census of England and Wales, 1931. Counties Volumes 1933, p.xi.
- 14) A.L. Chapman and R. Knight. Wages and Salaries in the U.K. 1920-1938. Cambridge. 1953.
- 15) Derby Daily Telegraph 31 Oct 1924, p.4.
- 16) Oxford Chronicle 21 May 1926, p.10.
- 17) T. Cauter and J.S. Downham. The Communication of Ideas. 1954 p.150.
- 18) Jennings and Gill. p.39.
- 19) See Chapter II, Table I.
- 20) Derby Mercury 19 Sept 1924, pl.
- 21) See Chapter II, Table I.
- 22) Larger representation of those engaged in commerce and finance.

- 23) Daily Sketch 6 Feb 1913, p.5.
- 24) Wireless World, Jan 1920, p.589.
- 25) Derbyshire Times 10 March 1923, p.7.
- 26) Wireless World Jan 1920, p.590.
- 27) Ibid., 30 Sept 1922, p.876.
- 28) Oxford Chronicle. 9 Feb 1923, p.4.
- 29) Chiswick Times, 9 March 1923, p.7.
- 30) Wireless World 7 Jan 1922, p.629.
- 31) Oxford Chronicle 30 April 1926, p.22 and Derby Daily Express 15 Nov 1926, p.9.
- 32) R.S.G.B. T & R Bulletin Jan 1935 p.242. Member tended to join for two to three years on average.
- 33) A. Briggs. 'New Light on the BBC's Beginnings'. The Listener, 2 Nov 1972, pp 572-4.
- 34) Derby Mercury, 26 Jan 1923, p.14.
- 35) Wireless World Jan 1920, p.590. 'The Radio Scientific Society.'
- 36) Oxford Times 10 Oct 1924 p.11 and in Derby, Derby Mercury 19 Jan 1923, p.5.
- 37) Derbyshire Times 20 Jan 1923, p.14.
- 38) Table II.
- 39) Councillor W. Bemrose was a leading industrialist, Jolley and Cowlshaw were retailers and A. Trevelyan Lee was the TownClerk.
- 40) Certainly the case with the Derby Wireless Club.
- 41) Wireless World 13 Jan 1923, p.509.
- 42) Derby and District Amateur Radio Society. A Brief History of Fifty Years of Progress Made by the Amateur Radio Enthusiasts in Derby. p.10.
- 43) Derbyshire Times, 13 Jan 1923, p.6.
- 44) Wireless World 23 Dec 1922, p.410.
- 45) Ibid., 18 Feb 1922, p.733.
- 46) Ibid., June 1913, p.209.
- 47) Wireless World 13 Jan 1923, p.509.
- 48) Ibid., 3 April 1920, p.25.
- 49) Chiswick Times, 2nd March 1923, p.7.
- 50) Wireless World, Feb 1920, p.647 and 8 Feb 1922, p.735.
- 51) Ibid., 4 March 1922, p.756.

- 52) Derbyshire Advertiser 23 Feb 1923, p.3.
- 53) 5 Aug 1922, p.594.
- 54) Derby Daily Telegraph 26 Nov 1923, p.2.
- 55) Derby Mercury, 26 Jan 1923, pl.
- 56) Derby Daily Express 15 Nov 1926, p. 9 and 16Nov 1926, p.5. Also Appendix.
III.
- 57) Oxford Chronicle 4 May 1923, p.6.
- 58) Ibid., 13 April 1923, p.4 and 19 Jan 1923, p.4.
- 59) Ibid., 6 April 1923, p.4.
- 60) Ibid., 1 June 1923, p.4.
- 61) Derbyshire Times 30 Jan 1926, p.10.
- 62) Chiswick Times 19 Jan 1923, p.2.
- 63) Wireless Trader 2 June 1926.
- 64) Wireless Trader 19 June 1937 (Changed name to Wireless and Electrical Trader on 3 July 1937).
- 65) It is interesting to note the wireless company advertisers in the 'Trades Directory Section' of Kelly's Oxford Directory.
1923: Nil;
1925: 5 Engineers and 1 manufacturer (p.502).
1931: 9 Dealers, 14 Engineers and 2 manufacturers (pp 545-6).
1938: 18 Dealers and 19 Engineers (p.798-9).
- 66) Chiswick Times 19 Jan 1923, p.2.
- 67) Derby Mercury 3 Nov 1922 p.15.
- 68) Derbyshire Times 7 May 1937, p.18.
- 69) Oxford Times 7 May 1937, p.15.
- 70) Oxford Chronicle 25 May 1923, p.11.
- 71) Derby Daily Express 28 May 1929, p.13.
- 72) Derby Evening Telegraph 7 May 1937, p.9.
- 73) Oxford Chronicle 25 May 1923, p.11.
- 74) Ibid., p.13.
- 75) Ibid.
- 76) Ibid., 23 Feb 1923, p.4.
- 77) Ibid., 2 March 1923, p.22.
- 78) Ibid., 27 Oct 1922, p.24.

- 79) Chiswick Times 8 Dec 1922, p.2.
- 80) Wireless Trader 7 Jan 1933, p.5.
- 81) Oxford Chronicle 24 Nov 1922, p.7.
- 82) West London Observer 2 March 1923, p.6.
- 83) Oxford Chronicle 9 Jan 1923, p.4.
- 84) Ibid., 20 April 1923, p.4.
- 85) Oxford Chronicle ceased publication in May 1929. The Derby Daily Express and Derby Daily Telegraph merged under the Daily Mail group's control in June 1929.
- 86) p.2.
- 87) For instance, 'Radio Wrinkles' 22 Jan 1929, p.
Derby Daily Telegraph 6 Oct 1924, p.5.
- 88) Oxford Chronicle 15 July 1927, p.11.
- 89) Chiswick Times 6 April 1923, p.5.
- 90) Derby Daily Telegraph 28 Sept 1931, p.4.
- 91) Brentford and Chiswick Times 9 Oct 1931 p.6.
- 92) Derby Mercury 14 September 1923 p.7.
- 93) Ibid., 31 Oct. 1924, p.12.
- 94) Derby Daily Telegraph 24 Aug 1923, p.2.
- 95) Oxford Chronicle 8 June 1923, p.4.
- 96) Chiswick Times 2 March 1923, pl.
- 97) Oxford Chronicle 8 June 1923, p.4.

Chapter 10

Footnotes

Chapter 10.

- 1) Glasgow station 5SC.
- 2) Chiswick U.D.C. Education Committee. F. Wallington. Head's Notes. 4 Apr 1924.
- 3) Brentford U.D.C. Education Committee. Rothschild School for Boys. Captain L. Revell, Headmaster. School Log Book 16 May 1924, p.198.
- 4) Ibid., 13 Oct 1924.
- 5) Ibid., 22 Oct 1924.
- 6) Chiswick U.D.C. Education Committee Minutes. 11 Nov 1924. Minute 16, p.234.
- 7) Brentford and Chiswick Borough Education Committee. Elementary Education Sub-Committee 24 March 1931 Minute 5.
- 8) Wireless World June 1913 p.209. A public school with a wireless society.
- 9) Derby Evening Telegraph 24 Feb 1939 p.6.
- 10) Oxford Chronicle 13 April 1923, p.11.
- 11) Certainly a set had been fitted by 1925. Indirect evidence of this in Derby Education Committee, Sites and Buildings Sub-Committee. 13 March 1925, Minute 525 and Higher Education Sub-Committee 13 July 1925.
- 12) Derby Education Committee, Elementary Education Sub-Committee 28 Jan 1925, Minute 389 and 7 Sept 1925, Minute 1063.
- 13) Ibid., 8 April 1929, Minute 620.
- 14) Ibid., 5 Jan 1931, Minute 291.
- 15) Ibid., 3 Dec 1934, Minute 154 and 2 Sept 1935. Minute 1027.
- 16) For instance: City of Oxford. Council Reports. Education Committee Meeting. Minutes 15 July 1936, p.836 '£226.10s. to Edison Swan for Wireless Equipment'.
- 17) Oxford Chronicle 16 March 1923, p.4 and 13 April 1923, p.11.
- 18) Workers' Educational Association. Derby and District Branch. General Committee Minutes. 2 Dec 1936, p.3.
- 19) Oxford Times 25 Nov 1927, p.5.
- 20) Ibid., 3 July 1931, pp 6 and 13.
- 21) Plebs Sept 1927.
- 22) Burton Chronicle 1 Oct 1931 p.7.
- 23) Oxford Chronicle 5 Oct 1923, p.4. 'The O.W.T.C.L. have fitted up a Ford van with wireless receiving apparatus. The car, which belongs to the Federation of Women's Institutes, whose Oxford headquarters are at Barnett House, will be used for touring through villages entertaining and educating.'
- 24) BBC Archives File 441.4 Carnegie Experiment Reports Sept 1930-March 1932.

- 25) Yorkshire Telegraph and Star (Sheffield) 1 April 1932 p.8.
- 26) Derbyshire Education Committee. County Library Service. 1934-5. 11th Report.
- 27) Ibid., 1937-8. 14th Report.
- 28) Oxford Chronicle 30 March 1923, p.15 and 6 April 1923, pp 17 and 23.
- 29) Manchester Guardian January 1929.
- 30) Ibid., 11 Jan 1930 p.9.
- 31) BBC Archives File 441.4 Report on the Carnegie Experiment in the West Midlands 1 Jan 1930 to 30 April 1931.
- 32) Derby Public Free Library. 60th Annual Report 1931. Appendices VII and VIII.
- 33) Manchester Guardian 7th April 1931 p.10.
- 34) Table II and contrast with Derby Public Free Library. 63rd Annual Report 1934.
- 35) Borough of Brentford and Chiswick. Report of the Libraries and Museums Committee 1937-8, p.3.
- 36) Oxfordshire Education Committee. Report of the County Librarian 1930.
- 37) Derby Public Free Library. 63-66 Annual Reports 1934-37.
- 38) City of Oxford. Library Committee Minute Book 1913-27. Report for 1925, p.304.
- 39) Derbyshire County Library. 5th Annual Report, April 1928 to March 1929.
- 40) Derby Public Free Library. 59th Annual Report 1931.
- 41) Oxford City Library. Librarian's Report. 31 March 1930.
- 42) Oxford City Library 1854 -1954, Centenary File. Undated, uncited Press cutting - probably of 1927.
- 43) Oxfordshire Education Committee. Report of County Librarian, 1931.
- 44) Derby Daily Telegraph 16 Dec 1930 p.4.
- 45) Manchester Guardian 7 April 1931 p.10.
- 46) Everyman 14 Jan 1933, p.45.
- 47) Ibid.
- 48) This was rejected. See Derby Borough Council. Free Public Library Committee Minute Book 1915-1930. General Committee Meeting 9 June 1932.
- 49) 61st Annual Report March 1932.
- 50) Staveley near Chesterfield.
- 51) One of the lectures was on broadcasting. The BBC lecturer, J.H.A. Whitehouse gave a lecture on 13 Jan 1927. 200 people attended. Chiswick Public Library and Museum Annual Report 1926-7.

- 52) City of Oxford Library Committee. Minute Book. 1927-40. Proceedings of Library Committee 22 Sept 1936, p.236.
- 53) Ibid., and p.239.
- 54) Chiswick Urban District Council. Minutes April 1924 - April 1925. General Purposes Committee Meeting. 28 Jan 1925.
- 55) Oxford City Council. Minutes 1928. General Purposes Committee 13 Feb 1928 pp 134 and 136
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- 65) P. Renshaw. The General Strike 1975. Chapter 22 pp 199-209.
- 66) Oxford Chronicle 7 May 1926 p.6.
- 67) Oxford Times 10 May 1926, p.2.
- 68) Oxford Chronicle 6 Apr 1923, p.4. 'Apart from a great over supply of the British Gazette.'
- 69) Derby Daily Telegraph 12 May 1926, p.4. - photographic proof.
- 70) Chiswick Times, 14 May 1926, p.3.
- 71) Oxford Chronicle 21 May 1926, p.10.
- 72) Ibid., 14 May 1926, p.4.
- 73) E. Burns. The General Strike, May 1926: Trades Councils in Action. 1926. pp 121-2. Also Labour Research Department: Monthly Circular July 1926, p.161. According to the price and the income achieved, only 22,290 copies would appear to have been sold. Perhaps some were distributed free but estimates of 50,000 appear excessive.
- 74) The Plebs August 1926, p.288.
- 75) Burns. Op.Cit. p.43.

- 76) The Plebs Aug 1926 p.282 and Burns Op.Cit. p.132.
- 77) Burns. Op.Cit. pp 156-7.
- 78) 14 May 1926, p.3.
- 79) For instance, Derby Daily Telegraph, 7 Dec 1923, p.2.
- 80) Oxford Times 18 April 1924, p.6. but a change of heart 24 May 1929, p.11.
- 81) There were frequent warnings against copyright infringements printed in the local press. The BBC was apparently concerned about unauthorised use. See Derby Daily Express 28 May 1929 pl.
- 82) Brentford and Chiswick Times 30 Oct 1931 p.7.
- 83) Oxford Times 2 Nov 1923, p.8 and Derby Daily Telegraph 30 Nov 1923, p.5.
- 84) Oxford Mail 12 April 1929, p.6.
- 85) Derby Daily Telegraph 5 Sept 1931, p.4.
- 86) Ibid., 26 Aug 1931, p.4.
- 87) Ibid., 22 Sept 1931, p.4.
- 88) Brentford and Chiswick Times 7 June 1929 p.4.
- 89) Ibid. and also Derbyshire Times 1 June 1929 p.8 for a similar view.
- 90) Derby Daily Express 5 April 1929, p.4.
- 91) Ibid., 9 April 1929, p.8.
- 92) Oxford Times, 24 May 1929 p.11.
- 93) Chiswick Times 17 Nov 1922 p.5.
- 94) Derby Daily Telegraph 27 Oct 1931 p. .
- 95) Brentford and Chiswick Times 15 Nov 1935, p.7.
- 96) Derbyshire Times 15 Nov 1935, p.12.
- 97) Oxford Times 25 April 1924, p.5.
- 98) Oxford Chronicle 25 April 1926, p.8.
- 99) Derby Mercury 25 April 1924, p.8-9.
- 100) Oxford Times 10May 1935, p.16.
- 101) Derby Evening Telegraph 12 May 1937, p.5.
- 102) Ibid.
- 103) Ibid. 13 May 1937, p.6. and Oxford Times 14 May 1937, p.16.
- 104) Brentford and Chiswick Times 31 Jan 1936, p.1.
- 105) Ibid., 24 Jan 1936, p.1.

- 106) Oxford Chronicle 16 March 1923, p.4. with photographs. Also 11 April 1924, pp 11 and 13.
- 107) Oxford Mail 24 May 1937 p.8.
- 108) Jennings and Gill p.37.
- 109) R. Roberts p.219.
- 110) Orwell, Vol.II. My Country Right or Left. p.404 and pp 447-8.
- 111) Derbyshire Advertiser 9 March 1923, p.9.
- 112) Chiswick Times 25 April 1924 p.6 and 29 March 1923, p.5.
- 113) Oxford Chronicle 23 Feb 1923, p.4.
- 114) Derbyshire Advertiser Op.Cit.
- 115) Derby Mercury 12 March 1923 p.14.
- 116) Brentford and Chiswick Times 1 Nov 1935 p.6.
- 117) Oxford Times 7 May 1937 p.20.
- 118) Ibid., 14 May 1926, p.14 and 4 June 1926, p.7.
- 119) Wireless Trader 7 Jan 1933 p.6.
- 120) Derby Mercury 22 Jan 1926, p.14.
- 121) Derby Daily Express 12 May 1922 p.5.
- 122) Ibid., 16 June 1920.
- 123) Oxford Chronicle 18 May 1923 p.5.
- 124) Derby Daily Telegraph 16 Aug 1923, p.3.
- 125) Derby Daily Express 1 April 1929, p.13 and Oxford Mail 1 Apr 1929 p.7. and 17 Apr 1929 p.1.
- 126) Derby Daily Telegraph 14 Sept 1931 p.4.
- 127) Derby Daily Express 24 May 1929, p.11 and Oxford Mail 14 May 1929, p.1.
- 128) Oxford Times 5 Dec 1924, p.16.
- 129) Derby Daily Express 20 May 1929, pp 14-15.
- 130) Uses of Literacy 1957 p.121.
- 131) Derbyshire Advertiser 11 Oct 1935 pp 8 and 17. See also Ariel 1938, p.25. for an account of a broadcast from Ashbourne.
- 132) Derby Daily Telegraph 16 Sept 1931 p.4.
- 133) Ibid., 15 Nov 1935, p.6.
- 134) Brentford and Chiswick Times March 1930
- 135) G.M. Young Victorian Essays (ed) Handcock 1962 p.205.

- 136) Derby Daily Telegraph 7 Oct 1924, p.4.
- 137) Ibid., 27 Aug 1931, p.4.
- 138) Jennings and Gill p.19.
- 139) BBC Archives File 129.01. Crawford Committee 1925. 11th Meeting 29 Jan 1926.
- 140) Oxford Chronicle, 6 Apr 1923, p.4.
- 141) Derby Mercury 28 Sept 1923, p.11.
- 142) Ibid., 26 Oct 1922, p.11.
- 143) Ibid.
- 144) Oxford Chronicle 12 Sept 1924, p.20.
- 145) p.4.
- 146) Derby Daily Telegraph 12 May 1937, pp 5 and 6.
- 147) This is difficult to prove directly. Licences were collected by Head Post Office areas but the populations in these areas did not coincide with administrative areas. These statistics are not available - estimates have to be made. If these are at all accurate, then listening levels were higher in urban areas than the surrounding rural areas. Apart from inaccurate estimates more error could be caused by registration of licences by rural inhabitants at urban post offices.

Licence Holding in Oxford and Derby Head Post Office Areas 1930-37.

Date	Licences in Derby	Listeners(a)	% of Total Population in Head (b) Post Office Area.	Licences in Oxford	Listeners	% of Total Population in Head (b) Post Office Area.
1930	22,011	83,428	29.8	18,718	69,631	43.5
1931	28,683	108,709	38.8	21,402	79,615	49.8
1932	34,929	132,280	47.2	24,475	91,047	56.9
1933	39,265	148,814	53.1	26,669	99,209	62.0
1934	45,355	171,895	61.4	29,464	109,606	68.5
1935	50,727	192,255	68.7	31,774	118,199	73.9
1936	55,724	211,194	75.4	34,271	127,488	79.7
1937	59,941	227,176	81.1	36,596	136,137	85.1

- 148) Chapter 10, Table I.
- 149) Chiswick Times, 25 April 1924, p.5.
- 150) Chapter 8 , pp. 318-331.

- 151) Chapter 2, pp 59-77.
- 152) Oxford Mail, 11th May 1937. p.4.
- 153) Oxford Chronicle, 11 April 1924, p.11.
- 154) Ibid., p.5.

Chapter 11

Footnotes.

Chapter 11.

- 1) For instance the Education Acts of 1870, 1880 and 1902.
- 2) A. Briggs Victorian Cities 1968, pp 12-13.
- 3) A.H. Halsey (ed). Trends in British Society since 1900. 1972. pp 37-39.
- 4) R. Busby, The British Music Hall, 1976 and D. Howard, London Theatres and Music Halls 1850-1950. 1970.
- 5) A. Mason. Association Football and English Society 1863-1915. 1979.
- 6) Particularly the legislation of the Liberal Governments 1906-1916.
See J.R. Hay, The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms 1906-1914. 1972.
- 7) W. Ashworth. An Economic History of England 1870-1939. 1960. pp.116-118.
The Road System itself was only extended from 179,095 miles in 1929 to 180,527 miles in 1930. However there was plenty of surplus capacity and the number of road vehicles expanded enormously; See Mitchell and Deane Op.Cit. p.230
- 8) 50,000 telephone call-boxes were introduced in the 1920's. Ashworth. Ibid.,p.340.
- 9) A.J.P. Taylor. English History 1914-1945. 1970. pp 392-396. This includes the context of the newsreel in the development of cinema generally.
- 10) Chapter 3, Figures XIV and XV.
- 11) Chapter 10, p.411.
- 12) 11 December 1936.
- 13) Chapter 10, p.412.
- 14) Chapter 10, p.463.
- 15) Chapter 10, pp. 401-403
- 16) Chapter 10, pp.395-405.
- 17) Chapter 10, p.399.
- 18) A. Briggs, Vol. I., p.265.
- 19) Chapter 6. p.259.
- 20) Chapter 9 , p.371.
- 21) Chapter 10, p.403.
- 22) Chapter 10, p.407
- 23) Briggs, Vol. I., PP 263-272.
- 24) Chapter 2, p.52.
- 25) Chapter 2, p.73.
- 26) Chapter 10, p.409-10.

- 27) Chapter 2, p.72.
- 28) Chapter 10, p.410
- 29) Chapter 10, p. 382-383
- 30) Chapter 10, p.410-413
- 31) Chapter 6, p.252, and p.256.
- 32) Chapter 5, p.228.
- 33). Chapter 10, p.384-392
- 34) Chapter 10, p.389
- 35) Chapter 6, pp 246-7.
- 36) Chapter 6, p.257.
- 37) Chapter 6, p.257.
- 38) Chapter 6, p. 259, plus Chapter 10 p.407.
- 39) Unfortunately the statistics for attendance and participation in public sports between 1918 and 1939 are surprisingly limited. See Halsey, Op.Cit. pp.561-2.
- 40) Chapter 10, p 407-409
- 41) Briggs, Vol. I. p.263.
- 42) Chapter 8, p.298-300
- 43) Chapter 6, p.262-4.
- 44) Chapter 6, p.262.
- 45) Chapter 10, p.403-404
- 46) Chapter 10, p.400-401
- 47) Chapter 6, p.259.
- 48) Particularly associated with the Hadow Report, New Ventures in Broadcasting: A Study in Adult Education, the publication of the Listener, BBC Archives file 183.2, both in 1928 and some press confusion about the use of the alternative programme is the Regional Scheme for instance, the Evening Standard 11 Oct 1926.
- 49) Broadcast over Britain, p.79 and p.112.
- 50) Ibid., p.17 and Chapter 7.
- 51) Chapter 6, p.261.
- 52) Chapter 8, p. 298
- 53) Chapter 5, pp 225-227
- 54) H. Nicolson, Diaries and Letters 1939-1945. 1967, p.99.
'Attlee is worried about the BBC retaining its class voice and personnel and would like to see a far greater infiltration of working-class speakers.'
Entry for 3 July 1940.

- 55) Chapter 6, p 261-2.
- 56) Chapter 5, p.179. 'On Ants and Grasshoppers'.
- 57) For instance 'Men Talking' and 'Time to Spare'.
- 58) Chapter 8, p.328.
- 59) Chapter 6, pp 264-5.
- 60) Chapter 8, p.298-300.
- 61) Chapter 8, p. 315-6.
- 62) Chapter 2, p.49.
- 63) Particularly after the lifting of the ruling on controversial material in 1927, and the creation of the BBC news section in 1934.
- 64) Chapter 10 pp 391-2.
- 65) Chapter 8, p.301.
- 66) Briggs, Vol.I, p.258-262.
- 67) Particularly 'Uncle Mac' (Derek McCulloch) who had a syndicated column in many local papers.
- 68) Lewis, Broadcasting from Within, p.101. Lewis was 'Uncle Caractacus' and many other senior BBC officials became broadcast 'Uncles'.
- 69) Chapter V, pp 196-201.
- 70) Chapter 2, pp 76-7 and Footnotes.
- 71) Chapter 3, pp 79-83.
- 72) Chapter 9, pp370-371.
- 73) Chapter 3, pp 83-85.
- 74) Chapter 8, p.320
- 75) Women went out to work in increasing numbers throughout the period. Halsey, OpCit. pp 114-5.
- 76) Chapter 8, pp327-328
- 77) Chapter 8, p.328.
- 78) Chapter 6, p.257.
- 79) Chapter 8, p.330.
- 80) Chapter 10, p.382.
- 81) Townswoman June 1937, p.61.
- 82) Ibid., Feb 1935, p.210 and Nov 1937, p.183.

- 83) Chapter 1, pp 22-28.
- 84) Chapter 1, pp 20-21.
- 85) Chapter 8, pp.336-338.
- 86) Chapter 7, pp 274-275.
- 87) Chapter 7, pp 272-273.
- 88) Chapter 8, pp 337.
- 89) Chapter 3, pp 104-107.
- 90) Chapter 7, pp 270-272.
- 91) Chapter 4, p.150.
- 92) Chapter 5, pp 203-208.
- 93) Chapter 5, p.205.

- 94) The Annan Committee on Broadcasting Cmnd 6753, reporting in 1978 advocated a television channel with the control of a publisher rather than an editor but this suggestion was not applied to radio.

- 95) Chapter 5, pp 199-201.
- 96) Chapter 4, pp 167-173.
- 97) Chapter 2, p.51 and 75-77.
- 98) Chapter 3, pp 130-133.
- 99) Robson, Op.Cit. pp 73-104.

- 100) Ibid., The electorate was considerably expanded following the 1918 and 1928 Representation of the People Acts.

- 101) Chapter 5, p.203.
- 102) Chapter 5, p.201.
- 103) Chapter 4, p.167.
- 104) Chapter 8, pp 337-338.
- 105) Chapter 6, p.261.
- 106) Chapter 7, pp.275-276.

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