

DEVELOPMENT OF BROADCASTING IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

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The first public broadcasting in this country was done by a few talented amateurs on the Copperbelt, using their own Transmitters, in 1940. It was an experiment, to see whether broadcasting to Africans would be worth while from the viewpoints of war propaganda and of getting at the people quickly in the event of serious war emergency. Those amateurs, incidentally, are still doing good work. They made our direct broadcast of the Copperbelt Sports possible last month. They will, I hope, help to bring the All Rhodesia Rugby matches to you next month, and I should like to pay a tribute to them here, as our first pioneers in broadcasting.

As their early experiment showed promise, a small Government Broadcasting Station was set up at Lusaka in 1941. Our main object then was to stimulate the people's war effort. It was a good idea, but that was very nearly all it was in those days. We couldn't get men and we couldn't get equipment, but we could have given Heath Robinson a few points.

I shall never forget our first little studio: we used it from 1941 to 1945. It was a little room in the Airport building. We never actually tried to swing a cat in it, though we did have a cat to stop the rats eating the wax insulation in the control panel, but if we had, there wouldn't have been much room to swing it. Anyway, the station cat left before we thought of it. It contacted a high tension wire, shot out into the night swearing bitterly, and was never seen again.

Having heard a bit about Acoustics, we sealed up one door, double blanketed the other door and the windows and stopped up the fireplace. Stopping up the fireplace proved its worth all right, because at one time we had an owl nesting in the chimney and another time two doves. They hardly came over the mike at all, but a good many other unauthorised sound effects did. Even broadcasters need air, and after the first five minutes we always had to draw the curtains and open the windows. Then the roar of the aircraft taking off, the shouts of the Defence Force drilling on the airfield, the barking of dogs, and sometimes even the pungent rebukes of the Airport Superintendent to his garden boy, were all faithfully recorded by the mike.

From our little speech input equipment ran an overhead wire to our baby transmitter over a mile away. Our main switch was in the hangar 400 yards away. We had innumerable breakdowns, especially in the rains. And the routine for breakdowns was rather like this. Ring the transmitter with the hand operated telephone - no answer - line down. Rush across to the hangar to see if the switch had thrown out and push it back if it had. If it hadn't, jump in a car and drive to the transmitter house, argue with the sentry, get in and see how long the fault would take to fix, and either rush back to the studio or go home, according to the advice of the Corporal of Signals working on the transmitter.

We had almost every conceivable type of broadcasting trouble but we carried on enthusiastically, if not very effectively and, with

the help of the local post office engineering staff who were already overworked in their own jobs owing to the demands of war, we did achieve some technical improvement. On the programme side, we worked very hard indeed, particularly on the European programmes, until one day, or rather one night, when I had been sitting up very late preparing a programme, it suddenly struck me that we probably hadn't got any listeners, or at any rate hardly any, and that it was all rather a waste of time. So we conducted a little research and found indeed that we had very few European listeners outside Lusaka, because we couldn't be heard. We also found that the number of Africans listening to our community receivers was much smaller than we thought.

I then decided that we must either give up broadcasting, or draw up a proper scheme for really efficient broadcasting and try to get the money to put it into effect. Broadcasting is a very expensive business, and it seemed pretty clear that Northern Rhodesia alone could never afford a really efficient organisation, and that the ideal would be a regional organisation for Central Africa, with Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland all helping to foot the bill.

First of all we obviously had to get hold of an expert to advise us on the technical side, on the problem of getting effective coverage. It took us two years, thanks to the war, to get the expert out. He was Mr. W.E.C. Varley, one of the B.B.C.'s most brilliant Engineers. It is his plan that forms the basis, on the technical side, of all that we are doing now.

Having got a sound plan to work on, we put up a scheme to the Central African Council for a regional organisation in which all European broadcasting would be done by Southern Rhodesia from Salisbury for the three countries, and we would do all the African broadcasting from Lusaka. That was in 1945 and although the scheme went through, it took a long time going through, and is still in 1949, not properly in force.

Under this scheme, Southern Rhodesia's contribution was to be in the expense of increased European broadcasting for Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were to split the cost of African Broadcasting in the proportion of 7 to 3. Fortunately, however, by this time, funds for regional development in Central Africa had become available from the British Government, and most of the cost of our African broadcasting has come, in the event, from Colonial Development and Welfare funds. Only half the recurrent expenditure comes from the ordinary Government funds of this country and of Nyasaland. Incidentally, there is some more money coming from the British Government this year for expansion of our broadcasting here.

Negotiations over this scheme dragged on at a slow and heartbreaking pace between the territories concerned and the Central African Council and the Colonial Office, and it was not until the end of 1947 that the scheme was approved and funds were allocated. Meantime however, we had got some expert technical staff, reasonable studio and transmitter buildings and some transmitter and studio equipment and had improved the service very greatly.

But we still had, and we still have, a very long way to go and I want to explain to you how we are going.

There is an idea about that we here in Lusaka are not interested in European broadcasting, but only in African broadcasting. That is quite wrong. It is true that under our present inter-territorial agreement European broadcasting for the whole of Central Africa will be conducted from Salisbury as soon as their new 15 kilowatt transmitter has been installed and tested, which will be about the end of this year. We shall then drop our European broadcasts on Saturday and Sunday. But that does not mean that less European broadcasting will be done for Northern Rhodesia. On the contrary, much more will be done. Instead of getting Northern Rhodesia news once a week, you will get it once a day. You will still hear

speakers from Northern Rhodesia, you will still be able to listen to local musical or dramatic talent and you will get a continuous programme every day for many hours of general entertainment instead of your present two programmes a week. Reception will be very clear from a 15 kilowatt transmitter in Salisbury - after all we are only broadcasting to you now from Lusaka on a $2\frac{1}{2}$ k.w. and you can hear pretty well.

We are represented on the Southern Rhodesia Broadcasting Board and shall have our say in programme content, just as Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland are represented on our African Broadcasting Board and have their say. Besides the facilities of telephone and telegraph for transmission of news items, and the airmail which will carry locally recorded material to Salisbury, we shall have a radio link with Salisbury.

The radio link will be provided by a small transmitter beamed on Salisbury so that the voices of leading personalities in this country can not only be broadcast to you by recorded material sent to Salisbury, but whenever necessary, speakers can come to the mike in Lusaka, be transmitted on the beam to Salisbury or be retransmitted from the Salisbury transmitter for general coverage. This radio link will, I hope, be two-way, so that Salisbury can also transmit to us material for African programmes. We are arranging for another one way radio link from a small studio to be set up in Zomba, with a small transmitter beamed on to us here.

Far from stopping European broadcasting, we are therefore going to give you much more and much better broadcasting as soon as Salisbury is ready. You must visualise us as part of a Central African broadcasting system. The fact that the European and African sections of the system happen to be 300 miles apart is irrelevant. All that it will mean to you is that if you want to listen for example, to the Northern Rhodesian news in the European programme, you will tune into, say, 41.3 metres, and if you want to listen to the African programme, you will tune in to say, 41.7 metres.

This arrangement was made in the interests of economy and efficiency, since studios and transmitters were already in operation in Salisbury for European broadcasting and studios and transmitters were also already in operation in Lusaka mainly for African broadcasting. The cost of centralising all existing equipment, adding new studio and transmitter buildings and houses for staff, at one centre, would have been very considerable. Administrative difficulties of centralisation would have arisen also, as Southern Rhodesia broadcasting is controlled by the Postmaster General and Northern Rhodesian broadcasting is controlled by the Director of Information. Moreover, the technique, the whole set up, of African broadcasting is so different from that of European broadcasting, that two separate branches, whether close together or far apart, are inevitable and distance does not really mean much in broadcasting.

In actual fact, speakers or performers will not have to come even to Lusaka to be broadcast in the European service of the Central African system from Salisbury. We already have one mobile recording van ready for the road and are fitting up another. We are also in the process of fitting up a mobile transmitter for outside broadcasts. So, to take an example at random, if the Luanshya Dramatic Society is putting on a Gilbert & Sullivan Opera and has some really good singers, we can send the van up to record part of the show and fly the records to Salisbury. If a simultaneous broadcast of an event is wanted, for example, a commentary on a Rugged match, we shall be able to send up the mobile transmitter which will transmit to Lusaka, be retransmitted on the beam to Salisbury, and retransmitted for general coverage from there.

Now I'd like to remove some misconceptions about African Broadcasting. "Educating the natives" some people say, in rather depreciating tones. Well of course, much broadcasting time has anyway to be allotted to entertainment. But for the rest, using the word "education" in the widest sense, we are doing our best to help in the education of the African, we believe on the right lines - hygiene, agriculture, housing, sanitation and so on. Apart from the fact that our critics can always listen in and judge for themselves whether we are on the right lines, and that we also have now a new Advisory Board including representatives of employers to guide us, I would put to you these points in favour of African broadcasting. The majority of Africans are still illiterate. Broadcasting is about the only way to get at them in the mass. But surely we must get at the mass, so as to avoid the unpleasant consequences which have arisen in other parts of the world, where the native population consists of a handful of intelligentsia and a completely ignorant black mass who can be so easily misled by a few agitators of the intelligentsia class. Whether you like it or not, the African mind is awakening, is thirsty for knowledge. Let us give it the right kind of knowledge; if we don't it will surely pick up the wrong. You know the old saying about idle hands and mischief. Well the same applies to idle minds, and there are always people, even as far afield as Moscow, looking for idle minds in Africa. Surely again we need the most efficient workers, both black and white, to work in the development of this country, and the African cannot become a better worker without a good deal more knowledge than he generally has now.

I put another point to you. We want a happy and contented African people. Now what can the native do when he has finished his work, his own work or yours. He can get drunk if he has the money, or gamble or worse. If there's a full moon he can dance. But most nights he can only go back to his hut, with no light and generally no ability to read even if he had light. There he can talk and think. And one of the things he can talk and think about, not very happily, is how much better off you are than he is, you with so many things he hasn't got, including a radio to entertain you. The African loves music, plays, rhetoric argument - all the things that radio can put across so well. Let him have them.

Incidentally, if you agree with me on this you can help in the cause yourself - by letting your servants listen to Lusaka sometimes on your sets, even as a few people have done, by fitting a cheap extension speaker to your boy's quarters. It's a strange thing, but much more interest in African broadcasting is shown by Europeans outside Northern Rhodesia than by those in this country. By Southern Rhodesian farmers and miners, who think we help to keep their labour happy, and even by Native Affairs branch of the Johannesburg municipality and the Compound Manager of one of the biggest mines on the Rand, who amongst others have asked us to do more broadcasting of interest to their natives. So there must be something in it.

You know, we've had a lot of opposition to African broadcasting, both from unofficial, and earlier on, even from official quarters. We've got over most of it now, but some people still have the wrong ideas about it. I obviously can't cover all the points about African broadcasting in this talk, but if there's anything more you want to know, I hope you'll write and ask. And I hope you will correct anybody else's wrong ideas.

One misconception is that we ought to pre-set receivers, so that Africans can only listen to Lusaka. It would be wrong to do this, both from technical and psychological considerations. We could not pre-set, because we shall have to change wavelengths periodically for various inescapable reasons, and anyway it is very easy to un-pre-set a pre-set receiver and Africans would soon learn how to do it. Psychologically too, it would be wrong. The African

English literate who wanted to listen to Daventry would feel cheated. A prejudice would be created in all listeners who would think they were being prevented from free listening and fed only on our propaganda. It is up to us to see if any undesirable broadcasts ever are directed at Africans, that they are compered. We know the African's languages, his mentality, his likes and dislikes and we have a powerful local signal. In a free listening world, I'm sure we can keep the African loyalty to Central African broadcasts.

Another thing, I heard only the other day that somebody said the Government was subsidising these new cheap sets for Africans, to the tune of £30 a set. That's nonsense of course. The manufacturers' cost of the set is £4 f.o.b. London. It will sell at five pounds in the shops here. It isn't only for Africans anyway. Lots of you will buy it. And as a result of one manufacturer producing a cheap all-wave set for us, several others have now entered the field, though they are still only in the prototype stage, and I hope they cut each others throats until sets get cheaper and cheaper and every African householder can buy one, because I believe that broadcasting can and will be the greatest influence for good that ever hit Africa and the African.

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