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BRITISH AUDIENCE QUICK TO KNOCK RADIO PROGRAMS

Listeners, Paying Tax Upon Sets, Guard Against One-Sided Debate, Opinions—Trade Ballyhoo Tabooed

By Dan Rogers
 U. P. Staff Correspondent
 LONDON (UP)—British broadcasting is one of the most thoroughly regulated mediums for expression in the world, compared with the privileges allowed American radio commentators, yet the British Broadcasting corporation has been deluged recently with charges of bias, prejudice and outright propaganda.

Broadcasting here is an airtight government monopoly. Well-bred Britons shudder at the thought that crude persons "in trade" should sponsor, produce and pay for programs of their own choice, sprinkling the program with advertising in the process.

British radio listeners pay the post-office department a liberal fee of 10s (approximately \$2.50) a year for each receiving set operated. For this fee they listen, until midnight only, to chamber music, symphonies, educational talks, carefully culled news bulletins, dances or orchestras, a limited number of restrained political speeches, non-controversial plays, sports results and more chamber music.

No Opinions
 And woe betide any B. B. C. announcer or other employee, who even by an unfortunate choice of adjective or phrase, should express an opinion. The company's charter empowers the postmaster-general to issue a notice requiring the B. B. C. to refrain from sending any signified broadcast matter. It may be drawn in general terms or may relate to a particular subject. "A notice of the former type has been issued desiring the B. B. C. to abstain from broadcasting any expression of its own opinion in regard to matters of public policy, etc." the postmaster-general told Commons in reply to a question recently.

For invited speakers the restrictions are not so strict, but when their utterances are controversial, the B. B. C. quickly hears from half the retired colonels in the United Kingdom if the other side of the issue is not given—and sometimes if it is!

Since British broadcasting is completely a government product, paid for entirely by taxation, individual John Bulls are not at all backward about telling the B. B. C. how to run the business. Neither are members of the House of Commons, especially those on the opposition benches.

Piece Goods Section of New M. M. Department Store



Not Patriotic Enough

The latest squabble came over a series of broadcasts describing conditions of life in various countries, an educational program directed at the schools. Prof. John Hilton, dealing with Russia, said a few nice things about the Soviet system, omitted a few things not so nice, but wound up patriotically enough with this assertion:

"They are nothing like so well off or so well looked after as the common people are here. I should say, at a rough shot, that a worker in Russia enjoys about half the good things in life that a similar worker enjoys here."

But if Prof. Hilton, and the B. B. C., thought this little talk would pass unchallenged, they were wrong. "Letters to the editor" columns blossomed with indignant protests. The issue reached the floor of Commons when Sir Nairne Stewart-Sandeman and Major-General Sir Alfred Knox asked the postmaster-general, respectively, if precautions were taken to insure that broadcasts did not contain propaganda, and if he would make representations to the B. B. C. to prevent the repetition of Soviet propaganda.

The postmaster-general replied that he believed the B. B. C. maintained a fair balance, took great care to exclude political propaganda from programs. He advised his critics to "read the broadcast rather than accounts put about concerning the broadcast."

Commons Takes Hand
 On the same day, the B. B. C. was criticized in Commons regarding its

reporting of the proceedings of the Commons itself. Because "an impression of bias was aroused frequently owing to lack of proportion and perspective" the postmaster-general was asked to have the B. B. C. submit news bulletins to party whips before they were broadcast. He declined, saying he thought the presentation fair to both sides.

A news bulletin was criticized in Commons for quoting a Berlin newspaper, even though the quotation was carefully designated as such and the name of the paper was given.

Last month the B. B. C. cancelled broadcast of a play, satire on munitions makers, for fear "this might be considered the government's view." Britain's rush to rearm was not mentioned.

Defenders of talks like that by Prof. Hilton say that both sides of every question must be broadcast, however, unpalatable this may be to partisans.

Propaganda Views
 "Partisanship at the microphone would kill broadcasting as an educational force," said William Wyman Vaughan, chairman of the central council for school broadcasting. "It is surely our duty to prepare children to think for themselves and so be able to resist the propaganda, not always scrupulous, to which they will be subjected in later life."

Which brings up the increasingly important question of radio propaganda, national and international, as employed already by several countries. Caroline Lady Bridgeman, one of the

B. B. C. board of governors, said recently:

"One country recently stole a wavelength on which it broadcast very undesirable programs in English. The question whether British stations should broadcast in foreign tongues is being anxiously discussed with the foreign office."

Italian stations often broadcast in English during the crisis over Ethiopia, both sides in Spain in the current war broadcast nightly in English.

Pants Holder.
 CLEVELAND—(UP)—Residents on Lake Shore Boulevard are considering some kind of reward for 15-year-old Robert Kiplinger and his dog Rex. He caught a "Peeping Tom" by the seat of the pants.

Drawing It Fine.
 LIEPZIG.—(UP)—A cellophane thread so thin that 15½ miles of it weighs only a pound, is one of the improved artificial textiles to be exhibited at the autumn fair just opened.

Beyond Speech.
 FALL RIVER, Mass.—(UP)—Although a resident of the United States for 51 years, Joseph Morrisette admitted in district court, through an interpreter, that he could not speak English.

Closing time for Too Late to Classify Ads is 1:30 p. m.

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