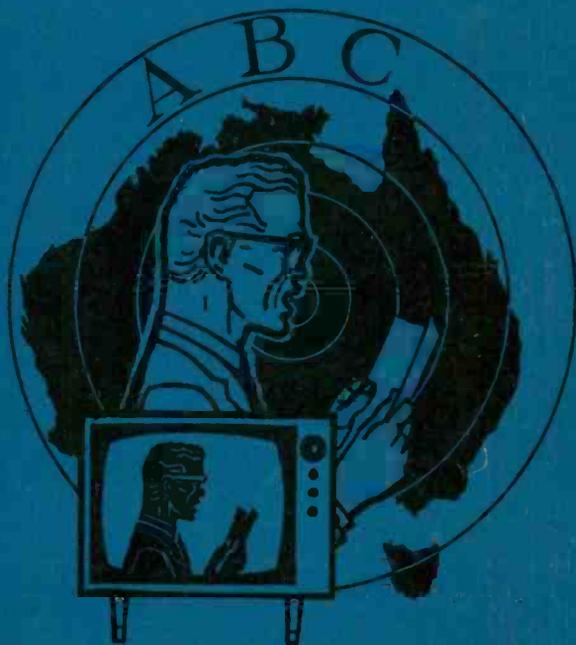


**LONGMANS**

*The*  
**AUSTRALIAN  
BROADCASTING  
COMMISSION**

*A National  
Service*



**AUSTRALIAN LANDMARKS**

# AUSTRALIAN LANDMARKS

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Edited by Renée Erdos

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THE AUSTRALIAN  
BROADCASTING COMMISSION  
A NATIONAL SERVICE

by

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Gramophone records in 1932 were ten and twelve inch discs of 78 r.p.m., playing from one to five minutes. (See page 19.)

## *INTRODUCTION*

LANDMARKS are easily recognizable in the distance, standing out against their background, and, looking from the present into the distance of the past, it is not difficult to understand the importance of events which have had such significant effects that they are landmarks in history. History, however, is made throughout time, and the years through which we live are a part of it. It is far more difficult to recognize the landmarks among which we live, but one landmark of twentieth century world history is the development of broadcasting by radio and television as a means of communication.

This book tells the story of one aspect of broadcasting as a landmark in Australia's history—the story of the service which belongs to the nation, the service of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. It tells the story of what it is, and how it came to be what it is.

The sources from which the facts of the story of the Australian Broadcasting Commission—a National Service—have been gathered are the newspapers and radio magazines of the time, the Reports which the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the Broadcasting Control Board have made to Parliament, the correspondence on file at the Australian Broadcasting Commission and in its archives, and other contemporary reports and reviews. A list of these sources is printed on page 62.



## 1. THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

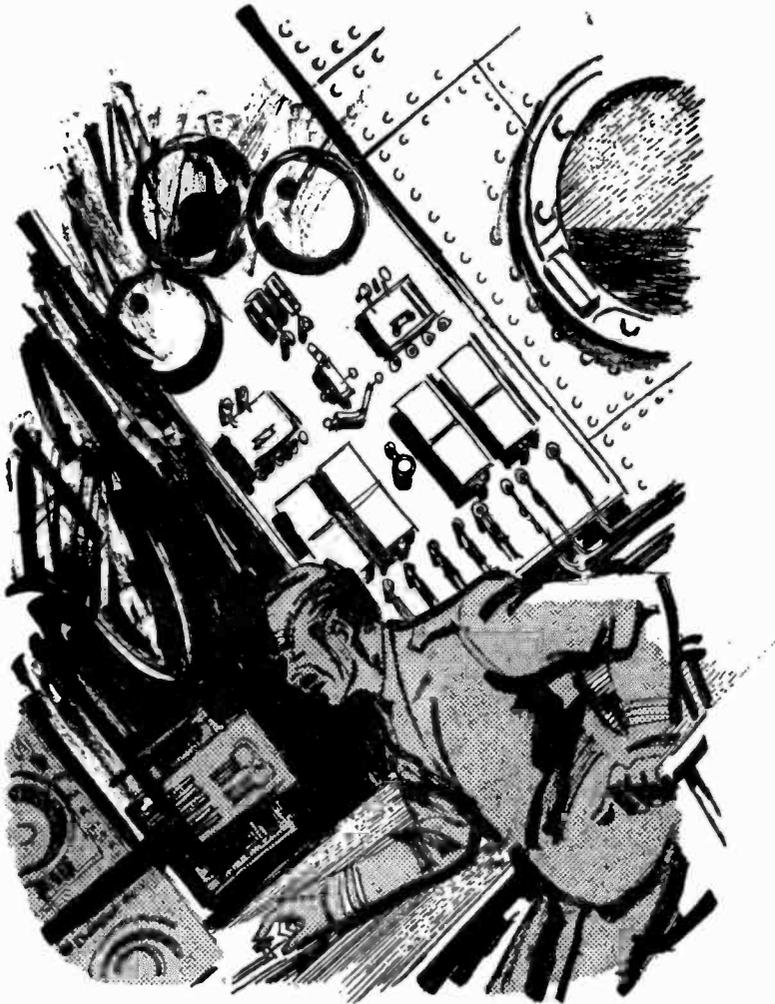
THE first important use of wireless in Australia was in ships. As far back as 1910 progressive steamship companies fitted their ships with wireless transmitters and receivers, and the captains, while far out to sea, kept in touch through the wireless telegraph operator with the mainland or other ships. 'Sparks', as the operator was generally known, tapped out his messages in the Morse code, spelling each letter in dots and dashes. On the mainland other wireless operators heard the coded signals, wrote out the messages, and telegraphed them.

The importance of this new development became clear in 1912 when 'Sparks' on the sinking *Titanic* saved over a thousand lives by signalling the famous SOS which was heard on another ship passing nearby. It came to the rescue of the survivors struggling in the icy water. Without wireless there would probably have been no survivors.

Several shore to ship radio stations were set up by Australia's Commonwealth Government at this time. This, however, was not the first sign of interest the Government had shown. In 1905 it had passed the important Wireless Telegraphy Act which officially recognized wireless as a means of communication. During that year a business company closely connected with the great pioneer of wireless, and called after him the Marconi Company, built a two-way radio station at Queenscliffe in Victoria and another at Devonport in Tasmania, effecting good two-way morse communication across Bass Strait.

Early experiments were largely the work of interested enthusiasts who found this new way of communication fascinating. Many designed and built their own equipment. In 1910 a number joined the newly formed *Wireless Institute of New South Wales* and carried out really exciting experiments and the Commonwealth Government drew up plans for wireless telegraph stations in Sydney and Perth which were to have a range of 1,250 miles in the daytime. Also, in that year,

THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION



Wireless operator signalling SOS during sinking of *Titanic*.

young Mr. Ernest Fisk, aged 24, came to this country to play a part in developing wireless. So, by the time the value of wireless was so clearly shown to the whole world in the case of the *Titanic* in 1912, Australians had advanced quite a long way in their use of wireless as a strikingly effective means of communication and as an absorbing hobby.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

When the Great War broke out in August, 1914, there were eighteen wireless stations dotted round our coastline including two special Post Office links with ships at sea. During the war years 1914-18 wireless communications of this kind were greatly developed, particularly after the enemy built up the devastating submarine fleet which at one time seemed to be sinking ships faster than they could be replaced. During this time, from 1915 to 1920, broadcasting was controlled by the Minister for the Navy.

The value of wireless stations was shown as early as 9 November, 1914, in the sea battle between the Australian warship H.M.A.S. *Sydney* and the German raider the *Emden*. The books of the Cable Telegraph Company have a vivid account of that exciting day when the small staff on Cocos Islands, northwest of Perth, saw the *Emden* steaming up to them at full speed. The purpose of this surprise visit was the destruction of the newly erected wireless transmitter and mast. A large raiding party leapt ashore and the Germans began destroying both the wireless transmitter and the cable



German landing party wrecking Radio Station on Cocos Islands.

## THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

equipment, but not before the message of the *Emden's* arrival had been broadcast to all ships nearby. The demolition was only half completed when H.M.A.S. *Sydney*, which had received the wireless message, came up at full speed, catching the raider completely by surprise. The *Emden* was sunk. A cheer went round the British Empire and her allies as the news was broadcast to the far ends of the earth.

Late in the Great War came another important development. A monument in the grounds of a house in Wahroonga, Sydney, bears this inscription:—

The first direct wireless message from England to Australia, sent under the direction of the Marchese Marconi, from the Marconi Wireless Station at Carnarvon, Wales, was received by E. T. Fisk, Esq., in the experimental wireless station attached to his residence, Luciana, here, on 22 September, 1918. To commemorate the event this monument has been erected. Unveiled by E. T. Fisk, Esq., 14 December, 1935.

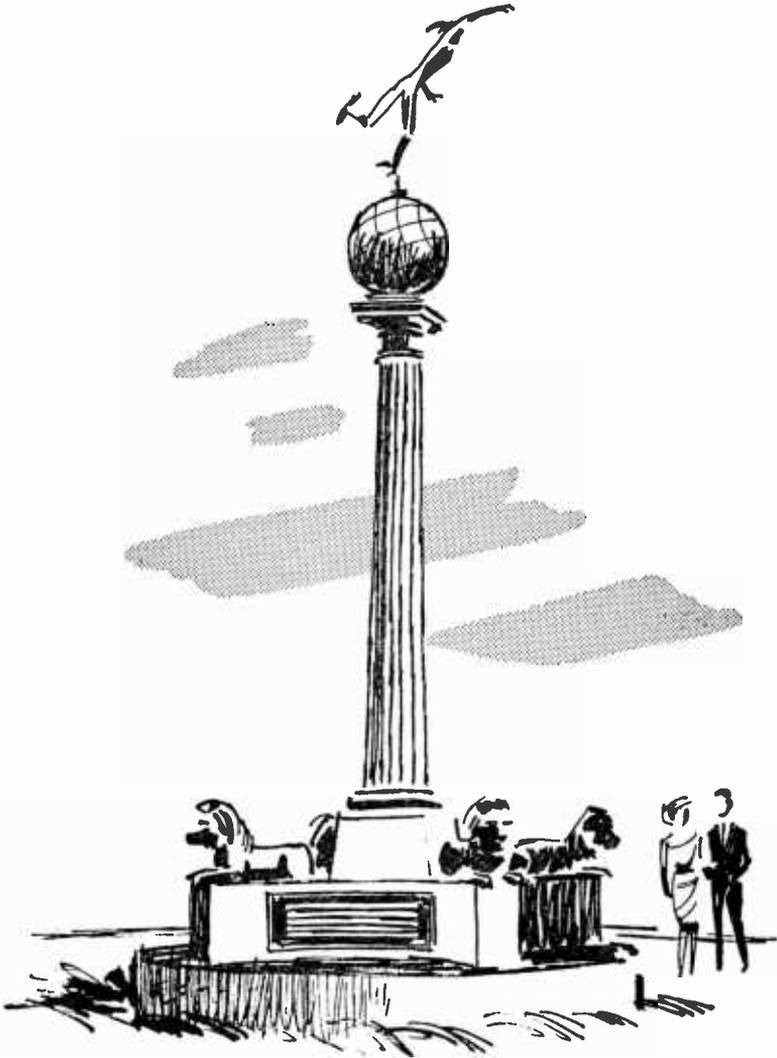
The message referred to on the monument was a morse code signal. Radio, as we know it, had not yet been invented.

In 1920 in the United States of America the first radio broadcast of the spoken word was made over Station KDKA Pittsburgh during an election. Soon Australians were experimenting with this new development which in those days was called wireless telephony, and in the same year in both Sydney and Melbourne, public demonstrations of successful broadcasting were made, not only by Ernest Fisk, but also by the Commonwealth Government Radio Service, who, by this time, were first in the field. It was, however, the business company called Amalgamated Wireless Australasia Ltd. that, with Ernest Fisk as its Managing Director, had been formed in 1913 to make receivers and transmitters, which gave the first complete broadcast of a concert from Federal Parliament House, at that time not in Canberra but in Melbourne.

In 1921, A.W.A. began a weekly programme from its Melbourne station. The competition between the great Company and the Government Radio Service spurred on the

### THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

inventor and development of microphones and receiving sets was so rapid that in 1922, the year in which the British Broadcasting Company was founded, A.W.A. thought the time



The monument erected in Wahroonga, suburb of Sydney, N.S.W., to commemorate the reception of the first direct wireless message from England to Australia on 22 September, 1918.

## THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

was ripe for systematic daily broadcasting in all States and made a proposal to the Commonwealth Government. Other firms, seeing the opportunity now opening up, wanted to have a share in the new industry. The Government had to make a decision. As broadcasting stations make very great use of telephone lines it seemed quite natural for the Government to place its Minister, the Postmaster-General, in charge of the developments.

In May, 1923, the Hon. W. G. Gibson called together all the interested parties to work out the future of the broadcasting industry. The companies decided that they could serve the listeners and at the same time pay their way by the 'sealed set' method. The sets were tuned and then sealed to receive only the wavelengths of the stations for which a subscription had been paid. The first station to begin broadcasting was 2BL Sydney on 23 November, although it first used the call sign 2SB. It belonged to Broadcasters Ltd. and charged a subscription of ten shillings a year, a very low fee at the time because this company wanted to sell many sets and make up for any losses by profits from these sales. 2FC, owned by Farmer & Co., Sydney, began broadcasting on 5 December and charged listeners three guineas. 3AR, owned by Associated Radio Co. of Melbourne, opened on 26 January, charging three guineas and 6WF, owned by Westralian Farmers Ltd., of Perth, opened on 4 June, charging listeners four guineas. These business companies were the first pioneers of public broadcasting in Australia. The four stations have had a varied but unbroken history and are now key stations of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Australia's national service, which was founded in 1932 only, so all the early developments in public broadcasting were ventures by private companies.

Broadcasting is expensive. Equipment, artists' fees, staff salaries, building costs and charges for patent rights all made expenses mount alarmingly and some of the companies were soon in difficulties. The money which came from the subscriptions for sealed sets was a paltry sum: it soon became clear that listeners were unwilling to buy sets at such cost.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

Wages were low and with the listener's licence fee of ten shillings charged by the Commonwealth Government added it would cost more than a week's wages to subscribe to one station. Some listeners, it was feared, were evading the fees, as only 1400 licences were taken out under this system.

Something had to be done to prevent a collapse. A new scheme was worked out by the Postmaster-General after the failure of another conference of all the companies in 1924. He divided the stations into two classes—A and B. A-class stations were to be strictly limited and were to be supported by the money raised by the Government from licence fees of £1. Their programmes were to be provided by a business company. They were expected to give programmes to country areas by means of relay stations. B-class stations were to be supported by the profits they made by advertising. This was the point at which broadcasting in Australia began to divide into a National service and a group, or Federation, of commercial broadcasters. At the time, however, this was not clearly seen, and five years were to pass before the establishment of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in June, 1932. In the meantime an interesting programme Company, the Australian Broadcasting Company, was created.

## **2. THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMPANY**

THE years 1931-32 were hard times in Australia. Unemployment reached an all-time record and wages fell to a level which made it difficult for anyone to live on them. The shadow of unemployment was over almost every worker's head, and the queues of people waiting to receive their unemployment relief, or the dole as it was called, grew longer. These were the last years of the Australian Broadcasting Company's short life. They were not favourable times for a Company to make money by providing entertainment, and it is not surprising that the Government had to step in to save the broadcasting network from financial starvation, but in three years it did much for broadcasting in Australia.

The Australian Broadcasting Company was formed on 1 July, 1929. The Government had decided that the interests of country listeners would best be served if the stations were operated by the Postmaster-General's Department, as the Postmaster-General was the Minister responsible to the Government for all telegraphic and telephone communication and radio seemed to be a logical extension of this. There were many telephone lines in use connecting the studios to transmitters and to country and interstate stations. These had to be maintained and improved and the Government quite naturally looked to its expert Department to carry out this task. It was a different matter with the programmes, however.

Radio programmes are meant to be entertainment for the most part and it was natural for the Government to think of the leaders in theatrical and musical entertainment as the most suitable people to control the programmes. They invited tenders from the public for the provision of programmes on all stations and received eight good offers. The combined tender of Greater Union Theatres Ltd., Fuller's Theatres Ltd., and J. Albert & Sons Ltd. was accepted. The chief officials

## THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMPANY

of the Company were important figures in these enterprises. The Broadcasting Company was to take over only the A-class stations.

The advantage of having a national service was shown by the improvement which was made in the programmes of all States by pooling the best resources of their stations and relaying the most expensive and important items to all States. The pattern of the Australian Broadcasting Service was now taking shape and it met with the approval of the people as shown by the rise in the number of licences. This was, of course, not due only to the improved A-class stations alone, because at this time there were also twelve B-class stations operating in four States and some of these had great popular appeal.

It is unfortunate that the historical records and files of correspondence of the Company were not preserved, otherwise much more would be known of a very interesting period in the history of broadcasting in Australia. Most of the staff, with the exception of the General Manager, of the A-class stations, numbering 120 in all, were taken over by the Australian Broadcasting Commission when it went into operation on 1 July, 1932. Some of them are still actively engaged in broadcasting and some readers may have the opportunity of discussing the early years of broadcasting in Australia with them.

Although these were years of good progress during which a number of local stations became welded into something like a national service, there were great difficulties. The money from the licence fees was insufficient, particularly for the further expansion to country areas which the Government demanded and the great depression was forcing many private business operators into bankruptcy. The Government decided to take full responsibility for the further development of broadcasting and in May, 1932, passed the Australian Broadcasting Commission Act, thus acquiring the twelve A-class stations and taking over the service on 1 July.

### **3. THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION—THE FIRST YEAR**

ON 1 July, 1932, the early morning announcers on twelve stations in each State capital city and some country centres used for the first time a new name, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, a name which is often shortened to A.B.C. Why Commission? What is a Commission? The answer to this question gives a lead to all the activities in the history and development of the A.B.C. The Commission is a small Committee of men and women who have earned the respect and confidence of the nation's Government and have been appointed by Order in Council to watch over the interests of the Australian people in the field of Broadcasting. They are not members of the staff and do not prepare or present programmes. In the first Annual Report of the A.B.C. this is quite clearly indicated in the following passage:

'The Commission has taken the view that the function of its Members—as distinct from that of its Staff—is to supervise rather than create programmes and to safeguard the interests and the wishes of the public in the manner more of trustees than of entrepreneurs. The staff employed has had long experience of programme-building and it was believed from the beginning as it is believed now, that, in general, its output has reflected accurately the desires of the listeners.'

This was an enlightened outlook and reflects the confidence and enterprise of the first Chairman of the Commission, Charles (later Sir Charles) Lloyd Jones and his four Commissioners.

The changeover from the Broadcasting Company was made smoothly and without any interruption to broadcasting services. For some time the listeners did not notice any changes but, like a tree which had been transplanted from a pot into

## THE FIRST YEAR

a garden, new growth in the roots was reflected in time by twigs, leaves and branches.

The first Annual Report of the Commissioners to Parliament for the year ended 30 June, 1933, shows how well the roots of the future tree were being planted, for in that year nearly all the main programme ideas of today took shape, elementary but quite recognizable. There is even this surprising sentence in the Report:

‘Considerable attention is being paid throughout the world to the use of ultra high frequencies for broadcasting and other radio purposes, particularly *Television*.’

The most important field of broadcasting then, as now, was music. By the end of the year the A.B.C. had arranged for regular programmes from a symphony orchestra in Sydney and another in Melbourne. Smaller units included concert orchestras, military bands, string quartets and wireless choruses in both cities. Beginnings were also made in other States for the formation of musical units like these. The broadcasts of the Sydney and Melbourne orchestras were often relayed by land telephone line to all States except Tasmania which at that time had no telephonic connection with Victoria. The Commission announced a policy of bringing notable musicians from overseas to Australia both to bring music of world standard to listeners and to provide the spur of competition for Australian musicians. Among the twenty distinguished visitors in this class were Edmund Kurtz, Jascha and Tossy Spivakovsky and Benno Moiseiwitsch. Their recitals were relayed whenever possible and more Australians heard live performances of world standard than was possible before.

Gramophone records in 1932 were ten and twelve inch discs of 78 r.p.m., playing from one to five minutes. In order to hear a complete opera or a symphony, a record lover would have to break the programme to change the record a number of times.

During the year a number of operas and other important long musical works were broadcast without interruption by the simple device of playing them from two turntables with

two sets of records. It is difficult for us who have become so used to long playing records to know what this meant for music appreciation.

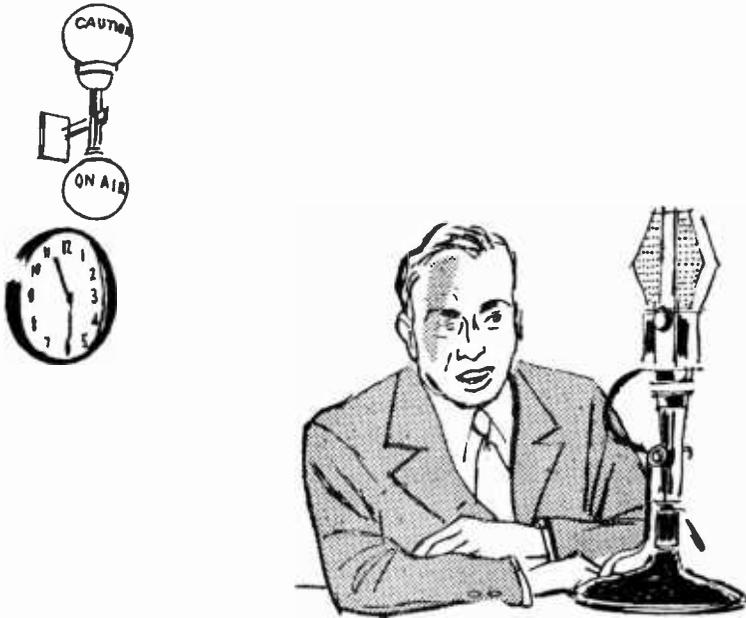
The Commission made it plain that its purpose was to serve people of all tastes. This was shown in the field of music by the number of light operas, musical comedies and musical sketches, old-time dance programmes and similar items which were broadcast and loved by the audiences. If there was anything lacking in the programmes it was perhaps the element of humour which developed only in later years.

Another important aspect of the Commission's work during this formative year was the promotion of the creative ability of Australian composers and musicians by the organization of nationwide competition. Big prizes were offered in a competition for composers of all kinds of music and more than eight hundred original works were entered. The adjudicators were pleased with the merit of many of the works and one was sent for publication and performance overseas.

Drama is certainly suited to radio performance and in some forms it is superbly presented by the unseen voices but, unlike music, a careful selection has to be made and adaptation is frequently necessary. In this first year of its activities the Commission was fully aware that, although dramatic productions and adaptations had advanced considerably since the first days of broadcasting, there was still much to be learnt about this new art form. In Section Five of this book the basic elements of radio drama are outlined and it will be seen that this is an art form with some advantages over stage and television productions but there are also pitfalls. In 1932 this was only coming to be realized. Nevertheless during the year over 1,200 hours of drama, nearly three per cent of the total programme time, was presented over twelve stations. The highlight of the year was a studio performance on 16 October of 'The Merchant of Venice' by a touring English company in which Dame Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson played.

News services, always popular, occupied over 1,500 hours. At this time the news was not obtained directly by the A.B.C. It was gathered by the various news agencies and newspapers

## THE FIRST YEAR



Early desk-type microphone.

and the A.B.C. bought the right to broadcast it. This was not very satisfactory because conditions were imposed which were not always favourable for the immediate broadcast of important events. The A.B.C. news services were usually directed to the special needs of people who were remote from the cities and daily newspapers.

Radio, and more recently television, have proved to be able to help the people considerably with their education. Adult listeners could perhaps regard any broadcast which enlarged their stock of ideas or added to their knowledge as education. This kind of education has always formed quite a large part of the activities of the A.B.C. and in its first year there was a noticeable programme strand devoted to this form of extension of knowledge and more will be said of it when dealing with the spoken word later in this section.

Education in the narrower sense of instruction to the young in schools, however, was also chosen as a suitable field for

## THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

broadcasting. The beginning of the present extensive Education Department of the A.B.C. are clearly shown in the activities of this year. Conferences were held with all leading educational authorities and on their advice a number of committees were formed to guide the A.B.C. in what it should attempt to teach. A system of school broadcasts was established. They were all in the form of talks to higher Forms, almost of a lecture type, and were given by experts in the subject fields. Although a long way from the kind of school broadcast that is given to-day it was the beginning of a development which has become very important in Australia.

Quite separate from the school broadcasts, children had an hour of programmes every day during the week directed especially towards them. They were quick to respond to this, as is shown by the mail. Out of a total of 189,749 letters received during the year, 57,601 were from children, an average of thirty-one per State per day. This surprising number reflects the genuine interest which they felt. The A.B.C. made particular efforts to retain their interest by sending cards and puzzles to them to help keep them amused. Frequent reports from parents also showed that they were keenly appreciative of the Children's Hour. Experimental broadcasts were carried out in many fields to find out where children's interest lay and how their needs could best be served.

For adults one of the most important aspects of all broadcasting is the spoken word, the direct communication of people telling the listeners their points of view, or groups debating matters on which they hold differing opinions. Through this means the listener becomes better informed on what is going on in the world around him. During this first year Australians heard, many for the first time, the voice of their Sovereign, King George V, and of the Prince of Wales. The Pope, the Admiral of the Fleet, the Prime Minister of England, and Herr Adolf Hitler. These were recorded overseas, but within Australia itself there were many notable broadcasts ranging over a wealth of subjects. One of the most

contentious issues of the year was the campaign which the radical politician, E. G. (Teddy) Theodore, was leading to nationalize banking and to repudiate indebtedness to overseas investors. The nation was almost torn apart on this issue as the fiery orator moved from city to city putting forth his views in a series of tumultuous public meetings. On 28 September of this year he was able to place his views before the people of Australia over the A.B.C. network. This was an historic occasion because it was the first time a really prickly political issue was handled by the A.B.C. and it was fully realized that this case could become a precedent for future policy. The situation was met by broadcasting Mr. Theodore's views in the form of a debate with a clever orator who held opposing views, the well-known King's Counsel, Mr. R. Windeyer. In taking this step the A.B.C. took a stand which most national broadcasting services were adopting, and which is in fact the only logical and just one, namely that everyone is entitled to hear both sides of any argument. This is basic to our rights as citizens and, so long as it does not become a policy of timid shrinking from the broadcasting of strong individual points of view, it is, in the end, in the best interests of the people as a whole. At all events the listeners to this debate could hardly have been disappointed. The author remembers it as one of the most skilful debates he has heard on the air.

Sport has been a popular topic for broadcasting from the beginning of radio. The first year of the A.B.C. gave plenty of scope for first-class broadcasts on sporting events. The highlight of the year was the tour of the English Test team captained by D. R. Jardine, playing against the Australians under W. (Billy) Woodful. There were ball-for-ball descriptions of the exciting matches and both captains spoke to the people from the studios. Other notable sportsmen to do so were Jack Crawford, the Lawn Tennis Singles champion of Wimbledon, the American boxer, "Young" Stribling, and the great Australian cyclist, Hubert Opperman.

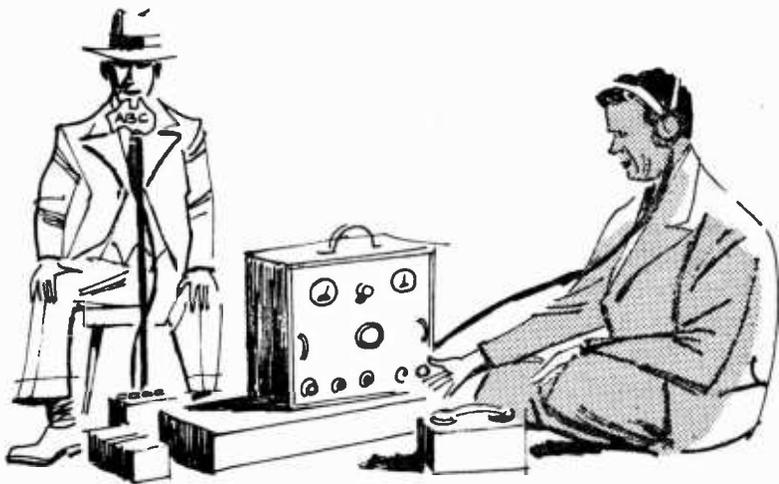
The two epoch-making aeronauts, Hans Bertram and J. A. Mollison, spoke simply and convincingly of the hazards and

## THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION

the triumphs of their world solo flights. Altogether Australians, especially those in inland areas, got to know more about the character and special qualities of leaders in all kinds of interesting activity than they would have done without our National Service with its newly founded policy of relays of important broadcasts to all States.

Another aspect of the A.B.C. broadcasts to the people of Australia was firmly established in the first year in the form of 'service' broadcasts such as lists of stocks and shares for the investor, wool sales prices, rainfall and river levels for the country man, emergency SOS calls for missing persons for the police, regular broadcasts of religious services, accurate time signals for all, but particularly for ships at sea, and similar items. We take all these for granted nowadays but the mailbags to the A.B.C. in 1932 carried many a letter from some enterprising listener conveying a new thought, a new suggestion or a different method of doing something, all of which were considered and many of which were adopted.

The co-operation which has always existed between the A.B.C. and the B.B.C. was founded in this first year with the broadcast over all stations of ten B.B.C. recordings of world



Portable equipment used for an 'outside' broadcast.

## THE FIRST YEAR

standard. No attempt was made during this year to set up a world shortwave station, a forerunner of the Radio Australia which is now so well known, particularly by our Asian neighbours, but a survey of the problems likely to be encountered was made and plans to undertake this work began.

Altogether it will be seen that the first year was a long step in the direction of developing the character in which the A.B.C. is known to-day, the character of a national instead of a local service. The early achievement was in the face of great odds. Australia is a vast continent and there are few countries in the world which pose greater problems of vast distances and sparse population. There was still a long way to go to carry out the declared objectives of bringing satisfactory radio on the ordinary broadcast wavelengths to over ninety-five per cent of the Australian people but a sound beginning had been made. Australia's place in the radio world was shown by the fact that we had seven radio licences for every hundred persons, which was the sixth highest proportion in the world and the highest of the Dominions, just above Canada.

## 4. MUSIC



Music is ideally suited for radio presentation, and, in its various kinds, fills almost half of the programmes of the A.B.C. During the years 1932-33 a great improvement in the quality of radio receivers took place with the introduction of inexpensive but high quality superheterodyne sets, superhets as they were called. These had previously been a luxury but now they were being made as standard household receivers and, with their better quality, the music they brought to the homes of Australians took on a new character of lifelike tonal quality. This was particularly true in the case of orchestral music where the separate instruments now stood out more clearly, and gave a new interest to broadcast orchestral music.

The decision of the A.B.C. to have a concert orchestra in all States as a highly professional nucleus which could be increased, or 'augmented', to a larger unit for important concerts, was an important step in bringing music to the nation. There had been several good orchestras in existence long before the founding of the A.B.C. The best-known of these were the New South Wales State Orchestra, conducted by Dr. E. L. Bainton, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Professor (later Sir) Bernard Heinze and Mr. Fritz Hart, and the South Australian Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Harold Davics. But these, good as they were, could not meet the growing needs of the A.B.C. and in 1935 the

## MUSIC

Commission decided to create its own orchestras and enter the public concert field. This was a bold step to take. Many musicians had to make a choice between joining these A.B.C. Concert Orchestras or remaining with combinations which at that time had by far the greater reputation. By 1936, however, concert orchestras were set up in all States. It was to be some time before any of them were to reach world standard but a beginning at least had been made.

The way was now open for the encouragement of serious music. The Broadcasting Act of 1932 had required the Commission 'to establish and utilize in such manner as it is desirable, in order to confer the greatest benefit on broadcasting, groups of musicians for the rendition of orchestral, choral and band music of high quality.' Now that orchestras were established the standard of the musical performances needed to be lifted year by year. To this end the A.B.C. began a policy of bringing distinguished conductors, musicians and singers from overseas. As early as 1933 the noted conductor of the military band, Captain H. E. Adkins, was invited to visit Australia and conduct a series of public concerts. These were quite spectacular. The band he conducted was composed of performers brought from many parts of the continent and it was the first time that such precision of playing had been heard here. Shortly after him the famous conductor of the celebrated English Hallé Orchestra, Sir Hamilton Harty, was invited to Australia to conduct a combined symphony orchestra for a number of unforgettable concerts. This was something quite new for Australia and the standard we have now reached in the appreciation of fine orchestral music is very largely the result of visits by the world's greatest conductors. Harty was followed in the early years by Sir Malcolm Sargent, Sir Thomas Beecham, Georg Schneevoigt, Eugene Ormandy, Rafael Kubelik, Otto Klemperer, Sir John Barbirolli, and Walter Susskind. These exciting musicians brought out the best in the newly formed orchestras but the fine artistic work of some of Australia's own conductors should not be overlooked. Outstanding among these was

Sir Bernard Heinze who has played a most important part throughout the history of the A.B.C.'s orchestral music. We have noted already that he was the conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra even before the formation of the A.B.C. and he was the first to conduct a full symphony orchestra, brought together for the occasion in 1934. From the very beginning he showed an interest in children and young people and in this same year began the Schools' free Orchestral concerts which are now well-known in all States and are listened to regularly in concert halls by nearly one quarter of a million schoolchildren in up to 200 separate concerts. In 1934 there were only fourteen such performances in Sydney, but a really important beginning had been made.

There has been a steady growth in music for the nation over the years, due very largely to the enthusiasm and perseverance of Sir Bernard. He has retained his position as a leading conductor and often at very short notice has taken over important duties. There have been able conductors in all States, too many to be mentioned in a book of this size, but the name of Joseph Post cannot be overlooked as a great, untiring and exacting conductor of fine orchestral music for the A.B.C.

An exciting event in the history of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which became Australia's leading combination with 82 players in 1946, was the appointment of Eugene (later Sir Eugene) Goossens as conductor in 1947. He sought a new standard of perfection and in nine years built the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to be one of the finest in the world. A great record company made recordings of it for sale in countries overseas. In 1964 the noted American musician, Dean Dixon, accepted the position of conductor and the orchestra was further increased for the concert season to 92.

The growth of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has been traced in some detail as an example of development taking place in all States. A memorable event was the combination during the Olympic Games in November, 1956, of the Sydney and the Victorian Symphony Orchestras, each of 82 musicians, in a performance before H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh.

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A new step has been taken yet again by the A.B.C. in bringing to this country overseas orchestras of world renown for concert and broadcast tours. The first of these were the Czech Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony Orchestras in 1960, followed by the Polish National Orchestra in March, 1963, and the N.H.K. Japanese Orchestra in 1964.

The broadcast audience has by now become quite accustomed to seeing and hearing orchestras on television. The first of such broadcasts took place early in 1957 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, under its permanent conductor, Nicolai Malko, with the pianist, Claudio Arrau. Such concerts have become a feature of the A.B.C.'s television services in all States and the further widening of our knowledge and appreciation of the world's best music is assured by the visits of overseas orchestras. The N.H.K. orchestra played some of the present day Japanese compositions. The concerts were heard and seen by many thousands of Australians over radio and television, and the large concert audiences broke out into tumultuous applause. In this way music helps to bridge the differences between nations.

This remarkable growth in broadcasting music to the nation would not have been possible without two contributing factors. In the first place the Governments and the various Municipal authorities made considerable sums of money available for the upkeep of the orchestras on condition that a number of free concerts should be given. This has brought live orchestral music to many thousands who would otherwise not have had the opportunity of attending first-class concerts. Sometimes the performances have been out-of-doors or from sound shells with audiences of up to 10,000. It is estimated that there are nearly half a million people who attend these free concerts which now number upwards of 250 every year. The other factor is the assured income which comes from the sale of tickets for the season's series of concerts. The people who pay regularly for season tickets in the 500 or more paid concerts provide, by this means, a very large sum of money. Over 600,000 such tickets are now sold annually and thus the A.B.C. is one of the biggest organizers of

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concerts in the world. Committees of voluntary members approach all the people they know, encouraging them to join, and then help to swell the numbers of subscribers, who are also in many of the larger country towns which the orchestras visit regularly. Similar activities are undertaken by committees for Youth Concerts, which have been arranged since 1947, for music lovers between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five.

Annual concert and vocal competitions have brought out the talent of many a young Australian musician. A number of them have joined the permanent orchestras. Annual competitions for composers, from a small beginning in 1933, have now reached a standard where most of the works submitted are worthy of broadcast.

Although the provision of orchestral music is the biggest single activity of the A.B.C.'s Music Department there are many other aspects of its work. The Broadcasting Act of 1932 had expressly stated that there should be programmes for the taste of every Australian because everyone has a share in the National Service.

In the first years smaller music ensembles were formed in most States, and visits by celebrated overseas trios and quartets were arranged. This set a pattern which has gone on without interruption except during the war years. A highlight in this field was a memorable tour of Australia by the Budapest String Quartet in 1935. There were several fine quartets and trios in existence and they received encouragement from the A.B.C. in the form of engagements to broadcast. The overseas Spivakovsky-Kurtz Trio broadcast a great number of programmes under a long-term contract in 1935 and set a standard of performance which lasted even through the war years, when overseas artists found difficulty in travelling to Australia. The policy of working closely with important ensembles like the Griller, Hungarian and Smetana Quartets, was established and has led to better music in all its forms.

Singers have a particular place in the story of music for the nation. From the very first some of the world's greatest singers toured Australia at the invitation of the A.B.C., in-

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cluding Ezio Pinza, Maria Rethberg, Lotte Lehmann, Alexander Kipnis and Richard Tauber. More recently there have been memorable tours by Lisa Della Casa, Rudolf Schock, Irmgard Seefried, Mattiwilda Dobbs, Elisabeth Schwartzkopf, Elena Nikolaidi, Leontyne Price (the first great singer to appear on television), Joan Hammond, William Warfield, Yi-Kwei Sze and Australian-born William Herbert, John Shaw, and Harold Blair among others.



It had been the policy of the A.B.C. from the beginning to encourage Australian musicians, singers and composers. Overseas artists have been brought in mainly to further this encouragement by providing healthy competition and it is interesting to note that Australians, who have achieved world distinction, are among the artists invited by the A.B.C. to tour the nation.

Opera is regarded by some as the highest form of music. It has ranked as one of the great cultural strands of most truly civilized countries for centuries. The A.B.C., in conjunction with theatrical companies, has set out to promote the opera in this country. This activity has taken three forms. In the early years operas were broadcast from record albums in unbroken performances. This was impossible for the ordinary music lover with a gramophone. The next step was to broadcast live performances. A beginning was made at Christmas time in 1935 in broadcasting a live performance of the charming opera for children 'Hansel and Gretel' from the A.B.C. studios. This practice grew into one of the really important functions of the A.B.C. Because of the number of people who take part in opera, this form of entertainment

is very expensive. The A.B.C. has combined forces with the theatrical industry, and particularly during the last ten years with the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, in broadcasting Grand Opera. At the same time transcription of some of the finest overseas performances, such as operas at the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals have, by special arrangement, been played in their entirety a short time after the actual performance. The most recent development has been the performance of full scale operas from the television studios in Sydney and Melbourne. This has brought opera into the homes of hundreds of thousands of people who hitherto had not had any contact with this art form. Television lends itself well to ballet also and some telling performances of the world's great ballets have found their way into people's homes by way of the television screen, most of them being original studio productions.

Light music has not been overlooked. In the early days community singing was a popular form of entertainment and a popular broadcast. Through the years the A.B.C. has provided and created light music of a kind to help spirit away the cares of the day with music which is easy to listen to and is excellent of its kind. Clive Amadio and Jay Wilbur are names which link themselves quite naturally with the best of overseas recordings, by the Melachrino orchestra, for instance, and which point the way to the popular television programmes of overseas artists who come to enrich our world of music, artists like Eric Jupp who bring the ease and grace of overseas performances into our homes.

Throughout this long development in broadcasting music to the nation Australian musicians have played their part. They have been encouraged by composers' competitions, and concerto and vocal competitions. The session, 'Young Australia', has broadcast promising young musicians six days a week for many years. They have received engagements on a generous scale in both radio and television. Australian compositions have formed at least five per cent of the total programme output, and Australians who have made their names

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overseas have been invited to return to their homeland on concert tours. Without this encouragement there would have been much less music of all kinds, Australian and overseas, for the Australian nation. Moreover the names of Australian composers like John Antill, W. G. James, Dr. Clive Douglas, Dr. Horace Perkins and Miriam Hyde are well known to many people overseas as well as to most Australians.

## 5. DRAMA

RADIO drama is taken for granted nowadays. It is difficult to imagine how awkward many of the first radio plays really were. The Reports of the A.B.C. before 1936 often mention the difficulties of broadcasting drama. Everyone who had experienced drama had been to a theatre. The theatre, however, is an exciting place where the glamour of the stage settings, costumes and lights produces emotions which help the actors to cast a spell of enchantment. Nothing of this could be transmitted by radio where, it was clear, sound alone must make the whole play, and where the audience exists singly or in small groups disturbed from time to time by other activities going on, telephone and doorbells and other rival claims to attention. A way had to be found to get around these difficulties. In the early 30's it was becoming accepted that special plays should be written for radio, turning its blindness into an advantage.

Leslie Rees, writing in *Music and the Drama* in September of 1938 asks: 'Now just exactly what is this radio drama? Let's be frank about it. Can it really be called drama in the true sense? Can anyone really take it seriously? Can it ever be Art? Won't television wipe away its very existence?' He goes on to proclaim his own faith. 'Yes, radio drama is, or can be, an art—as important an art as many which are generally accepted . . . A radio play can become a fragment of innermost emotional experience forever engraved on the tablets of the mind.'

This faith was soundly based upon a completely new understanding of the difference between radio, stage and film drama, and the use of the particular strength of each in its right place.

The stage of the radio play is not the studio floor, it is the mind of the listener. The scene is not a painted wall with furniture in the studio; it is what is built up in the listener's mind. This scene can be changed at will, and in a moment.

## DRAMA



Drama rehearsal, showing some early sound effects equipment.

There are no scene-shifters necessary, no revolving stage or any device needed beyond perhaps a momentary pause. The scene, unlike the stage, can be changed as rapidly and as often as wanted, and again it can be held as long as wanted (for the whole duration of the play if need be), unlike the film or television where change is necessary. Time can pass as slowly as the action which is described takes to pass, or it can leap a thousand years in a second or two.

As well as advantages, however, there are drawbacks. Sounds can be easily confused. For instance, heavy rainfall sounds much like a bushfire—in fact both are often produced in the studio by the same means—so that the dialogue must be carefully constructed to enable the mind to call up the right image. Then again, unseen characters can be confusing unless differences in voice are clearly defined. And poor radio drama, a succession of badly written dialogues, perhaps badly

acted, becomes a bore, against which listeners protect themselves by just not listening.

Writers the world over were soon giving serious consideration to the new art form, an art which could be brought into existence only by the microphone, a true child of radio. Fictional plays, features or documentary plays were written to give information on any subject. Ability to do this well grew swiftly with practice.

The Federal Drama and Features Department of the A.B.C., created in 1936, from the first encouraged Australian playwrights by various means. It offered prize-awarding competitions, gave professional criticism of manuscripts, ran annual drama festivals and sought out well-known writers. From the first it fostered close relations with its listeners as well as its writers by giving out leaflets and programme guides, by conducting series of special plays for which critiques would be welcomed and popularity polls conducted. It realized that the audience for plays is of rather a special kind, people of all ages who are prepared to spend an hour or more in close concentration upon the act of listening. This attitude has carried on to the present day. From the early days it was most effective in encouraging Australian plays and features, some of which came to be recognized as compelling works of art. Douglas Stewart's *The Fire on the Snow*, a poetic and moving account of Scott's last polar journey and a text often prescribed for study in literature courses, was outstanding. His next play, *The Golden Lover*, 1943, also in verse, was the result of a competition for verse plays held by the A.B.C. It has likewise become a classic. The names of Edmund Barclay, the pioneer of these writers (whose historical serial *As Ye Sow* was repeated by popular request several times and is indeed still in demand today), Charles Porter, Catherine Shepherd, Max Afford, Richard Lane, Betty Roland, Gwen Meredith (author of *The Lawsons* and *Blue Hills* serials), Alexander Turner, Ruth Park and George Farwell, among many others, come to mind when thinking back over the years. More recent Australian radio play authors of im-

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portance include Barbara Vernon, Coral Lansbury, Eleanor Witcombe, Robert Amos, and Patricia Hooker.

Feature programmes were also organized and some immense tasks have been carried out. To-day the A.B.C. attaches great importance to its radio features with as many as 150 poetry and literary broadcasts and documentaries of general interest each year.

In 1956 when the A.B.C. television service began, a play was included in the very first programme. The Drama Department encouraged the writing of plays especially for television and their production in Australian studios with its own actors, producers and designers. There were, of course, fewer presentations than by radio. This was because of the greater cost of producing a television play, and the extra studio facilities required. For many years the number of radio plays of an hour or longer, produced each year by the A.B.C. in the various State capitals, has been about 250. The number of A.B.C. television plays produced each year was, up to 1964, about 25, supplemented by serials such as *Stormy Petrel*, *The Outcasts* and *The Patriots*, all of which brought early colonial times to vivid life for great audiences. Rex Rienits, John Cameron, Kay Keavney, Patricia Hooker, Phillip Grenville Mann and Raymond Bowers are among the Australian authors who have written plays especially for T.V.

In features, too, the television medium has made possible a different kind of experience where the eye becomes perhaps more important than the ear, and a new art form yet again becomes necessary. Television documentary results are gained in a different way, usually by the correct bringing together of many varied ingredients, harmonious or contrasting, whether interviews, statements, photos, films, specially contrived graphics, actors taking part, music or sound effects.

So far we have mainly mentioned material written especially for broadcast. Adaptation from other sources, mainly the theatre, has provided a great supplementary fund of plays for broadcast and telecast. A study of A.B.C. play lists will reveal that a great proportion of the world's finest dramatic

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literature has at some time or other been presented in radio or television adaptation. Anyone who listens regularly to a session like *National Radio Theatre* will, over the years, become acquainted with many of the great stage plays of the world. Plays studied by examination students are presented wherever possible.

The chief aims of the Drama and Features Department have been to build a drama expressive of the idiom and character and ideals of our own country, to present varied entertainment and to give Australian listeners and viewers the chance of keeping abreast of the world's drama. At no time has the Australian material—including original plays, serials, adaptations, features—been less than half the total, and some years it has been as high as seventy per cent, particularly in radio features. In this field the A.B.C. showed that Australian productions could attain the highest level when in 1960 *Death of a Wombat*, which Ivan Smith wrote and produced, with music by George English, won the coveted Italia Prize as the world's best feature of the year. Various A.B.C. productions of Australian plays have been included in the B.B.C.'s list of programmes for distribution to the whole English-speaking—and English-listening—world. Similarly, A.B.C. treatments of Australian television plays have been screened in other English-speaking countries. In these ways a start has been made in bringing the Australian way of life, as mirrored in story, dialogue, conflict and characterization, before a world largely ignorant of it.

## 6. NEWS

THE year is 1939, in January, in the dry heat of summer. Three cars have stopped on the Prince's Highway in the heart of the Gippsland forest. Parts of the forest are on fire, and great areas are still ablaze. Although it is high noon the sky is black as midnight and great black leaves fall as cinders to the roadway from the upper air. Trees are burning close at hand and the drivers of the cars hesitate. Should they go forward or back? Over forty people have been burnt to death in the fires in the last two days. A mistaken decision could add ten more victims. Then a radio announcer is heard: 'This is the A.B.C. We continue our broadcast on the bushfire danger. The Prince's Highway in Gippsland is still safe up to one hundred miles east of Orbost, but the position is likely to worsen. All motorists on that section of the road are advised to proceed eastwards to open country as soon as possible. Further north, the Highway is closed. In the Marysvale area all roads are closed from . . .'

The drivers of the cars do not wait to hear any more but with their headlights bright in the eerie midday blackness they drive past the burning trees, eastwards to safety.

That is a description of how any one of us might owe his life to the A.B.C. News Service. The instance, which is a true one, is typical of hundreds of thousands of cases in floods, fires, storms and other times of national peril. News is more than information on the latest happenings, although this is important enough in itself. The A.B.C. News Service has throughout the years set itself the task of providing for the people of Australia a reliable service of information on all things of importance going on in the country and the world in which they live, information which shall be as reliable and as objective as can possibly be achieved.

A national broadcasting service has particular responsibilities in the information which it gives officially to citizens. These responsibilities are rather different from those of a newspaper

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which may reflect the point of view of a minority of people, or even of one person, and still be acceptable under the principles governing freedom of speech in a democracy, because, in theory at least, anyone may produce a newspaper putting forward opposite views. This is not so in a national broadcasting service. The balance of opposing views which is achieved in the newspaper world by the freedom of the press must be achieved quite differently in a broadcasting service of which there is only one kind, such as the A.B.C. in Australia. The fact that there are almost an equal number of commercial stations does not alter the case because the National Service has, and must always have, a responsibility to serve, as equitably as possible, the needs of every Australian no matter what his views. Consequently the National Service can have no editorial policy, that is a policy of presenting one aspect of events only in order to sway public opinion in a direction which the editor or owner wants. From the very first year of the A.B.C. News Service there was a clear recognition that all interests were to be considered, and all sections of the population served, particularly, in the early years, the interests of that minority of people who live far from towns, where newspapers are slow to arrive, and in many cases where daily papers were unknown.

In printed news it sometimes happens that news is published to stimulate sales of the newspaper or magazine. Items are chosen, not because they are of the greatest importance to the people, but because they are novel, or spectacular, or in other ways have the quality of making the hesitant purchaser hurry to buy the paper so that he can read what is under the startling headlines. Sometimes, also, mere availability can be the reason for including items which in themselves are really of lesser importance. This is particularly true of pictorial news-telling. It will be seen at a glance that a television news service can more easily show a picture of a fire in the home city than it can of the sinking of an ocean liner on the same day, although the latter could be a much more significant event.

## NEWS

The A.B.C. has developed its News Service to provide a stimulating, positive service which is designed to keep citizens well informed on events and affairs of importance to them in their environment. In controversial matters where more than one aspect of any matter may be quite valid, the policy has been to present every legitimate side of the argument. This is of particular importance in political matters and more so before election times when the nation chooses the men who will govern. Fairness at all times to everyone and fairness above all to the listener, or the viewer, is the watchword of the News Service.

With this policy goes another kind of fairness, or impartiality. News should be chosen not because of its novel or sensational quality but because of its relevance to the real interests of the people as a whole. This is one of the guiding principles of the News Service and has governed many important decisions during its history, particularly the decision to become independent of the newspaper industry in June, 1947. This is also the reason why so much effort has been put into serving the special local interests of all the different sections of our widespread community, ranging from Darwin and Cairns, indeed from Papua-New Guinea, to Hobart and Perth, and inland to Central Australia—an effort which has led to the great expansion of regional news service. The needs of Australian communities even further afield have also been considered and, where possible, satisfied, communities such as Australian soldiers and often their families overseas, and even the workers in the lonely outposts of the Antarctic.

How has this been achieved? Told very briefly, the story, which began in the first year, was one of quiet development along the lines of policy outlined above until 1938, the year before the outbreak of war. The unforeseen visit of the British Prime Minister, undertaken at one day's notice, to Munich to confer with Herr Hitler about the danger of world war was broadcast to the nation on 29 September. The unexpected announcement was the first release of the news to the people of Australia and it quickly reached millions of people. In the

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troubled year that followed listeners turned more and more to radio to hear the latest trend in the delicate and ominous international events. A special representative was appointed in Canberra to keep Australians informed about their Parliament's decisions. Anxiety deepened, and possibly millions of older Australians can remember the fateful evening of 3 September, 1939, when, after the solemn chimes of Big Ben which marked the end of the time for Hitler to agree to Great Britain's ultimatum, our Prime Minister informed the Australian nation that we were at war with Germany.

Immediately the whole situation changed. Radio was now recognized as the swiftest means of giving important news and information to the nation. Radio also was a source of danger by giving information which could be useful to the enemy. Swift censorship was immediately imposed, and even weather broadcasts were withheld for a time by the Department of Information which kept a watch on all news bulletins. It was found, however, that the A.B.C. was impartial and objective enough to be its own censor, referring to official scrutiny only such matters as it thought necessary. The A.B.C. also showed initiative in sending a mobile news unit to Palestine to report on the activities of Australian troops there. These official war correspondents did much to give relatives at home a clear picture of their way of life.

The rapid growth of the importance of the News Department in wartime is shown by the increase in time given for news broadcasts, 7,700 hours in 1938 as compared with 24,000 hours two years later, taking up twelve per cent of the total programme time. When the war moved into the Pacific area even further coverage of all events was given, including special news bulletins for the B.B.C. and later America. On 17 February, 1942, an agreement was reached whereby it was compulsory for all broadcast stations, including all commercials, to take the A.B.C. morning, midday and evening Australian news services which were prepared in Canberra, while a number of commercial stations voluntarily took the A.B.C. overseas news services also. This sharing of programmes

lasted for a long time after the war. In fact many commercial stations still take national and State A.B.C. bulletins.

An important development took place on 1 June, 1947, when the A.B.C. took the step of providing itself with its own staff of journalists and reporters throughout Australia, quite independent of newspapers and press agencies, a development which had not hitherto been attempted by any other broadcasting organization in the world. In the same year a journalist was stationed in Port Moresby to bring Papua-New Guinea within the news network. When in 1950 the A.B.C. took over control of the important overseas radio stations known as Radio Australia its news services broadcast programmes especially designed to inform our Pacific and Asian neighbours about Australian affairs and our way of life. They have come to accept the impartiality of these news bulletins which are given in many Asian languages with confidence, and in many of these countries the voice of Australia has come to be regarded as their most authoritative source of overseas information. Radio Australia now devoted itself to presenting every aspect of the Australian way of life to her near neighbours in the North, and transcriptions of hundreds of programmes are despatched to these countries for direct local broadcast as well as the shortwave rebroadcasts.

In 1957, less than ten years after the A.B.C.'s independent news service was set up, another milestone was passed by the first broadcast of news by television. A spectacular beginning was made from Melbourne where the Olympic Games were in progress.

The A.B.C. News Service is now organized to deal directly with information from any centre in Australia or from overseas. It is organized to receive news from the most important national or international even to the most uneventful, but possibly important, development in any of the arts or sciences, or in any country locality, and to interpret it into terms of what our Australian citizens for the good of the nation should be told about these things. It is further geared to give the news which our overseas neighbours, near and far, need to

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know to understand Australia. In so doing it does not overlook the needs of Australians in lonely outposts, whether on Pacific Islands, at sea, in Antarctica or fighting with our armed forces, and it broadcasts to these Australians news of their country which brings them nearer home. Our South East Asian neighbours receive particular attention. The A.B.C. Asian headquarters at Singapore has staff members at all key points and in Papua-New Guinea, at time of writing, there were five journalists and two New Guinean and two Papuan cadets.

## 7. EDUCATION

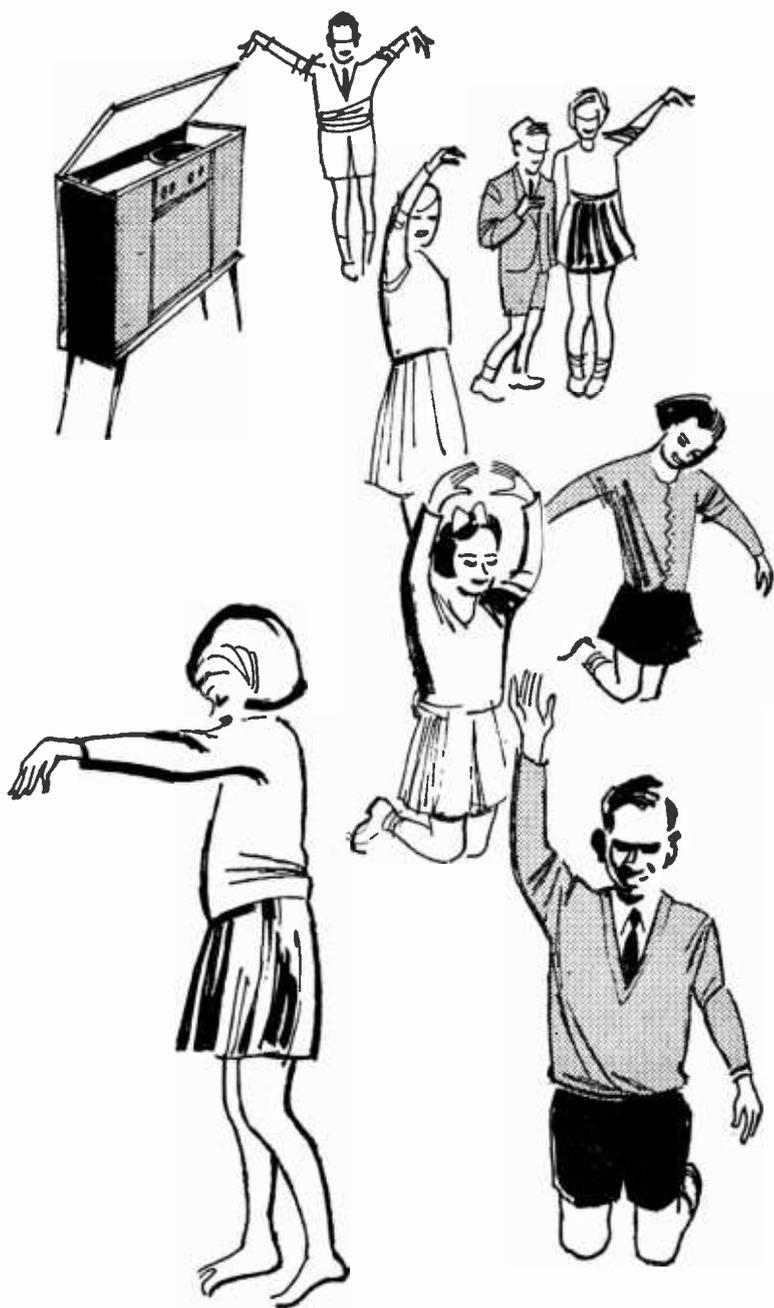
'EDUCATION' has more than one meaning. The A.B.C. has from the beginning adopted a policy of furthering education and has devised programmes which, in the general way, are intended to keep Australians well informed on matters of importance to them. These may be matters of general information of the kind discussed in *News* or specialized subjects like those discussed in *Music* and *Drama*. The word 'education' has also the particular meaning, narrower and more precise, of instruction given to students by teachers or lecturers in educational institutions. This chapter tells the story of what the A.B.C. has done in this field.

As we have seen in *The First Year* school broadcasts were begun in 1932. They took the form of lectures by experts and brought the voices and points of view of important people into the classrooms of the teachers. These talks covered a wide range of subjects and were welcomed by some teachers for providing a different point of view, perhaps a challenging and debatable new angle on a subject, or perhaps an enlargement or extension of knowledge. Sometimes the lectures were notable people, leaders of Australia, who by this means had a much greater audience than they could hope to have had in any other way. All this was good but schools were slow in response and in the early years not very many of them were equipped with radio sets. They were waiting for something more exciting. This presented a challenge to the A.B.C. planners and producers who, while advised by committees of educators on what subject matter to broadcast, were left free to decide how to broadcast it. They began to experiment with new and exciting ways of presenting the lessons. These came to be plays and dramatized features as absorbing to students in all Grades and Forms as drama and features were to adults. This development took time, and followed some years behind the advances of the Drama Department. It was hindered by the economies which the war

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years forced on the A.B.C. Nevertheless by 1944, the year in which separate Education Sections had been completely set up in all States, experiments of this kind were being carried out throughout the Commonwealth with the help of the Drama Department at first but later along independent lines. Everything that has been said in *Drama* about the impact of radio drama on the mind of the listener applies to this type of school broadcast which, at its best, gives the student an experience which is 'engraved on the tablets of the mind'.

In Australia education is separately controlled in each State and it is necessary for school broadcasts to be planned to suit the needs of schools in six States all with their own different courses of study. The advantages of National broadcasts are somewhat limited because it is difficult to find subjects which can be broadcast to the same classes in all six States at the same time and the policies of the separate State Education Departments must be considered. An agreement, however, was reached to provide for some National broadcasts. The Directors of Education of all six States formed a committee with the A.B.C.'s Director to advise on the content of these national sessions. *The World We Live In* and *Health and Hygiene* began as National sessions and have now been broadcast for more than twenty-five years without a break. It is estimated that nearly one million children hear both of these sessions regularly so the responsibility for ensuring that they are as good as they can possibly be is a great one. This responsibility rests upon the committee of Directors known as the Federal Advisory Committee. Each State also has an Advisory Committee, of which the State Director of Education is the Chairman and the A.B.C. Supervisor of Education is the Secretary. These Committees are responsible for all the State sessions, each one of which has a separate Planning and Appraisal Committee of experts who advise in detail on the subject matter. The A.B.C., however, reserves the right to present the material in the manner in which it, guided by experience and experiment, thinks best. The same method applies to television broadcasts to schools. The A.B.C.,



Education during the broadcast of a Music Through Movement lesson.

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which has a virtual monopoly of school broadcasting in Australia, will broadcast only what the most competent educators advise, but they are also the only experts in their field of educational broadcasting and they are expected to provide the best possible broadcasts with their own resources. This practice has generally worked well. Some State Education Departments go further than giving advice and provide money to help in the purchase of radio and television sets and teachers' and children's notes and booklets. In some States teachers of the Education Department are given the full time task of visiting schools in the State to help teachers use radio and television broadcasts well, and also to help the officers of the A.B.C. Education Department to prepare broadcasts which are more effective in the schools. In one State there are four such teachers.

The field which is now covered is very wide. *Kindergarten of the Air*, which began in Western Australia in 1942 and was made a National session in 1943 with its own Advisory Committee, is directed to children from three to six years of age. It was a forerunner of similar sessions overseas. All grades of the Primary School are covered with broadcasts in English, Music, Social Studies, Folk Dancing, Speech Education and other subjects. Secondary Schools in addition have programmes in French and German and, on television, in Mathematics and Science. This important development in the field of television aims to broadcast Mathematics and Science lessons by some of Australia's most experienced teachers to bring the advantage of their skill to any school which takes the broadcast.

The number of schools using educational broadcasts reveals the confidence which teachers place in them. In 1936 there were 1,024 schools in the Commonwealth registered as listeners, at the outbreak of war in 1939 there were nearly 2,000, at the end of the war in 1947 there were 5,000, and now nearly every school in the Commonwealth uses some of the sessions, bringing the number up to close on 10,000. There has been a similar increase in the number of booklets sold to the

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children to accompany these broadcasts. In 1947 these numbered 220,000 for the Commonwealth. In 1964 this number rose to nearly one and one quarter million, consisting of nine different titles. In one State that year there were more of the standard Primary booklet sold than the entire number of all booklets in the Commonwealth in 1947.

Both radio and television broadcasts to schools are meant to be used as teaching aids. There is no intention to replace the teacher who must always be present unobtrusively to help the children to understand the lesson.

There is also a 'fringe' of listeners and viewers, the parents at home who, by the school broadcasters, come closer to the work their children are studying. Perhaps the most important single group of listeners, however, are the children far from town, or perhaps in hospitals, children of the Correspondence School who receive their lessons by post. For these children a special session is broadcast bringing to them the voice of the teacher they may never see. For them these broadcasts have a different function. They bring the school to them and help them to feel members of a real school with a headmaster and teachers who care very much for them.

A venture in higher education has been a half-hour television programme twice a week called *University of the Air*. This has brought higher education to all who wish study more advanced subjects. It is the adult form of school broadcast and by the mail received from interested viewers its future is one of ever expanding boundaries.

## 8. THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

BEFORE it was made a full hour in September, 1954, *The Children's Hour* was flourishing under the title *The National Children's Session*, well known to a hundred thousand listeners, most of whom were members of the Argonauts' Club. Programmes broadcast especially for children have always been given particular attention by the A.B.C. In the early years a beginning was made which was to show the way the session would grow. Although all States had their own programmes the managers in every State insisted on children's programmes which would do more than merely idle away a half-hour pleasantly. Amusement there was, as there has to be, but the emphasis was on worthwhile amusement, the telling of good stories and before long, in 1934, dramatized serials specially written for radio. There were also competitions in essay writing, poetry, drawing and music. Australian children of 1938 got to know the characters of the session, the Zoo Man who told them about animals and Nature, Stamp who dealt with stamp-collecting, and Inkpot who answered questions about the writing of poetry, essays and letters. There were others in the various States and this set the pattern which has been followed since, a group of characters who deal pleasantly but expertly with letters written by members of this great radio club, so that everyone becomes better informed on matters which are of interest to children and bring pleasure generally, emphasizing the beauties of life and of literature.

In 1939 a National character was given to the session by the inclusion of a ten-minute serial relayed to all States except Western Australia. This helped to raise the standard of the local programmes in these States. In Western Australia the session was locally produced until May, 1955, when the difficulty of the two-hour time difference was overcome, and the well loved Perth compere became part of the National team.

## THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

The A.B.C. has always regarded the Children's Session as the time when it is entertaining its future audiences and has a certain responsibility for the training of young Australians in ideals of good citizenship and enjoyment of the best things in life. To this end it has used the full resources of radio, and more recently, television, adapted for the young mind, in the presentation of drama, music, comedy, farce, talks, adventure, nature study, travel and hobbies. By 1939 the pattern was fairly complete. 'Mike', the magazine of the air, presented all kinds of contributions. 'Jock' dealt simply and directly with natural science, 'The Melody Man' with music, and 'Anthony' with literature. These names were adopted by people who had the highest qualifications. The Melody Man was Lindley Evans, and Anthony was A. D. Hope. This policy has been carried through. The team of broadcasters come together in the studios and deal expertly with their subject matter in a manner which is amusing, encouraging and exciting. The result over the years cannot easily be measured but the next few paragraphs will do something to show its extent.

In January, 1941, the pattern was made complete by the establishment of the Argonauts' Club, a group of radio listeners who applied for membership which gave them an opportunity of writing to 'Elizabeth', the well-loved compere and taking part in the sessions through the voices of the team who read the contributions. They also received a badge. The Club has flourished. By June of 1941 it had 6,750 registered members, four years later these had grown to 32,000, and by 1963 the number was 120,000.

One of the first achievements of the Club in 1942, was, by hard work and not by begging, to raise £588 to purchase a mobile canteen for English troops. Since then it has helped hundreds of thousands of children to lead a richer and fuller life by sharing their experiences in music, literature, hobbies, debates, quizzes and brainstruts, and by participating in the many activities the Club encourages. These include such worthwhile activities as Australia-wide competitions for art

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and literature. Exhibitions of art attracting thousands of visitors in Capital and other larger cities have been held by the A.B.C. as a result of these. Complete books have also been written by a number of children all working together on projects called *Let's write a Book* and *Let's do the Illustrations*. The first of these was called *Dangerous Secret* and was published as an attractive volume in Australia. It is a very readable story, the chapters of which, selected from the work of hundreds of different writers, tell an exciting story illustrated by the best drawings chosen similarly. *Dangerous Secret* was translated into Norwegian and published in Norway where this idea originated. It was followed by *The Gold Smuggler* and the young writers and artists met each other for the first time when they were flown to the opening of the art exhibition.

Another interesting development of the Argonauts' Club was a tour of eight members to Japan in 1963 and a return tour of eight Japanese children in exchange, through the generosity of Australia's international airline and the Mainichi Broadcasting network.

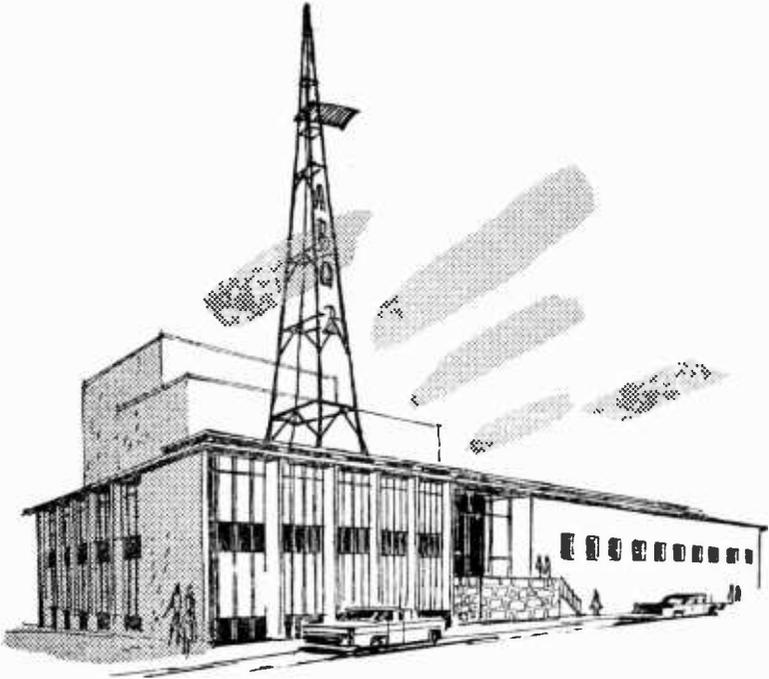
This story has no ending. Every year children, over 10,000 of them, join the Club while a similar number graduate out of it on their eighteenth birthday. Some members are active in it for twelve years. All are welcome to take part in the activities and the 'characters' of the session may be met in person when they perform at the Royal Agricultural Shows of many centres. They may also be seen when children attend the regular weekly party held in the television studios of the State Capitals. The Children's Hour in radio and television brings amusement as well as enlightenment to a very important section of our people, the citizens of tomorrow.

## 9. COMMUNICATION TO THE NATION

Television is a scientific achievement of incomparable importance to all who are in contact with it because it is the most perfect form of communication from man to man ever devised. This is true also, in a more limited but very positive sense, of radio. Before these mass media were set up for instantaneous communication in Australia there were no means, apart from the press, whereby the nation could be swiftly informed about matters of importance. It is therefore necessary for Australians carefully to consider what is important to them and to ensure that these needs are met by the officers of their national broadcasting service. The Commissioners have the first responsibility and we have seen in the preceding chapters how they have carried out this task. It remains to draw attention to the many other aspects of these 'service' broadcasts, to complete as far as possible the picture of the national service. In the field of direct communication the needs of various groups, some very large, others select and small in number, all have to be considered. This chapter will deal very briefly with these spoken word broadcasts of talks, debates, lectures, rural, religious and sporting broadcasts, all directed to specific audiences.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission has paid great attention to direct communication programmes. We have seen how, in the first year, a number of world figures, including King George V, spoke to Australians over the newly formed network. There has been continuous steady progress in providing even more avenues for direct communication from talks by scientists, doctors, artists, musicians, men of adventure and other leaders in all fields of activity in which man is interested. Controversial issues are dealt with either in the form of a debate such as *The Nation's Forum of the Air* or as a series of talks giving every angle of a topic over a span of time. This is done to preserve strict impartiality. The impact of the minds of outstanding visitors to Australia

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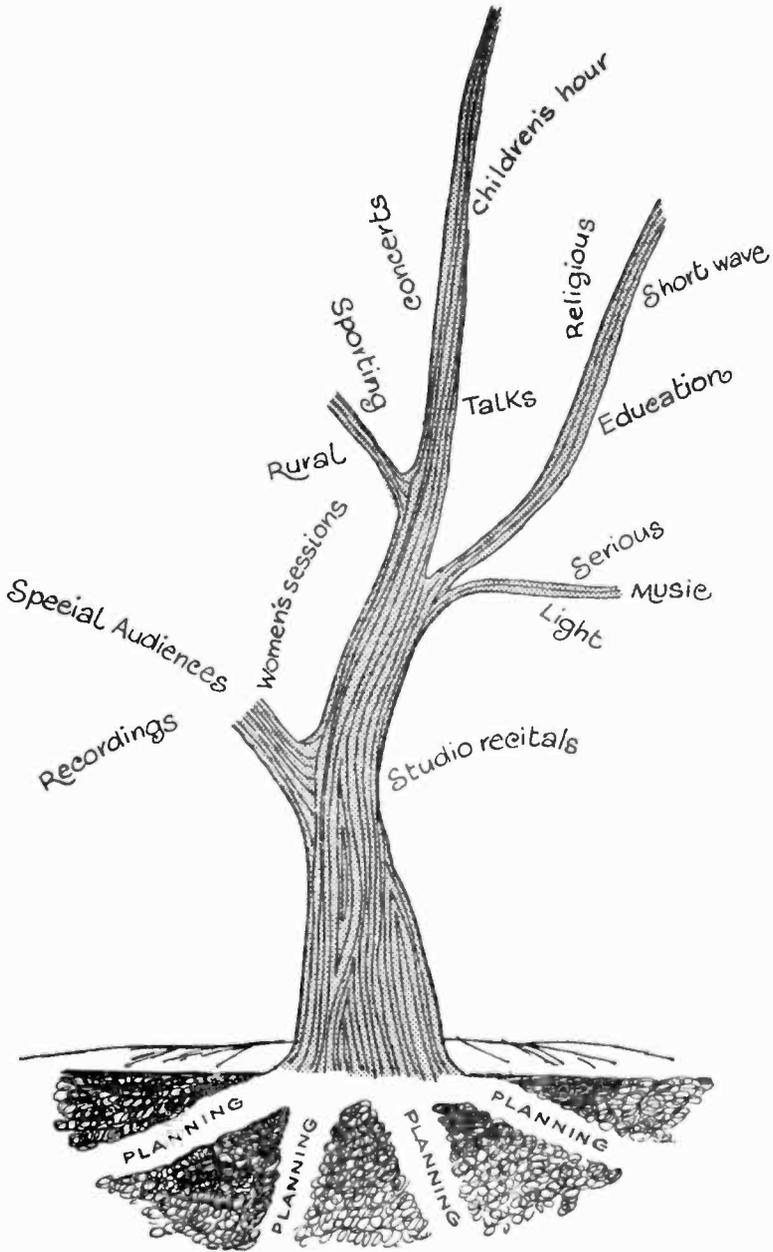


A.B.C. National Television Studios—ABQ Channel 2.

and outstanding Australians is multiplied many times by their direct communication, week by week, to all listeners to *Guest of Honour* or viewers of *People* and similar programmes. The interests of women are served by radio and television broadcasts directed particularly to any subjects which interest them. It could be said that in the field of direct communication there is no matter important to the people of Australia which is not at some time or other presented or discussed in the radio or television programmes of the A.B.C. The Federal Parliament's debates are broadcast from the House of Representatives or the Senate whenever it is in session.

Rural broadcasts are a particular feature of the national service. Even in the first years the special needs of Australians living far from the cities were kept in mind and throughout the history of the A.B.C. they have received a service which

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has been expanded and improved to include all their major interests. The A.B.C. has created a separate Department to provide up-to-the-minute information on matters of importance to Australia's primary producers. In 1964 an A.B.C. programme on Agricultural production in Australia won a Bronze Award in the Berlin International Film Competition.

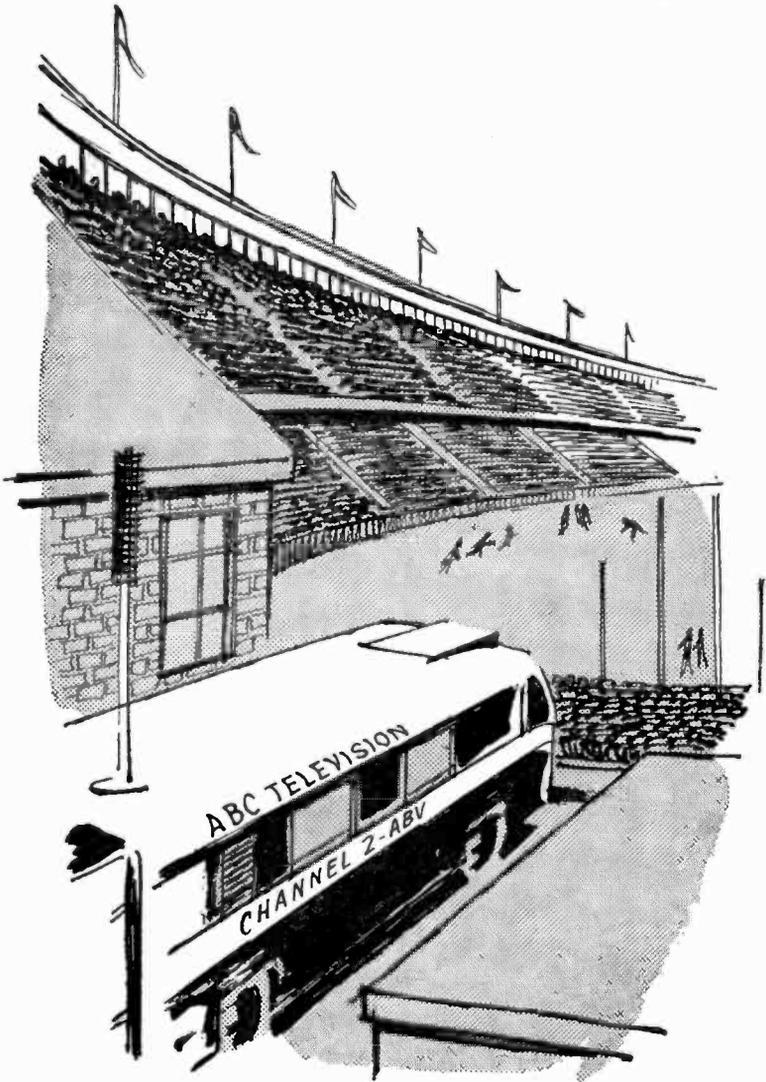
The Christian religion is a highly significant factor in the Australian way of life. Religious broadcasts take an important place in bringing this religion to the people, not only in the form of direct broadcasts of church services by radio and television, but in many other forms, such as hymn singing, talks on *Plain Christianity*, *Daily Devotional* and schools' services.

Direct communication applies to anything which interests mankind. Nothing could better illustrate the excitement of the participation by radio, or television for that matter, in sporting activities, than the report of the A.B.C. to Parliament in 1938 which reads:

'At no point is the miracle of wireless realized to better effect than in the broadcasting of the Test Matches when Australian teams are in England. During the past year it has been possible for any Australian sitting in his home to hear the click of the ball against the bat at Lords, or the cheers of the crowd at the Oval.'

It would require a volume many times larger than this to deal with the history of broadcasts on sporting in Australia alone, and the task will not be attempted here. Readers will readily recognize that the services in radio and television are so comprehensive that their present state is the outcome of decades of experience in providing for Australians what Australians want, in the Australian manner.

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Mobile T.V. van set up to telecast an outside sporting fixture.

## **10. THE COMMISSION AND THE MINISTER**

Who owns the A.B.C.? The question is easily answered. Every Australian owns an equal share. This great public property has to be safeguarded from many risks in the interests of us all. It must not get into the power of strong people or groups of people who selfishly have not the interest of every Australian at heart. Above all it must not become a mouthpiece for people who are interested in putting forward a selfish point of view. It must remain the property of the Australian citizens, to serve their needs in the most effective way.

In Australia, as in Great Britain, Parliament decided that, although the National Broadcasting Service must finally be responsible to it, independence of a definite kind was desirable. That was independence to carry out fearlessly and without danger of political or other interference a programme policy which should be equally fair to everyone. This was achieved by selecting five (later increased to seven) responsible Australians to control it for the Australian people in the way they think best, with full confidence in their judgment. Ultimately any one of these people, the Commissioners, being responsible to Parliament through the Minister (the Postmaster-General) could be relieved of his or her post by Parliament, but this would be a last resort, and it has so far not happened.

In one particular sphere, however, this arrangement can become embarrassing to parliament as a whole, or to particular sections, or individual Members. That is the area of political discussion where an independent broadcasting service could sway the minds of the listeners and viewers in a way which some Members might not wish.

This is a dilemma which the Australian Federal Parliament solved very fairly. It waited to see how the Commission would conduct its public utterances. We have seen how in its various Departments the A.B.C. strengthened its tradition of fairness to everyone in the community, earning the approval of both

the public and the Parliament. The latter showed this confidence in a practical way.

In 1942 when the Act was revised a section, 89(1), was added which stated that, 'subject to this section, the Commission may determine to what extent and in what manner political matter will be broadcast by the Commission!'

This wording made it quite clear that, whatever the Act stated elsewhere, the A.B.C. had absolute independence to treat political subjects as it thought best. The A.B.C. valued the position of trust in which it was placed. Watchful eyes kept the situation under observation.

The Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act of 1946 set up a Committee which quite independently arranges for the broadcast of 'Question Time' and the debates in either House until closing time, or the end of the Parliamentary session, every day that it is sitting. These broadcasts provide Australians with an unusual opportunity to have first hand information on the government of their own country. They may be heard in every part of Australia where there are two alternative networks available thus ruling out only those country areas where there are single regional stations.

In 1948 Parliament decided to rearrange the broadcasting industry by assuming power over both the National service and the Federation of Commercial Broadcasters to the extent of making many of their decisions subject to a new body, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. This Board was given wide powers in allotting wavelengths and television channels and other similar matters and it also had certain directive rights over programmes, mainly to maintain certain standards and to prevent wasteful duplication. However, when the Bill was being debated in Parliament, it became obvious that some Members wished the National Service to be subject to the Control Board in matters of political and controversial broadcasts because in the original draft Section 89(1) was omitted. The Commissioners made a stand on the point, however, and the section was replaced and made to include controversial matter as well as political before the Bill was finally passed.

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The Act now read even more definitely in favour of the Commission's independence in these matters, for the word 'only' had been inserted after 'subject', as 'subject only to this section' quite clearly indicating the intention to be that no other section of the Act could interfere with this right.

In 1956 the Act was further amended so as to extend the section to relate also to the televising of political and controversial matter. The section now appears as Section 116 of the *Broadcasting and Television Act of 1942-1960*.

This is a satisfactory position for the people of Australia, for the A.B.C. and also for Parliament even though at times it could be uncomfortable, and has indeed proved to be so from time to time. The freedom to criticize its ultimate masters is one which must be used with absolute fairness and discretion. There have been times when Ministers, responding to complaint, placed blame upon the outspokenness of the A.B.C. and attempted to take action which threatened the freedom given by Section 116(1). On each such occasion the people of Australia were outspoken in their criticism of such actions, and even tended to reprimand the officers of the A.B.C. for showing undue timidity, a charge which they on one occasion publicly refuted. It is to be hoped that the situation will remain unchanged and that both the people of Australia will safeguard and the A.B.C. will merit the independence which a National Broadcasting Service must have for the good of everyone.

## **RESEARCH AND PROJECTS**

1. The A.B.C. issues Annual Reports which are available to anyone who cares to apply for them. Write to the Director of Publicity, G.P.O., Box 487, Sydney, for a copy of the Report each year. It is published early in the financial year, so, if you write for the Report towards the end of June every year, your copy will reach you, post free, in August or September.

From these Reports build up your own continuing history of any aspect of the A.B.C.'s activities in which you are particularly interested.

2. Arrange to visit your A.B.C. broadcasting and television stations to see for yourself the work behind the scenes.

3. Make a careful comparison of the programmes offered by the National Broadcasting Service with those of your own favourite broadcasting station and write an essay on the different approaches to broadcasting which you observe.

4. What do you think is the future for television in Australian education? Your views should be stated fully and you should be particularly careful that your proposed plans are practicable, in the light of the history of broadcasting in Australia.

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**AUSTRALIAN LANDMARKS**

**AUSTRALIAN LANDMARKS**

**L O N G M A N S**