Paul Helminen

New Waves

Possibilities and problems of broadcasting expressed in British radio magazines from 1922 to 1929

University of Jyväskylä

Master's Thesis

9.3.2024

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Historian ja etnologian laitos
Tekijä – Author Paul Helminen	
Työn nimi – Title New Waves - Possibilities and problems of broadcasting expressed in British Radio Magazines from 1922 to 1929	
Oppiaine – Subject Yleinen historia	Työn laji – Level Maisterintutkielma
Aika – Month and year March 2024	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 64

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Yleisradiotoiminta alkoi Iso-Britanniassa vuonna 1922, kun radiotoimintaa hallinnut postilaitos myönsi monopoliaseman vastaperustetulle British Broadcasting Companylle. Tarjoamalla koko kansalle viihdettä, sivistystä ja uutisia riippumatta heidän yhteiskuntaluokastaan tai sijainnistaan, BBC:llä oli suuri vaikutus Iso-Britannian kulttuuriin ja yhteiskuntaan jo ensimmäisien toimintavuosiensa aikana. Radion potentiaalisista hyödyistä ja ongelmista sen kaikilla osa-alueilla käytiin runsaasti keskustelua harrastelijoiden, julkisuuden henkilöiden sekä tavallisten ihmisten keskuudessa.

Pro gradu -tutkielmassani olen käsitellyt mentaalihistorian näkökulmasta radiosta kirjoitettuja näkemyksiä käyttäen kahta 1920-luvun radiolehteä, *The Radio Timesia* ja *Wireless World and Radio Reviewiä*, pääasiallisena tutkimusaineistonani. *The Radio Times* oli BBC:n oma julkaisu, joka oli suunnattu suurelle yleisölle, kun taas *Wireless World and Radio Review* oli pääasiassa harrastelijoille tarkoitettu julkaisu. Lehdistä hyödynnetty aineisto koostuu pääosin artikkeleista, uutisista sekä lukijoiden mielipidekirjoituksista vuosien 1922 ja 1929 väliseltä ajanjaksolta.

Aineistossa esiintyvät erilaisten ihmisryhmien mentaliteetit radiota kohtaan ilmenivät lehtien sivuilla ilmaistuna reaktioina ja mielipiteinä teknologian laajenevaa aluevaltausta kohtaan. BBC:n toiminta sai suurelta yleisöltä pääasiassa positiivisen vastaanoton, jota heijasti useiden pienempien ryhmien, kuten viihde-alan ja uutistoimistojen osoittama vastustus.

Asiasanat – Keywords
content analysis, sisältöanalyysi, discourse analysis, diskurssianalyysi, mental history, mentalitettihistoria, British Broadcasting Corporation, radio (joukkoviestimet), yleisradiotoiminta, broadcasting, Iso-Britannia, United Kingdom, 1920-luku.

Säilytyspaikka – Depository
Jyväskylän Yliopisto

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1. Introduction and background

Technological innovation has brought with it numerous effects that have had varying amounts of effects on both people and culture in general. Throughout history, new types of utilities have benefited some sections of society with an ease of living while harming others by bringing upon frustration and economical problems. Inventions have sparked both optimism and scepticism when introduced to the public, sometimes causing unrealistic expectations or even vicious opposition.[1] Radio waves, which had been discovered in the latter half of the 19th century,[2] initially had little effect on the daily lives of common people, but this would change once the technology's reach expanded into the public sphere in the early decades of the 20th century. The year 1922 is considered a pivotal moment in the history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. In the span of this single year a form of technology mostly associated with military communications and tinkering hobbyists and engineers changed into an early incarnation of Britain's revered mass-media powerhouse that the BBC is in the 21st century. The growth of broadcasting was rapid throughout the 1920s, and by the end of the decade, it had become a service that catered to a significant percentage of the kingdom's population. Easy forms of entertainment, news, and education were now presented to the population en masse, sparking plenty of discussion regarding the abundant possibilities and problems of this new type of mass-media technology.

The United Kingdom is among the most important countries with regards to the development of radio and broadcasting technology. Several important contributors to the science of radio were British, such as James Clerk Maxwell,[3] Sir Oliver Lodge[4] and Sir John Ambrose Fleming.[5] In addition to this, broadcasting pioneer Guglielmo Marconi had performed some of his earliest broadcast transmission experiments off the coast of the British Isles[6] and formed one of the earliest companies manufacturing devices intended for wireless communication, the Wireless Telegraph & Signal Company, which later became the Marconi Company.[7] Despite this, Britain was slow to adopt public broadcasting compared to the

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[1] Salmi, 1996, pp. 11-20.
[2] Briggs, 1961, p. 25.
[3] Sarkar et al., 2006, pp. 215-228.
[4] Sarkar et al., 2006, pp. 247-265.
[5] Sarkar et al., 2006, pp. 311-326.
[6] Raboy, 2016, pp. 59-108.
[7] Crisell, 2002, p. 15.

United States, where it had been established several years earlier.[8] An important factor that slowed Britain's adoption of public broadcasting was the set of rules dictated by the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1904, which made the operation of any and all wireless devices legal only by permits provided by the Post Office.[9] Thus, radio's earliest years were predominantly limited to the acts of hobbyists, most of whom were interested in the technology for scientific, experimental, and communicational purposes. The British Broadcasting Company[10] was born out of necessity to control and regulate broadcasting in Britain. The Post Office was aware of the chaotic situation that was occurring in the United States due to their loose regulations towards public broadcasting, which is why the BBC was allowed to be formed for ensuring a stable form of national broadcasting by means of giving it monopoly status in British broadcasting.[11] This resulted in tightening the grip around the types of radio programmes available for the domestic listening public. The position as the sole major player in wireless media granted the company massive amounts of influence regarding the types of broadcast content the British listeners would hear. By the end of the 1920s, it was obvious that broadcasting had become a major part of the social and cultural change that was happening in the United Kingdom at that time. For example, broadcasting had an effect on the public's tastes towards art forms such as opera and classical music, and it also played a part in reducing the gap between social classes.[12]

1.1. Thematic approach and research questions

The point of this research is to study the possibilities and problems about the emergence of public broadcasting in Britain, as expressed on the pages of British radio magazines between 1922 and 1929. Hannu Salmi's book *Atoomipommilla kuuhun: tekniikan mentaalihistoriaa*,[13] published in 1996, has provided the thematic framework for the research. Salmi's book treats the concept of technological change throughout history by examining it in connection to human emotions or *mental history*, examining several points in history where technological change has had a noticeable effect on culture and society, and whether it has been a source of

[8] Hilmes, 2011, pp. 31-36.
[9] Briggs, 1961, p. 48.
[10] When first formed in 1922, the BBC was a private company with a monopoly status on broadcasting granted by the Postmaster-General. The company was changed into a public corporation in 1927.
[11] Crisell, 2002, p. 18.
[12] Briggs, 1965, p. 7.
[13] *"Atom bomb to the moon: mental history of technology."*

fascination and excitement or concern and resistance among the public. According to Salmi, *mentality* as a concept consists of collective feelings and experiences with regards to a certain topic. Compared to concepts such as *ideology*, which an individual or a group is usually aware of, *mentality* exists subconsciously in larger groups such as social classes, gender, and ethnic groups. The collective is usually largely unaware of their mentality, yet it influences their actions, reactions and decision making. Compared to *intellectual history*, which often examines history from the perspective of leaders and intellectuals, *mental history* often examines history from the perspective of the common man, although those in positions of power are not excluded from it.[14] This provides a very open and large thematic perspective, which can be applied to all kinds of individuals and groups, which is useful to the research of radio's effect on society as a whole. Utilising this perspective I have attempted to find out what kind of possibilities and problems public broadcasting was thought to bring along with it and what kind of mentalities were shown in the magazines regarding its introduction and evolution during the 1920s. I have chosen two questions to which I have attempted to find answers through my research:

1. What kind of mentalities towards broadcasting appeared in Britain between 1922 and 1929?
2. What kind of possibilities and problems there were with regards to broadcasting?

Although the topic of *social class* appears several times in this thesis, I have not focused on it. Instead, I have mentioned it with the purpose of providing context to other topics whenever applicable.

1.2. The scope of the research

The years researched in this study range from 1922 to 1929. Britain did have irregular broadcasting before 1922 which was undertaken mainly for experimental purposes, but these broadcasts, performed mainly by the Marconi Company and various individual amateur enthusiasts, did not receive much attention from the public and mentions of them in newspapers are scarce. Moreover, during World War I broadcasting was almost non-existent due to the increased limitations caused by the Defence of the Realm Act of 1914.[15] Radio on

[14] Salmi, 1996, pp. 13-14.
[15] Hilmes, 2011, p. 37.

its own was not a new concept for the British public, as the United Kingdom had been the location of Guglielmo Marconi's early experiments, and the technology had been in use in maritime and military applications. However, the public were not aware of the possibilities of radio for things such as entertainment and news, as the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1904 strictly limited the broadcasting there was to non-commercial experiments and communication. Once the British Broadcasting Company was formed in 1922 and their regular broadcasting began on 14th of November of the same year, the discussion regarding the BBC's broadcasting began as would be expected, and radio in general gained much more attention. As the available discussion regarding pre-BBC broadcasts is minimal at best, my research starts from 1922.

The year 1929 is chosen as the end point of the study for several reasons. The main reason is that radio's popularity had risen to a level that it could have been considered a commonplace object in most households by the 1930s and broadcasting in general was not considered a new and exciting thing by most people by then. Nearly 600,000 wireless licences had been approved by the end of 1923, and the number rose to over a million during the following year, from where it rose steadily throughout the rest of the 1920s.[16] By the end of the decade, listening to radio had become a casual occurrence that millions of people did daily. The BBC could have been considered a small public service that catered for a minority in the 1920s, but by the end of the 1930s, it was a large institution that served the majority of the British population.[17] On a lesser scale, the transition from the 1920s to the 1930s brought with it significant events and changes, such as the end of the "roaring twenties," the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the following Great Depression, and an increase in public focus towards early television and sound films. For these reasons, I consider 1929 a fitting end point for the research.

[16] Briggs, 1961, pp. 17-18. Briggs emphasises that obtaining an exact figure for the actual quantity of licences is impossible. The number of licences also does not reveal the true number of listeners, as there was a significant number of individuals listening without a licence. According to Andrew Crisell on p. 28 of *An Introductory history of British broadcasting*, approximately nine million licences had been issued up until 1939, but there existed various loopholes for listening without a licence. For example, a radio shared by an entire family only required a single licence. In 1928, all BBC programmes had at least a million listeners, and some were heard by a number as high as fifteen million.
[17] Briggs, 1965, p. 6.

1.3. Previous research

There is no shortage of books and studies written about the history of the BBC and British broadcasting in general. However, works that focus primarily on the earliest years of the kingdom's national broadcasting are in the minority, however. Sean Street's 2003 PhD *Crossing the Ether: Public Service Radio and Commercial Competition in Britain with special reference to Pre-War Broadcasting* is primarily about the competition the BBC faced from the other radio stations from continental Europe and their effects on British broadcasting, but covers some similar themes as my research. However, the 1920s are featured only briefly in Street's research. Julia Taylor's 2013 PhD *From Sound to Print in Pre-War Britain: the Cultural and Commercial Interdependence between Broadcasters and Broadcasting Magazines in the 1930s* examines the connection, discussion, and relationships between the BBC and British radio magazines, but as its title suggests, the study covers only the 1930s. The years between 1922 and 1929, which this study covers, are touched on in several written works of BBC's history. Andrew Crisell's *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting* has covered the general history of British broadcasting in a concise manner. The general history of the BBC during the research period has been covered extensively in Asa Briggs' classic histories, *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. I, The birth of broadcasting*, and *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. II, The Golden age of wireless*. Although Briggs' books are over fifty years old, they are still excellent sources for their in-depth coverage of the BBC's early years, as Briggs was able to meet in-person and interview some of the surviving original BBC staff members, including the corporation's original director John Reith, and use their private notes and letters as sources. Most of the books written about the history of broadcasting in Britain have used Briggs' books as sources. Thomas Hajkowski, in his book *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922–53*, and David Cardiff and Paddy Scannell, in their book *A Social History of British Broadcasting Volume One: Serving the Nation*, have presented the early history of broadcasting in Britain from a more cultural and listener-centric perspective. In addition to this, Susan Briggs has covered the early history of *The Radio Times*[18] in her book *Those Radio Times*, which includes excerpts from the magazine and descriptions of listener experience, but little actual analysis of them. In the book *Radio Critics and Popular Culture: A History of British Radio Criticism*, Paul Rixon has studied the history of the radio critics, which offers an excellent

[18] See section 1.5.

perspective on the criticism of radio both from the general press and radio journalists. Kate Murphy and Justine Lloyd have examined early broadcasting from a female perspective in *Behind the Wireless: a history of the early women at the BBC* and *Gender and media in the broadcast age: Women's radio programming at the BBC, CBC, and ABC.* John Clarricoats has written about the history of British amateur radio in his book *World at their fingertips*, which mostly covers the history of the experimental side of broadcasting and the people behind it.

1.4. Primary sources

The primary sources for this study consists of articles, news, and opinion pieces that appeared in two radio magazines that were in circulation during the research period: *The Radio Times* and *Wireless World and Radio Review*. As their names would imply, both magazines were predominantly radio and broadcasting focused. However, they focused on different aspects of the topic in their contents. *Wireless World* was mainly focused on the experimental side of broadcasting and was aimed mainly at hobbyists, while *The Radio Times* was a more general publication aimed at the general listening audience. Focusing on two sources that offer dissimilar outlooks on the same subject provide with large amounts of information that can be compared with one another.

1.5. The Radio Times

The Radio Times[19] is the BBC's own weekly journal, which started in September of 1923 for the purposes of publishing programme listings, news regarding the company and broadcasting in general, and a multitude of different kinds of articles. Although *The Radio Times* was predominantly a radio magazine, it featured articles on topics that were unrelated to radio, such as interviews of famous people and general science articles.[20] The start of its publication was due to necessity, when newspapers refused to publish broadcast programme listings in fear of losing their readers to radio.[21] When *The Radio Times* began its publication in 1923, it was seen as a welcome addition to the large roster of various radio-centric magazines that were in circulation, majority of which catered primarily to the radio amateurs and focused on

[19] The name of the magazine was simplified to *Radio Times* in 1937.
[20] Some of these were excerpts taken from talk programmes.
[21] Crisell, 2002, pp. 43-44.

the more scientific and engineering-related aspects of radio. Unlike them, *The Radio Times* offered the casual listener a publication that was more focused on the programmes themselves, and kept the science and technical details in the minimum. The introduction of the magazine was welcomed by the larger audience of radio who had wished for a less scientific and engineering -focused publication.[22] Other radio publications also considered it a good idea, *Wireless World* included.[23] The Radio Times had three editors during the period of research of this study: Leonard Crocombe from 1923 to 1926 (with A.R. Burrows working as a joint editor for a short period),[24] Walter Fuller from 1926 to 1927, and Eric Maschwitz from 1927 to 1933.[25] However, actual editorial views were rarely expressed on the magazine's pages, as the majority of the issues featured articles written by guest writers on the front page.

News about the BBC was a prominent part of the magazine's contents. In addition, the magazine usually contained a variety of articles, all of which were not directly related to radio or broadcasting. Several noteworthy figures of the time, such authors H.G. Wells and Annie S. Swan, and politician and philanthropist Reginald Brabazon, the Earl of Meath, wrote articles to the magazine in addition to the BBC staff. As previously mentioned, the technical side of broadcasting was kept to a minimum, but articles of the subject appeared occasionally in the magazine, usually written by BBC's head of engineering, Peter Eckersley. These articles were written in a style that could appeal to a wider audience and were mostly devoid of technical jargon.

It should be noted that *The Radio Times* is an official publication of the BBC, which is why source criticism is to be taken to consideration. Throughout the research period of this study opinions deeply critical of both broadcasting and the BBC appear extremely infrequently on the pages of the magazine. As stated by Richardson, the editorial staff can choose which letters get to appear on their pages.[26] This could very well have been a case of the magazine choosing what kind of content was appropriate to be published. This extends to the letters to editor as well, as the magazine received a lot of correspondence from readers[27] and the editors had full agency over which letters were ultimately published in each issue. Negative feedback

[22] For example: *The Radio Times*, 28.9.1923; a listener praised the magazine for not being amateur-centric.
[23] *Wireless World*, 3.10.1923.
[24] Briggs, 1981, p. 76.
[25] http://www.radiotimesarchive.co.uk/facts.html, read 14.2.2024.
[26] Richardson, 2007, pp. 151-153.
[27] By 1924, the BBC was receiving approximately two thousand letters a day. Briggs, 1961, p. 203.

on its own was not uncommon when it came to letters sent by listeners, though extremely negative correspondence was almost non-existent.

1.6. Wireless World and Radio Review

From the abundant selection of magazines aimed at an amateur readership I have used *Wireless World and Radio Review*,[28] which was the first and longest-lasting magazine about radio in Britain. Started in 1911 under the name *Marconigraph* as an in-house magazine for Marconi Company's employees before changing its name into *Wireless World* in 1913[29] and eventually into *Wireless World and Radio Review* in 1922,[30] the magazine developed steadily throughout the years and became the official publication of the London Wireless Club and eventually the Radio Society of Great Britain. Some magazines, such as *Popular Wireless*, recommended *Wireless World* as a replacement for their readers when their publication came to an end.[31]

The contents of *Wireless World* were mostly dedicated to science of broadcasting, engineering, and constructing wireless devices. In addition to this, the magazine contained news that could be of interest to the amateur radio enthusiasts, such as updates of radio club activities and developments in broadcasting around the world. Hugh S. Pocock, a member of the Radio Society of Great Britain (R.S.G.B.), was the magazine's editor throughout the entire research period of 1922 to 1929.[32] In common with *The Radio Times*, *Wireless World* had writers from outside the magazine's staff for some of the articles featured, though not in such a wide scale as *The Radio Times* did. *Wireless World* did cover news and general opinions about the BBC and their broadcasts, which were provided by their "special correspondent."[33] In stark contrast to *The Radio Times*, *Wireless World* did not hesitate to publish significant amounts of criticism towards the BBC. The magazine's writers rarely expressed their opinions about the programmes and instead directed their criticism toward the

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[28] *Wireless World* was renamed *Electronics & Wireless World* in 1983, which was simplified to *Electronics World* in 1996.
[29] Clarricoats, 1967, p. 15.
[30] *Radio Review* was a magazine that ran from 1919 to 1922 before it was merged with *Wireless World.*
[31] *Popular Wireless*, 25.12.1937.
[32] Pocock's name is not mentioned in issues before April 1923 and is instead referred to as simply "the editor." However, Edward Pawley mentions on page 17 of *BBC Engineering 1922-1972* that Pocock was the editor of *Wireless World* from 1920 until 1941. From April 1923 onward Pocock was credited as being the editor of the magazine.
[33] The identity of this individual is unknown. It is implied they were affiliated with the BBC, but this can not be proven.

policies of the BBC, although discussion and criticism regarding the programmes appeared frequently on the magazine's correspondence section.

In addition to *Wireless World*'s normal weekly issues, I have used *The Listener* as a source as well. *The Listener* was a smaller publication that was included in *Wireless World* as a four-page insert.[34] R.S.G.B. used it as a journal for comments and opinions on the BBC's broadcasting in a way that was more focused on the contents of the programmes, featuring reports on programme popularity and listener opinions. *The Listener* eventually became an official BBC publication in 1929, but I have only used the earlier *Wireless World* -incarnation of the magazine in my research.

1.7. Methods

The study consists of qualitative research for which I have used content analysis as my main method. In order to gather the data used for this research, I went through every issue of *Wireless World* from 1922 to 1929 and *The Radio Times* from 1923 to 1929, focusing on the articles, news, and letters to the editor featured in them. Going through each issue independently was a necessity, since neither *Wireless World* nor *The Radio Times* feature a search function for their archives.[35] After reading the texts once I have saved them for further reading, which has been useful for connecting texts to build easily followed narratives. A negative side to this is the possibility of missing relevant information in the sources.

Analysing the content of the magazines consists of qualitative research in the form of *content analysis*. Klaus Krippendorff's *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology* has been used as the guideline for this thesis. Content analysis as a method is used to analyse large amounts of data and interpreting its contents to identify common narratives, trends, and other qualities. Content analysis can be easily applied for the research of media and mass-communication,[36] which is why it fits well with my research as well. Content analysis as a method is in many ways similar to *close reading*, although it is not nearly as simplistic. While close reading is often applied to a small selection of sources, content analysis is designed to be utilised with a large set of data available. As the majority of the data I have collected

[34] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Listener_(magazine).
[35] The archives for *The Radio Times* do feature a search function. However, it has been enabled only for the programme listings and not the articles or any other content in the magazines.
[36] Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 21-25.

consists of magazine articles and listener opinions, careful content analysis can potentially disclose noticeably more information than what is actually included in the texts itself, such as the general mentalities held by different groups, which is especially useful for this research.

The secondary method used is critical discourse analysis. I have used John E. Richardson's book *Analysing Newspapers* as a guide for this. In essence, critical discourse analysis is used to inspect a text's qualities in relation to the context they exist in and its potential consequences, how the text might shape society and culture around it, and if the language used in the text contains connections to things such as different ideologies.[37] A great amount of importance is placed on what is and what is not said in the text, and why the contents of text are what they are. I have researched the conditions under which the text was written and connected them to a wider discourse if possible. The importance of critical discourse analysis is apparent whenever the text in question contains opinions and views that are sourced from an opinionated place. Connecting these qualities to a larger context assists in explaining why certain viewpoints are expressed.

[37] Richardson, 2007, pp. 26-45.

2. The wireless boom

Despite its rather sudden appearance, the popularity of broadcasting rose quickly among the general population. Amidst the public, many were already familiar with technology through its military and maritime applications, even if its full potential had yet to be fully discovered. According to Gordon Bussey, the use of radio in World War One had caused the public to become aware of the technology on a large scale.[38] Once the BBC began its regular broadcasting of programmes in November 1922, interest in radio began to rise steadily among the British public. During the first month of broadcasting, the number of applications for wireless licences doubled from 3,000 to 6,000. In January 1923 licences were granted at a pace of around 10,000 a week, which rose to 11,000 the next month. By February 17th, there were approximately 60,000 licences approved.[39] The booming popularity of radio was evident at the "*Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition" held in March of 1923, where it was claimed that no home could be perfect without a wireless receiver.[40] In an experiment performed by the Hackney and District Radio Society in London, a high-end homemade wireless set equipped with a loudspeaker placed next to a window facing a street was able to amass a sizable crowd of curious pedestrians, who were fixated on listening the clear reception coming from London's 2LO[41] station, and even waited through a six-minute interval. The number of listeners became so large that the police had to come in and end the experiment.[42]

Early on, listening required either a licence and an official BBC-built receiver, or alternatively, a home-built device that was approved by the Post Office, but it was not uncommon for aspiring listeners to attempt to bypass the law. It became evident that unofficial wireless receivers bearing counterfeit BBC stamps were circulating around Britain. Most of these arrived from overseas.[43] Many simply refused to pay for a licence and built simple homemade crystal receivers for listening, for which they would face a fine if caught.[44]

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[38] Bussey, 1990, p. 1.
[39] *Wireless World*, 17.2.1923.
[40] *Wireless World*, 10.3.1923.
[41] "2LO" was the callsign of the BBC's London station.
[42] *Wireless World*, 21.4.1923.
[43] *Wireless World*, 16.6.1923.
[44] Briggs, 1961, p. 147.

After simplifying the licences into a single type costing 10 shillings[45] and lowering the cost of licences for homebuilt receivers, the Post Office believed that the public would be happy to pay for the abundance of entertainment provided by their receiving sets,[46] but unlicensed listeners remained a constant source of frustration for the remainder of the decade. *Wireless World* often reported about instances where a listener had been caught and prosecuted for not having a licence, often ending up baffled by the claims provided by the “wireless pirates”. If caught, the most common pretence for not having one was that the licence required only a one-time payment, rather than a yearly one. Various different reasons appeared in the reports over the years. Some claimed that they thought only certain sets required a licence, or that the licence was required only if an outdoor aerial was used,[47] “only properly-working sets required one,”[48] or that devices older than six months did not require one.[49] There were also rare examples of sheer ignorance, where a “pirate” claimed they had no idea that a licence was even necessary.[50]

The Radio Times was keen to show the positive opinions from various noteworthy people on their pages. Famous people of the time appeared regularly in the magazine, and their articles were usually put on the front page. In addition to this, the first Christmas number of *The Radio Times* contained opinions about broadcasting from several notable individuals, such as Liberal politician and House of Lords member Harry Levy-Lawson, Labour leader and future Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, Labour politician J.R. Clynes and Lieutenant-General Robert Baden-Powell,[51] all of whom had positive and optimistic views on broadcasting and the BBC’s endeavours to some degree.[52] As this was still in the early stages of public broadcasting in Britain, there is a possibility that the BBC was attempting to get politicians and celebrities with different views to boost their image, no matter how vague their answers were.

[45] 10s in 1920 = £14.53 in 2017 (source: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/, read 15.11.2023). Average weekly wage in Southern England in 1923 was approximately £2 10s (source: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/oct/11/bbc.broadcasting1, read 15.11.2023).
[46] *Wireless World*, 9.7.1924.
[47] *Wireless World*, 18.3.1925.
[48] *Wireless World*, 23.2.1927.
[49] *Wireless World*, 20.7.1927.
[50] *Wireless World*, 2.3.1927.
[51] Baden-Powell was the founder of the global scouting movement, and a very famous person during this time.
[52] *The Radio Times*, 21.12.1923.

A benefit to radio's rapid rise in popularity was its relative ease of use. A simple crystal radio required no power in addition to what the broadcast signal itself contained, and thanks to its limited receiving range, only needed small signal and volume adjustments to work properly. Journalist Filson Young, who would became one of the radio critics of *The Radio Times* in the 1930s,[53] explained in his article how he had never bothered to purchase and learn to operate a gramophone or a mechanical player-piano, but had learned to use a radio, as he did not need to know about the science and engineering of the machine to gain sufficient amounts of enjoyment from it.[54] Young acknowledged the more scientific side of radio and the efforts of the amateurs, but preferred to keep them as "excellent mysteries." In a later article, Young revealed that he had tried more advanced receiving sets, but was dissatisfied with them due to their more complicated features and finding their improved signals detrimental to his enjoyment of music due to their tendency to highlight the less-than-ideal sound quality of the broadcasts.[55] People like Young could be considered the audience the BBC and *The Radio Times* referred to the most during the 1920s - passive listeners who kept themselves away from the experimental side of radio and were satisfied with the national programmes. However, it is to be noted that the BBC had no issue with British listeners listening to broadcasts from outside Britain,[56] although Peter Eckersley attempted to persuade the public to accept that stations operating outside Britain were not worth listening to due to interference and signal loss.[57] Eckersley's views caused him to receive some criticism in *Wireless World* from both its writers and readers.

Despite the public's interest in broadcasting being high and ever-rising, some notable personalities began to doubt broadcasting's enduring popularity by the end of the decade. Authors H.G. Wells and Lion Feuchtwanger did not see a long-term future for broadcasting. In his essay *The Remarkable Vogue of Broadcasting: will it continue?*, originally published in 1927 in the *Sunday Express*, Wells expressed a pessimistic opinion on the near future of broadcasting, which in his view was doomed to lose popularity because of public disillusionment. According to Wells, broadcasting could not provide anything that was not already done better by some other medium, which would be the key to its downfall once the public's wonder of new technology died down. A major part of Wells' argument consisted of

[53] Rixon, 2018, p. 44.
[54] *The Radio Times*, 18.4.1924.
[55] *The Radio Times*, 27.6.1924.
[56] *The Radio Times*, 31.10.1924.
[57] *Wireless World*, 24.6.1925.

claims that many of the most influential people of the era, in regards to both entertainment and politics, had not been given a chance to appear on radio.[58] An anonymous writer, who revealed themselves to be a great admirer of his works, wrote a response to Wells' essay in *The Radio Times*.[59] The respondent to Wells' argument was suspicious as to whether Wells had even listened to enough radio to be so critical of the medium, as the majority of the individuals Wells' had listed in his essay had, in fact, been heard on the radio. The respondent criticised Wells' preference of gramophone records, magazines and books over radio, explaining how listening broadcasting was cheaper, and to some individuals, preferable compared to the methods Wells gave. A similar sentiment to Wells' was provided by Feuchtwanger, who in his article featured in *The Radio Times*, adamantly stated that many of the positive effects of radio had been overestimated by the public and how broadcasting had already reached the peak of its evolution programme wise. According to Feuchtwanger, the only thing broadcasting could improve on was the talk programmes, which he thought could provide a voice to those without access to an audience an opportunity to do so.[60] Astyanax,[61] a regular, pseudonymous correspondent of *The Radio Times*, responded to his arguments by countering them as nonsensical. According to Astyanax, it was too early to say that broadcasting had no future except for the talk programmes, as the form of media had been around for less than a decade in its proper form. Astyanax also dismissed Feuchtwanger's remarks on broadcasting's effect on music, as according to his response, broadcasting had helped spread awareness of classical music among the general public and boosted the sales of gramophone records.[62]

2.1. "What the public thinks" - connecting the population through broadcasting

As broadcasting's booming popularity could attest, finding an audience for it was not an issue for the BBC. As long as it was possible to procure a wireless receiver, a listener could

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[58] Wells, *The Remarkable Vogue of Broadcasting: will it continue?* Originally published on 3.4.1927 in the *Sunday Express*, later published in the essay collection *The Way the World Is Going,* 1928, pp. 168-179.
[59] *The Radio Times*, 22.4.1927.
[60] *The Radio Times*, 30.3.1928.
[61] The identity of Astyanax is unknown, but after he was accused of being a BBC staff member who wrote to *The Radio Times* under a pen-name, editor Eric Maschwitz revealed that Astyanax was "the pen-name of a young playwright who has no connection whatsoever with the B.B.C. and no wish to justify its policy" in the 6.4.1928 issue of the magazine.
[62] *The Radio Times*, 13.4.1928.

consume radio to their heart's content. Unlike entertainment such as theatre or concerts, no additional payment was required outside of the usual wireless licence. Radio was also an instantaneous type of media, as the information and entertainment it provided was received at the very moment it was sent. The ability to read or good eyesight were not needed as well, meaning that people such as small children, the illiterate, and the very elderly could all enjoy the programmes. Radio could also be enjoyed from the comfort of one's own home, meaning that people living outside of the larger cities did not have to travel for a wide selection of entertainment.[63] As long as they lived in the range of the stations, the entertainment was brought directly to them. While this gave the BBC a potentially massive audience, it also proved to be a severe challenge, as they would have to offer various kinds of content for all of their listeners.

Interestingly, the prospect of listening to radio in a city was not a common topic in either of the magazines. This is more strongly because of the fact that the majority of listeners likely resided in high-population areas, thus, it was considered the norm. Judging by many of the articles published in the magazines and the correspondence received by them, it can be said that the rural listeners were the part of the audience that generally gained the most out of broadcasting. The editorial of *Wireless World* on September 10th, 1923, titled "Is Broadcasting Wanted?," mentions how broadcasting in cities had turned out to be merely an inferior alternative to other forms of entertainment, as the content of the programmes rarely deviated from what was already available at established places such as concert halls. The magazine's official view was that the broadcasted musical number would never, and never should, supersede the experience of attending an actual concert. They held a similar opinion towards the broadcast lectures, which could be informational, but not anything that could not be found from other sources. What they did acknowledge was that the listeners living in more isolated areas, while being the clear minority in the audience, were the ones getting the most out of the service.[64] In areas without a wide variety of entertainment, broadcasting was capable of providing an adequate substitute for what was available in the city. The writer did, however, argue that broadcasting should not be considered a true national service until it could offer the entire British public something that would stand out from the rest.

[63] Crisell, 2002, pp. 4-5.
[64] *Wireless World*, 10.9.1923.

Several articles and letters to the editor in *The Radio Times* indicate that broadcasting was an instrumental part in bridging the gap between the large cities and remote villages, where entertainment and educational programmes were often held in high regard. Labour politician Tom Shaw mentioned in an article of his how broadcasting allowed cities and villages, “formerly divided by a great gulf,” to “meet on common ground.”[65] What is evident in the sources is that broadcasting had a major positive impact on the connection of cities and the countryside. F. Morton Howard wrote a humorous story about Christmas in a small village, which depicted radio’s wide-reaching effect:

> “Last Christmastide we had our first wireless entertainment in the village. It positively made us feel that we were getting more like London every day. Mind you, you must not think that we are a really isolated village. We have a regular bus service to the nearest town, eleven miles away. The bus runs on Saturdays. Once each way.”

The story, written from the viewpoint of the writer themselves, tells of a group of villagers still new to broadcasting attempting to make their wireless receiver work, and eventually listening to broadcasts from London, Newcastle, and Birmingham. After various mishaps, humorous misunderstandings, and amazement toward the technology, the story closes with the following line:

> “But despite all these comments and criticisms, the wireless entertainment was a big success. As a result, several sets have since been installed in the village, and we really can't understand why anybody goes on living in London now.”[66]

Morton Howard’s story is quite representative of the reactions the rural British population had towards radio. Although some of the characters in the story were suspicious of the new device at first, the closing remarks of the story indicate that the village had been quick to adopt the technology after getting a sense of its benefits. A similar story by journalist and writer Annie S. Swan appeared in the magazine on October 23rd 1925, featuring a very similar take on the subject. In the story, the writer recalls visiting an elderly couple familiar to them, who lived in a very isolated cottage, but who were equipped with a radio and listened to it on a daily basis. Swan used the story as an example how great of a thing radio was for people like them:

> “Now, there is no village or hamlet cut off from anywhere: Even if it is too remote for the onslaught of the char-a-bane, it will have a telephone in the village post-office wireless even in the most modest cottage wides even in so most tod houses, and i visited

[65] *The Radio Times*, 1.8.1924.
[66] *The Radio Times*, 19.12.1924.

such a one the other day for the purpose of seeing an old couple who had been associated with my youth. I heard of their proximity accidentally and hired me with great joy to discover them. They were living entirely alone in a cottage on the brae-face, but the aerial on the roof indicated they were not cut off."

"I would pay my tribute to what seems to me the greatest wonder of modern achievement. Not only does it bring the country dweller into close touch with the age in which he lives, annihilating distance and opening ever-widening doors of experience and enjoyment. Wireless, like the spirit of brotherhood, seeks to put a girdle round the earth, making the whole world kin."[67]

In 1926, two major articles, written by journalist and author J.W. Robertson Scott[68] and novelist Fred M. White,[69] described the introduction of the radio to the countryside as one of the greatest developments the rural areas had seen. Both writers praised radio and assured how it gave new life to the villages by providing them information and entertainment of similar quality to what could be found in the cities, comparing radio's benefits to countryside to what various other inventions of the industrial age had given them, such as railways and the telegraph. In addition to Robertson Scott and White, professor Eric J. Patterson wrote an extensive article on how rural communities were using the BBC's broadcast lectures to educate themselves to a level not seen previously.[70] Patterson called this phenomenon the "rural university."

After 1927 there were no more articles that went into depth on radio's effect on the countryside on the pages of *The Radio Times*. Afterwards, villages and other rural areas were often mentioned alongside cities and smaller towns, as broadcasting had become a common thing throughout Britain by then. It can be argued that the arrival of radio brought more positive changes for the rural population compared to the audiences living in the cities. In both *The Radio Times* and *Wireless World*, negative opinions regarding radio in more isolated regions was almost non-existent. A single notable statement of opposition towards radio can be found in a news report in *Wireless World*, where the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda[71] in the Outer Hebrides politely denied a wireless station to be erected there.[72] The Hebrides would reach the signal range of transmitting stations once more powerful stations and relays

[67] *The Radio Times*, 23.10.1925.
[68] *The Radio Times*, 23.4.1926.
[69] *The Radio Times*, 17.9.1926.
[70] *The Radio Times*, 13.5.1927.
[71] According to the news report, St. Kilda had only seventy-five inhabitants in 1923. There has not been any permanent population on the island since 1930.
[72] *Wireless World*, 26.5.1923.

arrived, as listening from the aforementioned location was mentioned multiple times in *The Radio Times*, most notably in a letter to the editor, describing how wireless had enriched the life of many people living there.[73] The almost unanimous open-mindedness towards radio represented by the rural population along with its apparent rapid adoption into their daily life differs quite noticeably from the more reserved and less-enthusiastic mentality the population in the cities expressed during the earliest moments of British broadcasting. According to Asa Briggs, broadcasting did have a role in ending the isolation of the countryside, although not an exclusive one.[74]

However, providing varied programmes for a gargantuan audience would prove to be a difficult task. Early sceptics from both inside and outside the wider wireless scene were doubtful of the possibility of building a proper audience for public broadcasting. In several letters to the editor of *The Radio Times*, many listeners were annoyed by programmes that were too “highbrow” and “too specific” in their opinion, demanding more programmes for the “common man”. Novelist George Blake, the acting editor of the literary magazine *John O’London’s Weekly*, wrote an article regarding the difficulty of the concept of the “common man” in broadcasting. Unlike in most other areas of the entertainment industry, the BBC programme directors had little to no idea of the full scope of the audience they were providing for. Blake argued that a raggy-looking shepherd from Argyll, an elderly cottage-dwelling woman from Romney Marsh, a physics expert from Bloomsbury, and the flapper woman living a floor above you, could all be considered “the common man” when it came to broadcasting.[75] Blake’s letter was sympathetic to the BBC, despite the fact that the magazine he worked for had been critical of some of the more experimental programmes that had occurred at the time.[76]

Similarly to the rural population, the female audience expressed a generally welcoming mentality towards the arrival of radio and openly adopted it into their daily lives. Women in general were an audience group that received relatively little attention from either of the magazines, yet one that gained a lot from broadcasting. Several letters to the editor in *The Radio Times* reveal that women, especially those who were mostly bound to their homes due

[73] For example, *The Radio Times*, 26.2.1926.
[74] Briggs, 1965, p. 7.
[75] *The Radio Times*, 14.8.1925.
[76] *John O’London’s Weekly* criticised BBC’s famous “nightingale” -program. John Reith commented on the criticism in the 11.4.1924 issue of Radio Times.

to childcare and other duties, found great enjoyment in listening to the broadcasts.[77] A column by Bernard Furniss called radio “a monotony breaker and loneliness dispeller” for women, who could now enjoy the finest entertainment while performing household chores and looking after their children.[78] According to the book *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC* by Kate Murphy, the BBC were quick to notice their female audience, and the first programmes targeted to women appeared in the spring of 1923.[79] The *Women's Hour* became a regular programme during the same year.[80] Both *Wireless World* and *The Radio Times* usually viewed the female audience in a positive light, though the former often dismissed women as ignorant casual listeners who cared little for radio-related things outside of the BBC's broadcasting. In some instances, women were ridiculed on the pages of *Wireless World* and *The Listener* in a sexist manner by portraying them as unintelligent individuals who cared more for how well the wireless receiver fit the decor of their home than how well it worked or how to use it properly.[81] This angle began to change as the decade progressed, as it became clear that women accounted for a significant portion of the audience.[82]

Overall, the arrival of broadcasting was well-received among the different sections of the public, but the BBC faced some difficulties due to the sheer size and variety of their audience. While the BBC's position as a monopoly had secured their place in the sphere of British broadcasting without any domestic competition, it also meant that they had to adapt their selection of programmes for the entire British public. As a national service, the possibility of leaving sections of the public alienated was counteractive in regards to their goals, but this meant they had to place considerable effort to make their service both useful and enjoyable for all, regardless of their position in society. This generated problems as time went on. For example, certain elements of broadcasting, such as the selection of music heard on the BBC's airwaves, would prove to be constant points of argument among listeners, and often their arguments were sourced directly from their social upbringing.[83]

[77] For example, *The Radio Times*, 28.12.1923.
[78] *The Radio Times*, 18.4.1924.
[79] Murphy, 2016, pp. 189-190.
[80] Lloyd, 2020, p. 35.
[81] For example, *The Listener*, 24.3.1926.
[82] Crisell, 2002, p. 23.
[83] See section 3.2.

2.2. "The amateur position" - the radio amateurs' losing fight against the BBC

The arrival of the BBC was a shock to many of the amateur radio enthusiasts of Britain. After World War One and the cautious opening of broadcasting rights, which by 1920 still remained under the restrictions of the 1914 Defence of the Realm Act,[84] more and more amateur wireless clubs started to form all across Britain.[85] The Post Office tolerated this, just as long as all private broadcasting was done on a non-commercial basis.[86] Until late 1922, the amateurs had been free to broadcast and receive on the wavelengths and time periods allocated to them as they pleased as long as they had the permits to do so.[87] Developments in broadcasting, especially the Marconi Company's regular tests on the Chelmsford 2MT-station, generated much interest within the amateur circles.[88] As can be seen from the issues of *Wireless World* from August to October 1922, this interest endured with the emergence of the public broadcasting scheme,[89] but once it became clear that the amateur's rights to broadcast would be reduced significantly, concern began to build steadily within their circles.

The Post Office's new regulations limited the operation of a transmitting device by private individuals to a great degree, further restricting the available wavelengths and time-periods, while making the possibility of gaining a transmitting licence much harder than it had been in the past. The amateurs protested against these changes on the pages of *Wireless World*, criticising the post office for making the practice of their hobby significantly more restricted. The editor of the magazine, Hugh S. Pocock, explained how the amateurs had fought for their right to return the pre-war freedom of broadcasting only a year or two earlier, only to find those rights taken away from them in such short notice. According to him, the efforts of the amateurs were highly important for the further development of science, and limiting their rights was a significant blow to broadcasting in general. In addition, they feared that the amateur would become a minority in the airwaves, which was to be filled by BBC broadcasts and casual listeners tuning into them. The general impression regarding the start of the Broadcasting Company's broadcasts was that it was too early to inflict a change as massive as

[84] Hilmes, 2011, p. 37.
[85] Bussey, 1990, p. 3.
[86] Briggs, 1961, pp. 50-55.
[87] *Wireless World*, 3.6.1922.
[88] Reports of the early Chelmsford 2MT tests can be found throughout the 1922 issues of the magazine.
[89] *Wireless World*, 19.8.1922-28.10.1922.

that for such a fledgling industry and hobby, which in the long run, would hinder the overall development of the industry as a whole.[90] Outside of its usual pages dedicated to the technical and scientific aspects of broadcasting, the majority of *Wireless World's* articles for the remainder of 1922 consisted of the "oppression" that the amateurs faced, such as the claims insisted by the Postmaster-General that some amateurs, most of whom operated home-built multi-valve devices, interfered with BBC transmissions by causing oscillation,[91] and how some holders of the experimental licence were broadcasting music for entertainment and advertising purposes, which contradicted the terms of the permit.[92]

Judging from a general perspective, *Wireless World* nor its readers held no real animosity towards the BBC or the Post Office, but did their best to voice their side of the situation through the pages of the magazine. The R.S.G.B. appealed to the Post Office in an open letter published in April 1923 in the magazine by stressing how important the amateur's efforts were to broadcasting in general, and how wireless as a hobby was exceptionally beneficial for a person interested in electronics and science thanks to its practicality. The limited hours dedicated to the experimenter caused the airwaves to be so crowded, that some aspects, such as learning morse code, became almost impossible to do. They also complained how obtaining a licence had become increasingly difficult, modification of one's set was not allowed without re-registering the apparatus, and how the act of selling a homemade set had become limited by the regulations regarding acceptable radio designs. To remedy these problems, the R.S.G.B. suggested more advanced control of the airwaves, more hours dedicated to experimental work, and a new type of licence for the amateurs, which would grant them more freedom in terms of broadcasting.[93] The Post Office disregarded their efforts, considering them implausible.[94] Regulations surrounding homebuilt devices only became more strict as the year went on, which frustrated the amateurs further.[95]

Interestingly, Pocock proposed that every amateur should join together to form a unified front against the post office, and the restrictions they imposed on their hobby. By August of 1923,

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[90] *Wireless World*, 18.11.1922.

[91] *Oscillation* refers to a type of radio wave interference that might occur when a valve receiver is adjusted, generating feedback which in return interferes with the station's signal. Oscillation was a major problem during the early years of British broadcasting and the BBC received 15 000 complaints a year because of it. Source: Pawley, 1972, p. 27. Oscillators were often referred to as "howlers" in *The Radio Times.*

[92] *Wireless World*, 16.12.1922.

[93] *Wireless World*, 21.4.1923.

[94] *Wireless World*, 28.4.1923.

[95] *Wireless World*, 29.8.1923.

competition between the amateurs had diminished significantly in this spirit of cooperation, as they aimed to make the best of the situation. While the official opinion of the magazine considered this to be a positive development, a fear existed that a possible divergence of opinions in the amateur sphere could harm the hobby. Pocock also noted that competition between the amateurs was necessary for technical developments to occur: breakthroughs in technology and science would lessen in quantity if the amateur's efforts were dedicated solely to strengthening their position.[96]

The actual mentality of the amateurs is difficult to determine. Attitudes towards the BBC were positive, and the amateurs were quite interested in the technical side of broadcasting. For instance, several long and extremely detailed articles about the broadcasting equipment used by the BBC were published throughout the 1920s,[97] and they followed the development of new broadcasting stations with great interest. Wireless clubs throughout the country were sometimes invited into the stations for a tour, which were greatly appreciated.[98] As the amateurs' transmitting hours did not clash with the BBC's public broadcasts, direct confrontations between the two parties were rare, but if the BBC had to perform experiments of their own during Sunday evenings, the amateurs were quick to voice their dissatisfaction. Peter Eckersley, head of engineering at the company and an amateur himself, did his best to reason with them, making it clear that in many ways the BBC's work was experimental as well and required work done outside of their appointed broadcasting hours.[99] Regarding the broadcasts, the amateurs seemed more interested in the technical aspects of wireless and not the content itself. This was evident in an article about the famous Covent Garden opera broadcast of January 1923, which mostly dealt with the endeavour of accomplishing a broadcast of its calibre, and disregarding other aspects, such as sound quality and the performance itself, almost completely.[100] The main issue that the amateurs faced was the continuous dwindling of their rights to practise their hobby. Without the BBC's monopoly, it could have been possible that the amateurs would not have been so critical of the situation.

From what can be seen from the articles in *Wireless World*, the amateurs' fight for their rights to broadcast freely lessened quite drastically as the decade progressed. By 1924, it was more

[96] *Wireless World*, 1.8.1923.
[97] For example, *Wireless World*, 23.12.1922.
[98] For example, *Wireless World* 19.5.1923.
[99] *Wireless World*, 30.6.1923.
[100] *Wireless World*, 27.1.1923.

or less obvious that BBC's public broadcasting monopoly was here to stay, and the pre-war freedom of broadcasting was unreachable. Discussion surrounding the amateur's rights still continued on the pages of *Wireless World*, although to a lesser extent. Instead, they focused their efforts on other sides of their hobby, such as building increasingly powerful receivers, chasing world-wide communications, and coming up with new ways of gaining better and clearer signals from BBC's broadcasts. It could be argued that at least on the pages of *Wireless World*, the amateurs silently accepted their defeat against the monolith that was the BBC, as by the end of decade, the majority of non-technical articles and news centred around the BBC. However, the hobby gained a significant boost of popularity after regular broadcasting by the BBC began. According to Bussey, a polarisation of interests began to emerge in the amateur scene after 1922, when most of the new hobbyists were more interested in building their own sets instead of conducting broadcasting experiments.[101] In *The Radio Times* there were multiple notions that many schoolboys and young men were especially interested in the scientific and engineering side of radio.[102] In one way, broadcasting played a key role in changing the hobby of amateur radio by opening it to a much larger audience than before. According to Susan Briggs, for example, young boys were encouraged to take up the hobby in the *Children's Hour* -portion of *The Radio Times*, and this led thousands of them to take interest in radio.[103] Although the hobby itself was unable to revert back into its former form, the popularisation of radio in general further developed the interest towards amateur broadcasting and engineering in the public sphere.

2.3. Unifying the world – optimism and suspicion for a more united world through broadcasting

The growing interest in radio and broadcasting spawned plenty of general optimism for the future and the possibilities of using it as a tool for unification of the nation and world itself. In general, there existed an optimistic hope that radio could be utilised in a way that would bring the nations closer to one another. *The Radio Times* featured several articles written by various individuals which dealt with the future prospects of broadcasting. People such as labour

[101] Bussey, 1990, pp. 9-11.
[102] For example, *The Radio Times*, 17.10.1924 and 22.5.1925.
[103] Briggs, 1981, p. 27.

politician Tom Shaw,[104] novelist Henry de Vere Stacpoole,[105] and inventor Archibald Low,[106] were certain that broadcasting was the key to making the world a better place and ensuring that future generations would live a much better life as a result of its benefits. The overall tone presented in these articles was very positive, showing very clear optimism that the future of broadcasting would bring people from all over the world together, and humanity would not have to wait too long for it to become reality. However, the technology was still on a primitive level during the 1920s, which is why international broadcasting mostly existed in the form of poorly functioning and low-quality transmitting and receiving between high-power stations and listeners equipped with high-end valve sets.

The rapid increase in the number of broadcasts on the European continent and elsewhere raised concerns about the control of international broadcasting, which was completely unregulated in the early twenties. Neither the International Telegraph Union nor the League of Nations desired to form an entity to regulate international broadcasting matters, citing the recentness of the technology as their primary reason. This forced various private and national broadcasters to take matters into their own hands. The International Broadcasting Union (IBU), often called the "Geneva Scheme" in the magazines, was formed to regulate the international airwaves in 1925. The BBC was initially against joining the plan as it preferred to retain the control of its wavelengths, but ultimately decided to join after negotiations.[107] *Wireless World* especially followed the plan keenly and regularly reported updates on the story. The first impression of the scheme in *Wireless World* was mixed.[108] The magazine considered it a good idea, but there was uncertainty over how well the scheme would work in practice. *Wireless World* did show interest in the possibilities the scheme offered in regards to enhanced international broadcasting and the possible exchange of programmes,[109] and showed optimism for the possibility that the scheme would bring the prospect of international listening to the wider public, who were still mostly satisfied with their local stations.[110] The magazine was critical of the BBC's policy of strengthening the signals of their existing stations to reach a wider crystal radio -listening audience, as the magazine and many of its

[104] *The Radio Times*, 1.8.1924.
[105] *The Radio Times*, 24.10.1924.
[106] *The Radio Times*, 24.7.1925.
[107] Lommers, 2012, pp. 56-65.
[108] *Wireless World*, 22.4.1925.
[109] *Wireless World*, 15.7.1925.
[110] *Wireless World*, 23.9.1925.

readers preferred multiple stations, from which they would have benefited with their valve receivers.

The IBU could have used its authority of the airwaves to make the world a better place through better international broadcasting and limiting the use of propaganda in the broadcasts,[111] but *Wireless World* was also concerned about whether the union's actions would have a detrimental effect on broadcasting as a whole. According to the opinions expressed in the magazine, it would have been better if the League of Nations would had seized the opportunity and secured themselves an international broadcasting station instead,[112] something which would eventually be realised in 1932.[113] The IBU, on the other hand, focused its efforts on regulating the airwaves, which turned out to be a task full of problems. As can be seen from the issues of *Wireless World*, the introduction of the scheme was delayed multiple times, and once it came into being, the new regulations caused notable amounts of frustration among listeners. The countries that were part of the union were forced to change their wavelengths several times to reduce interborder radio interference, which caused a lot of confusion in the British listening public.[114] This also made listening to non-British broadcasts extremely difficult as the switching of wavelengths caused all previous information about various stations to be obsolete.[115] While the IBU had some success in their mission, it was unable to fix the wavelength issue in Europe. Wireless World called it an "etheric policeman" which, especially after interest in it started to fade, tried to keep the users of Europe's airwaves at bay.[116] Regardless of their efforts, Europe's airwaves were still excessively crowded in 1929 and the regulations did not seem to work as broadcasting grew more popular.[117] Despite showing great potential at fixing the wavelength issues in Europe, the IBU's effect on broadcasting during the 1920s was ultimately limited.

While the majority of listeners in Britain were satisfied with the domestic programmes, listening to broadcasts from abroad was a real possibility for those who owned a high-end

[111] *Wireless World*, 22.4.1925 and 29.4.1925.
[112] *Wireless World*, 22.4.1925.
[113] Lommers, 2012, p. 157. The League of Nations' own broadcasting station began its development in 1928, which can be seen in the 16.5.1928 issue of *Wireless World*. *Wireless World* reported in the 13.2.1929 issue that the League would begin to broadcast in March 1929 from a station located in the Netherlands, but it would take until 1932 for a dedicated station to emerge.
[114] Bussey, 1990, pp. 25-29.
[115] *Wireless World*, 11.1.1928, 28.1.1928 and 7.3. 1928.
[116] *Wireless World*, 14.11.1928.
[117] *Wireless World*, 21.8.1929.

valve radio. A problem that arose in both the broadcast programmes and wireless communication in general was often the language barrier. Some used this as an opportunity to learn new languages, but most longed for a solution to the problem. Both *The Radio Times* and *Wireless World* reported on the possibilities of adopting an "international language" for radio. Articles by BBC's director of programmes A.R. Burrows[118] and regular contributor to *The Radio Times* R. de Poynton[119] argued for the adoption of English as the international radio language, for which they received a noteworthy amount of correspondence from the speakers of the constructed language of Esperanto,[120] and to a lesser extent, Ido.[121] As it can be seen from both of the magazines, Esperanto was a popular language among many wireless enthusiasts who were extremely vocal with their campaign to spread awareness of the language and its suitability for becoming an international broadcasting language. *Wireless World* especially reported regularly about the usage of Esperanto in broadcasting all over the world. Poynton was convinced that English, with its widespread use and ease of learning compared to languages such as Russian and Chinese, would be perfect for the role of an international broadcast language and that it would eventually reach that position. Defenders of Esperanto disagreed with them and considered English to be an inferior choice, as according to them, Esperanto required less learning than English and several countries already had broadcasts in Esperanto.[122] Esperanto had also been recognized by the League of Nations as a language candidate for international telegraphy.[123] At the 1924 Geneva Conference, where the Geneva broadcasting scheme was being discussed, several speakers addressed the conference in Esperanto, including a representative of *Wireless World*.[124]

Although mentions of Esperanto appeared often in the magazines, those who campaigned for its establishment were only a vocal minority of people mostly consisting of radio amateurs, and the overall effect of their efforts was limited at best. English literature scholar Sir Israel Gollancsz dismissed all notions of Esperanto's capability of becoming a new lingua franca because of its artificial nature, and was adamant that English would eventually reach that position in his article "When all the world speaks English," citing advancements in both

[118] *The Radio Times*, 23.5.1924.
[119] *The Radio Times*, 10.4.1925.
[120] *The Radio Times*, 13.6.1924, 24.4.1925, 8.5.1925 and 5.6.1925.
[121] *The Radio Times*, 4.7.1924.
[122] *Wireless World* reported that in 1926 there were 82 broadcast stations worldwide that offered programmes in Esperanto.
[123] *Wireless World*, 18.11.1925.
[124] Briggs, 1961, p. 311.

American and British broadcasting as the reason for it.[125] Gollancz' take on the language question aligned well with the previous opinions that appeared in the magazine. The regular articles concerning the vindication of the status of the English language in broadcasting was not a coincidence, as *The Radio Times*, both in its regular writers and its readers, represented strong feelings towards their national identity, which the BBC actively promoted in their broadcasts.[126] An exception to this common opinion was made by journalist C.E. Montague, who argued that the implementation of English as the world language through broadcasting would be an exceptionally harmful thing for the cultural diversity of the world, and viewed it extremely unlikely that the BBC in particular would participate in the active downfall of all other languages.[127] According to Asa Briggs, BBC director John Reith was against the adoption of Esperanto as a world radio language and preferred the idea of "spreading British thought in English or French which are easily understood."[128] It could be argued that the BBC's primary goal was to be a service for Britain and the British Empire as a whole, and the rest of the world came after them. Although notions of optimism regarding worldwide peace and unification through the use of radio appeared on the pages of their own journal, the international aspect of broadcasting was not an important factor to the BBC, which could also explain their initial disinterest in joining the IBU.

2.4. Friend of the blind, the deaf, the sick, and the elderly

Possibly the most unanimously positive aspect of broadcasting was the way it provided entertainment for the elderly, those suffering from loneliness and people with disabilities or who suffered from some sort of sickness. To those suffering from these ailments and the ones who took care of them, a general mentality of radio as a bringer of relief was extremely commonplace, and this was reflected often in *The Radio Times* especially. One lonely elderly listener from a remote countryside location wrote to *The Radio Times* how they had "found the elixir of life" when they began listening to the radio.[129] The editor of the magazine considered their statement only a "slight exaggeration," as they were aware of how radio was a source of happiness for the lonely, aged, and sick.

[125] *The Radio Times*, 4.3.1927.
[126] Hajkowski, 2010, pp. 19-50.
[127] *The Radio Times*, 15.4.1927.
[128] Briggs, 1961, pp. 310-311.
[129] *The Radio Times*, 19.10.1923.

The Radio Times published several articles regarding the correlation between health and radio. The usefulness of radio for this was noticed very early on after regular broadcasting first began. Wireless sets had been installed in some hospitals as early as the April of 1923,[130] and became increasingly common as the decade progressed. Early advocates for increasing the amounts of radios in hospitals were the writer and journalist Mr. Keble Howard, who raised a significant sum of money to equip the Royal Sussex County Hospital with radios in late 1924,[131] and Viscount Knutsford, whose article regarding the benefits of radio in the hospitals was published in *The Radio Times* in 1924, and managed to raise £32,000[132] for buying radios for London hospitals.[133] There are many examples of letters received by *The Radio Times* that featured either patients or staff of hospitals, often holding nothing but praise for broadcasting. Listeners from hospitals enjoyed the programmes enough to request additional ones to be broadcast right before their bedtime. Music, news, and religious sermons were greatly appreciated by the patients who otherwise would have had to endure countless hours with little or no entertainment.

Although this kind of use for radio received similar amounts of praise in the amateur circles, there did exist some doubt about how to implement them properly for hospital use. In an article published in *Wireless World*, J.R. Ratcliffe considered radios in hospital wards an expensive and impractical idea. Typical to the magazine's leanings to technical side of radio, he argued to that implementing a wireless receiver in a hospital would require "a frame aerial multi-valve set," a portable radio that only a single ward could use at a time, or a designated central wireless unit with complicated wirings spread throughout the hospital. Complicated receivers and the utilisation of loudspeakers could also cause additional problems, as he described in his article:

> "Such sets cannot be managed by the nurses in the wards; they presume an electrician, who may have to be fetched from other work to manipulate them. Loud-speaker sets are very unsuitable for the wards of busy hospitals, as there are nearly always patients who are seriously ill or just recovering from an operation, and to whom the noise is an

[130] A discussion regarding the first wireless set installed in a hospital ward appeared on the pages of *The Radio Times*, spanning multiple issues in 1926. Ralston House, which was a hospital home for paralysed sailors and soldiers, was treated with a demonstration of a radio in February 1923, but would not receive a permanent unit until June. The Northern Counties Hospital for Incurables at Heaton Mersey, Manchester, received a permanent wireless unit in April 1923, and was still in daily use as of 1926.

[131] *The Radio Times*, 9.2.1926 and 9.4.1926.

[132] £32,000 in 1924 = approximately £2,438,083 in 2024. Source: https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1924?amount=32000, read 26.2.2024.

[133] *The Radio Times*, 23.4.1926.

> infliction. Other patients may want to be quiet and read. Again, the loud-speaker cannot be used when a physician is in the ward and is listening to a patient's heart or chest. The consequence is that the set is less and less frequently used, and if it gets out of order it is left so."

In the same article, Ratcliffe described how a hospital in Birmingham avoided all of these issues by implementing a new kind of hospital wireless system, which consisted of small crystal radios attached directly into the wall with headphone plugs next to the beds. The radios were always on whenever there was a transmission, and a patient could request a pair of headphones from a nurse, causing no nuisance to the other patients. The hospital was situated near Birmingham's 5IT station, which allowed the signal to be sufficient for the majority of the time with only a small indoor aerial. In addition, Ratcliffe mentioned that this implementation would be used in London later on.[134] While this system was considered to be a suitable solution to the problem of having radios in hospitals, it became apparent from a letter sent to the editor of *Wireless World* that the automatic nature of the units caused them to be often neglected after they had been originally installed, resulting in poor reception and distorted sounds, which made especially music difficult to listen to.[135] W.H. Peak, a managing director at the Marconiphone company, responded to the letter in a later issue, explaining how the radios usually installed in the wards required weekly maintenance to keep them functional.[136] The news from this drew a lot of attention, which led the BBC to send engineers to twenty-two hospitals in the London area to evaluate the situation.[137] The BBC themselves did not cover this issue in *The Radio Times*, but it is not surprising considering the magazine's focus on BBC broadcasting and programmes rather than radio in general.

Famous physician Sir Bruce Bruce-Porter wrote an article for *The Radio Times*, where he argued that radio is exceptionally beneficial for continuously bedridden patients such as cripples. In his article, Bruce-Porter mentioned how many patients who had to stay in bed permanently were forced to stay alone without any entertainment when their caretakers went away, leading to deterioration in their mental state and increasing the possibility of depression. According to him, listening to radio had showed noticeable positive changes in patients:

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[134] *Wireless World*, 9.12.1925.
[135] *Wireless World*, 13.6.1928.
[136] *Wireless World*, 27.6.1928.
[137] *Wireless World*, 1.8.1928.

> "To the helpless cripple, wireless has opened up a new world. In fact, people who are permanently bed-ridden, and, so far as contact with the outside world is concerned, were dead, now live again, thanks to wireless. They hear music actually being played, not merely its reproduction, and they hear public men speaking. Thanks to the enterprise of the British Broadcasting Company and the kindness of well-known public men, they become acquainted with the personality of those whose names have made history. Personality is conveyed much more by the spoken than by the written word. The short Sunday evening service brings many of our best persons into homes they could not otherwise visit, and comfort to many who are sick in mind as well as body. There are many poor folk to-day eking out an existence on a pittance, who are too proud to make their poverty generally known. Every medical man is acquainted with such. To them a little receiving set would be a godsend. If a local radio club would raise a fund to pay the licence and provide sets on loan, there would be no difficulty in finding suitable people to be recipients of their kind thought."[138]

Being able to hear music, speeches, and sermons on the radio was greatly appreciated by the blind, many of whom felt disconnected from the world due to their disability. *Wireless World* was highly vocal about radio's beneficial nature to people suffering from blindness. Captain Ian Fraser, chairman of the St. Dunstan's Hostel for Blind Sailors and Soldiers, was among the first blind public figures to become greatly invested in radio and its usefulness to blind people.[139] His effort to pass a bill in the House of Commons to provide the blind with free radio licences was followed keenly by *Wireless World*, who regularly published updates on the story and Fraser's actions in general. Once the bill was passed in 1926, *Wireless World* gave Fraser a lot of praise for this achievement[140] and repeated their congratulations to him again only three issues later.[141] While passing of the bill was an important development for radio and the blind, Fraser's position as a member of the R.S.G.B. since 1922[142] could have been influential for the amount of interest and praise he received. In comparison, *The Radio Times* did not cover the story despite receiving a lot of correspondence from blind listeners. Fraser did write about radio and blindness in *The Radio Times* as well in an article where he described many of the positives the BBC's broadcasts brought to the blind, who according to him often suffered from boredom.[143] In response to his article, listeners mostly agreed with him, yet mentioned that Fraser's tone gave an impression that he downplayed the importance

[138] *The Radio Times*, 31.7.1925.
[139] According to Clarricoats on p. 78 of *World at their fingertips*, Fraser had been interested in radio even before World War One.
[140] *Wireless World*, 1.12.1926.
[141] *Wireless World*, 22.12.1926.
[142] Clarricoats, 1967, p. 78.
[143] *The Radio Times*, 30.1.1925.

of braille.[144] While the argument for braille did not appear again in the sources, it shows that certain blind individuals were not going to abandon the other type of media available to them simply because broadcasting was superior compared to braille from a technological standpoint.

In comparison, deafness appeared on the pages of both magazines, but to a significantly lesser extent. The hearing impaired did, however, benefit from the broadcasts, as programmes could be heard by using headphones or using a loudspeaker-equipped valve radio with very high volume. Correspondence from deaf listeners appeared sporadically in *The Radio Times*, where broadcasting received a lot of praise. Radio gave many hearing impaired people a chance to listen to music and other entertainment for the first time in years.[145] Some even claimed that radio was the cure for deafness and their hearing became better after being introduced to the technology.[146] The possibility of using wireless as an aid to the deaf was considered by The Royal Ear Hospital in London, who began to research its possibilities in 1928.[147]

From a broad standpoint, it can be argued that broadcasting was a breakthrough for those suffering from disabilities and other ailments. The general mentality in the discussion leaned towards the positive sides much more compared to the negatives. Minor technical difficulties were brought up, but they did not end up as permanent issues. When compared to most other topics that surrounded broadcasting as a whole, the way it helped the sick was among the only things nearly everyone agreed upon.

[144] *The Radio Times*, 20.2.1925 and 27.2.1925.
[145] For example, *The Radio Times*, 16.1.1925, and 10.4.1925.
[146] *The Radio Times*, 15.1.1925
[147] *Wireless World*, 23.5.1928.

3. The varying content of the programmes

3.1. Educating the nation - broadcasting and its usefulness to education

Educational broadcasts, such as lectures and talks, were a major part of the BBC programmes alongside other entertainment and news and had been since the early times of the company. Director John Reith himself thought that it would be wasteful to not use broadcasting for educational purposes.[148] The BBC themselves showcased a mentality towards broadcasting that was very much positive towards its uses to education. Many schools throughout the United Kingdom were equipped with radio equipment in the 1920s. For example, *Wireless World* reported that in 1928 there were over 3000 schools where educational broadcasts from the 2LO and 5GB[149] stations were listened to.[150] These were mostly utilised in classrooms to listen to the various educational programmes, but occasionally schools had their own radio classes where students could practise operating a radio themselves.[151]

Among teachers, a common negative mentality towards broadcasting was suspicion of its actual effectiveness to education. The earliest educational broadcasts happened in January 1924 and regular educational broadcasts began in August of the same year. Students from over 200 schools listened to these programmes,[152] but certain schools were initially hesitant to include elements of radio into their curriculum. According to Asa Briggs, the idea of students group-listening to broadcasts was not favourable to teachers, who thought that the technology took away the teacher's freedom to plan their classes in their own way.[153] In addition, some schoolmasters feared that broadcasting was detrimental to children, as it could cause them to neglect studying. Broadcasting was considered especially harmful to boys, who would listen and practise wireless at home rather than do homework. This kind of sentiment was shared by a headmaster of a Yorkshire grammar school, for example.[154] *Wireless World* considered

[148] Briggs, 1961, p. 8.
[149] 5GB was the first of the BBC Regional Scheme stations. Located in Daventry, it replaced the existing midlands stations in 1927.
[150] *Wireless World*, 22.6.1928.
[151] *The Radio Times*, 22.5.1925.
[152] Elliott, 1976, p. 350.
[153] Briggs, 1965, p. 192.
[154] Briggs, 1981, p. 28.

these fears irrational, explaining how boys had detested schoolwork long before broadcasting, and stated how radio was beneficial and educational in many ways.[155]

Opinions on the effectiveness of the educational broadcasts were mixed. The articles in *The Radio Times* held a highly positive opinion on the educational value of broadcasting. One of these was an article by the former President of the Board of Education, H.A.L. Fisher, where educational broadcasting was praised as the next revolution in Britain's education both in and out of schools.[156] An article of similar praise was written by J.R. Clynes, the Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons.[157] Labour politician Arthur Greenwood held a more reserved opinion on the subject, but was certain that once broadcasting developed further, it could supplement pictures and silent films in classrooms with its sound.[158] Similarly to Fisher and Clyne, Greenwood was assured that broadcasting would eventually revolutionise education as a whole, but acknowledged that the technology was still in its infancy. These articles did not consider the actual effectiveness of radio in school and perceived it in an idealistic way. *Wireless World* showed definite interest in the possibilities of radio in schools and acknowledged that ordinary classes supplemented by lectures on special subjects could be beneficial in children's education, and that the technology allowed a single lecturer to effectively speak to numerous classrooms simultaneously. However, they also acknowledged that the poor reproduction of the human voice in broadcasting could make following the lectures difficult for younger students. The author of the article was convinced that sound film would immediately replace the radio in classrooms once the technology became available, and instead advocated for the schools to teach the students the theory and practise of wireless.[159]

From the end of 1926 onward the BBC changed its programme policy towards a more educational one.[160] This included both an increase in the programmes aimed at schools and more emphasis on the educational value in the talk programmes. While the decision was primarily done with educational benefits in mind, there was an experimental aspect attached to the endeavour in the form of the Kent experiment, in which 72 schools from the Kent area were equipped with wireless receivers and their effects to education were followed

[155] *Wireless World*, 7.1.1925.
[156] *The Radio Times*, 11.7.1924.
[157] *The Radio Times*, 18.7.1924.
[158] *The Radio Times*, 27.3.1925.
[159] *Wireless World*, 28.1.1925.
[160] Briggs, 1961, pp. 347-348, 404.

throughout the school year. The experiment was considered a successful one and proved how broadcasting contained several beneficial aspects to it regarding its usage in education,[161] although *Wireless World* mentioned a BBC report claiming that "wireless cannot replace the living teacher." Despite its successes, school wireless was not without its problems. Poor reception caused by inferior receivers and long distances caused the broadcasts to be impossible to follow.[162] According to Asa Briggs, the Kent experiment had mitigated this issue thanks to the region's close proximity to London. Most of the schools were satisfied with the broadcasts, but there were also reports of children growing tired of listening to them.[163] Once the report for the Kent experiment was published, the BBC correspondent of *Wireless World* showed minor criticism towards the lack of reporting on how the broadcasts were viewed at home, although their tone could be taken as humorous:

> An additional blessing seems to have been the added interest which parents have displayed in their children's lessons. In some cases Dad has been able to listen to the same lesson that Tommy has heard while in school, and poor Tommy has come home to an unexpected parental catechism. I should like to hear what Tommy thinks about it. When shall we have the children's report?[164]

While Fisher, Clyne, and Greenwood held opinions of unrealistic expectations and optimism, it can be concluded that the usage of broadcasting in education was successful and a beneficial addition in at least some capacity to British schools, and both *Wireless World* and education officials had positive views of it. However, the incredulous mentality of some of the school staff and the doubt expressed by *Wireless World* regarding its possible irrelevance in the near future proves that the general mentality of the topic was not positive overall.

Outside of the school broadcasts, most listeners were not pleased with the new direction of the talks, which were already an unpopular part of the programmes, and now featured even more educational content than what they used to and the school transmissions took the place of the earlier afternoon broadcasts, reducing the amount of entertainment programmes during the day. According to *Wireless World*, the listeners had shown apprehension to this change as soon as it had begun to occur.[165] Talk programmes were uninteresting to a lot of listeners and received a lot of criticism, which only increased once their content became increasingly

[161] Briggs, 1965, pp. 190-196.
[162] *Wireless World*, 29.6.1927.
[163] *Wireless World*, 12.10.1927.
[164] *Wireless World*, 18.7.1928.
[165] *Wireless World*, 22.12.1926.

educational.[166] Frustrated listeners wondered if there could be a separate station for them. Although it was not explicitly stated by the BBC, the constant criticism toward the style of programme led Corporation to not include any talks into the broadcasts of the new experimental 5GB broadcasting station in 1927.[167] According to *Wireless World'*s BBC correspondent this decision was well-received by the listeners, though some of the magazine's readers wondered if the correspondent was projecting their own opinions through the column, claiming that many listeners desired talk programmes on 5GB.[168] What is interesting is that the criticism towards talks in both *The Radio Times* and *Wireless World* came mostly from well-educated people living in the cities. Other kinds of listeners, such as those living in rural areas, servants, housewives, and the elderly, praised the educational talks and stated in letters to the editor of *The Radio Times* that they were learning a lot from them. Overall, the consensus on talks was generally far more positive in *The Radio Times* than in *Wireless World*.

3.2. Appreciation of music

3.2.1. "Highbrows versus Lowbrows" - Debate for and against classical music in broadcasting

Music in general was the most popular form of entertainment heard in the broadcasts.[169] The result was that discussion about music was commonplace in both *The Radio Times* and *Wireless World* throughout the research period. The BBC was aware of the power they had in their hands through their monopoly status in British broadcasting, as the music they would play could potentially affect the tastes of the whole British population. They argued that broadcasting was the final step in "true democratisation of music," which would provide the entire nation with the finest music regardless of their social class or location. The musical tastes of the affluent concert-going audience and the lower-class public differed greatly. As both the radio and the gramophone were still in their infancy, and performances in concert halls and theatres were often an expensive affair, a large majority of the nation had yet to hear

[166] *Wireless World*, 19.1.1927.
[167] *Wireless World*, 24.8.1927.
[168] *Wireless World*, 7.3.1928.
[169] *The Listener*, 5.10.1927. The data comes from a ballot conducted by the R.S.G.B., which indicated that musical programmes were generally more popular than other types.

the classical composers of the past.[170] This led the BBC to put a large emphasis on classical music in their programmes, in the cause of national musical education and to expose classical music to new audiences. In addition to this, articles about classical composers and their works by music critic Percy Scholes were common in *The Radio Times*, and certain special issues were dedicated almost exclusively to composers such as Beethoven and Schubert.[171] In response to some of the criticism the BBC received in regards to their music choices, John Reith, the director of the BBC, explained how they stood for the broadcasting of all kinds of music, but also stated how "good music" should be broadcast as well:

> "On the contrary, the oftener one hears the best music, the more it grows on one. We say that by popularizing good music, wireless is doing an important service to the musical world, and one which an increasing number in the profession are glad to acknowledge."[172]

Several factors fed into the constant debate around music in broadcasting.. As the audience consisted of people from all social classes and age groups, it became evident that a music programme that pleased everyone was an impossibility and a source of never-ending discussion. Limitations in technology meant that for a large part of the decade only a single station was available to listen for the majority of listeners who only had a basic crystal radio. Partly for this reason opinions regarding the BBC's music choices were noticeably vehement at points. Listeners who commented on the musical programmes were usually divided into two different mentalities, the "highbrows" and "lowbrows," who preferred either classical compositions or "light"[173] and "dance"[174] music respectively and campaigned heavily for their preferred music to be broadcasted in greater numbers compared to the other. Both sides were critical of the BBC for including too much of the "wrong" variety of music in their programmes, and regularly attempted to influence the selection of musical programmes by voicing out their opinions. Disdain for classical music was expressed far more often than for the "lowbrow" -music styles, which, it can be argued. reflects the larger number of lower-class listeners. As can be seen throughout the research period in *The Radio Times*, and to a lesser extent in *Wireless World*, the majority of listeners did not want to hear classical music

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[170] Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, pp. 194-195.

[171] The special issues for Beethoven and Schubert were published on 18.3.1927 and 16.11.1928 respectively.

[172] *The Radio Times*, 29.2.1924.

[173] *Light music* was a term used for non-serious musical numbers, such as humorous songs and popular or crowd-pleasing classical compositions, usually short in length.

[174] *Dance music* was a general term for all music that was meant to dance to. According to Scannell & Cardiff on p. 183 of *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, there was a "post-war dancing craze" going on when broadcasting began in 1922.

which they were unfamiliar with, and preferred the popular songs of the day instead. Additionally, lengthy classical pieces sometimes proved problematic for broadcasting, as they would either have to be cut into multiple broadcasts or they would take a significant amount of the time allocated for broadcasting. Compositions with vocal parts, ones sung in a language other than English, and operas, received criticism from listeners as well, mostly for the fact that the technology available could not reproduce the sound in a way that would make the vocalists' voices distinguishable from one another. For opera, the BBC attempted to remedy this by adding an annotated explanation of the story and dialogue of the composition in *The Radio Times*, but how well this worked can not be stated accurately.

While the "lowbrows" were the more vocal side of the argument, the "highbrows" did voice their pleas for increasing the amount of classical music. For example, in a letter to the editor titled "Why good music should be broadcast", a listener from Manchester explained their reasoning, calling the "lowbrows" people with "prehistoric brains who could not distinguish between rhythm and melody:"

> "One would have thought that the class of people who dislike anything they have not been educated up to was dying out, but such an assumption appears to be unwarranted. Their position in any case appears to be an extremely selfish one. Such music as they like can be heard almost anywhere. Go into the nearest picture palace and you will hear the class of music in which they delight. To my mind, broadcasting must completely fulfil its possibilities when it gives us what we can not otherwise obtain. Take high-class music. To hear such comfort, if one lives in a large town, costs at least 2s. 6d., and though many people find that sum insignificant to their pockets, they must not fail to realize that very many indeed cannot afford so much."[175]

The Radio Times would tackle the problem of varying musical tastes frequently. Percy Scholes commented on the issue in December 1923 in an article where he attempted to understand both sides.[176] The main point of the article was that he knew no individuals who enjoyed only "highbrow" or "lowbrow" styles of music, and both sides actively enjoyed each other's music at the same time, pointing out several famous compositions that were widely appreciated by all kinds of listeners.[177] Scholes was, however, a self-appointed "highbrow," and believed that the lives of those who listened to classical music were fuller and more

[175] *The Radio Times*, 21.12.1923

[176] *The Radio Times*, 14.12.1923.

[177] Some of the compositions Scholes mentioned include the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, "French comedy music," the Blue Danube Waltz, and Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata.

interesting than those who did not. In the end of the article, Scholes argued that dislike of classical music was from ignorance caused by a lack education and exposure to it:

> "I don't blame the Lowbrow too much for his lack of interest in the sort of music that needs listening to with brains. I know that it is not altogether his fault. For one thing, until, first, the Gramophone, and, second, Broadcasting, came into existence the opportunities of hearing the higher kinds of music were few. Many people don't enjoy a Symphony in A, or Sonata in B Flat, " or a "Concerto in Sharp," because they hardly know what those cold, unattractive names imply. To explain some of these terms, and the musical facts they represent, is the purpose of my writing week by week in The Radio Times. I suggest that when a Monday S.B. [178]concert of "classical" music is to be given the intelligent Lowbrow should read my article on Friday, Saturday or Sunday, and then on Monday listen to the concert, item by item, with the article in front of him. He will not at once jump right into a condition of advanced "high-browism," but I believe that, bit by bit, he will find himself progressing until music that is at present frankly beyond his capacity of understanding will become to him comparatively simple. The enjoyment of Highbrow music once gained is a lifetime's possession. I have met lots of people who once enjoyed only Lowbrow stuff, and now enjoy the Highbrow too, but I have never in my life met a man or woman who once liked the Highbrow stuff and now likes only the Lowbrow. Have you?"

From this point of view, it can be argued that the highbrows saw the BBC's music choice as beneficial for the public, since they were finally able to hear a type of music previously unavailable to them. Writer Compton Mackenzie held a similar opinion to Scholes in his article "Radio and the reading habit" where he expressed his opinions on how radio was influencing literature and music. Mackenzie argued that the lowbrows only dislike classical music because they are unfamiliar with it, and would find themselves enjoying it more if they simply had an open mind about listening to it.[179] In a letter to magazine's editor titled "A Word for the Low Brows," a correspondent expressed their dislike to Mackenzie's statement, which encapsulates their feelings regarding the elitism the highbrows often promoted:

> "DEAR SIR, —In a recent issue of The Radio Times Mr. Compton Mackenzie deals with the question of high-class music and the " Low Brows.' I venture to think that he has not stated the case correctly. The "Low-Brows" do not object to a fair proportion of high-class music, but to a surfeit of it. If his argument were carried to its logical conclusion, only the classical in literature, the drama, etc., should be allowed to the public, so that, quoting his words, "they can raise themselves if they have the humility to want raising." Why do the musical " High-Brows" adopt this lofty and unforbearing

[178] "S.B" = Simultaneous broadcast. Term used for experimental broadcasts that were relayed to other stations to be heard simultaneously at multiple locations.
[179] *The Radio Times*, 9.5.1924.

> attitude? Surely, in some of the other arts many of them would have to be placed in the category of… Yours truly, " Low-Brow.""[180]

Wireless World in 1927[181] and the BBC in 1928 reported that the popular taste was "improving,"[182] as popularity of classical music was on the rise, but the debate between the "lowbrows" and "highbrows" continued throughout the research period without much development in the opinions. Astyanax, a recurring contributor to *The Radio Times*, was certain that in time the highbrow music taste would eventually become the standard for the general population once they had been exposed to classical music long enough.[183] Astyanax argued that broadcast music would inevitably go through the same process as film did, as film was only considered a "a proper artform" after intellectuals deemed what kind of films were considered objectionably good, thus proclaiming "highbrows" as sort of tastemakers for the music played on the radio, who were essential for the development and perfection of the artform. The article received a lot of negative feedback from readers who seemed to have missed its point and who claimed that opinions of public individuals contributed little to the film industry. Astyanax, on the other hand, explained that those few intellectuals who talked and wrote about films were actively increasing interest in them, as the majority of the public usually remained indifferent and silent whether or not they enjoyed the medium.[184]

Although a notable portion of professional musicians showed little concern towards broadcasting, it was not uncommon for musicians to adopt a critical mentality towards the medium during the research period. Even though the BBC would become the largest employer of musicians in Britain during the 1930s,[185] musicians themselves were initially hesitant to embrace broadcasting, and many outright refused to perform in the programmes. It is clear that there was fear and suspicion towards this new medium. Broadcasting was seen as a harmful thing for the music trade as it was feared that radio would reduce concert attendance and be a danger to their employment, for which some musicians boycotted BBC concerts altogether. Concert promoters feared that radio would drive them out of business. Conductor and composer Sir Landon Ronald expressed the fear of broadcasting prevalent in the concert business in his article in *The Radio Times* from a professional musician's point of

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[180] *The Radio Times*, 13.6.1924. For some unknown reason, this particular letter cuts off in the end, which is rather peculiar.
[181] *Wireless World*, 2.2.1927.
[182] *The Radio Times*, 28.1.1928.
[183] *The Radio Times*, 9.3.1928.
[184] *The Radio Times*, 6.4.1928.
[185] Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p. 181.

view.[186] According to Ronald there was no reason to be concerned, as the simple act of seeing a famous musician on stage would continue to bring audiences into concerts, and viewed the coming of broadcasting as an opportunity for artists who did not meet the expectations of appearance in a stage performance. Even after the musicians' opinion towards broadcasting became more positive, it was common for them to return back to the earlier critical mentality afterwards. Similarly to theatre actors and comedians, some musicians found performing in a studio devoid of a responsive audience difficult. On one occasion, the BBC even banned vocal musical numbers and even the performers from speaking, most likely in an attempt to minimise any kind of advertising of music, which was a lucrative trade.[187]

Musicians denouncing broadcasting became a common trope which the *Wireless World*'s BBC correspondent made fun of in their yearly "Old Bore's Wireless Almanac," where they parodied monthly broadcast-related news numbers. "Famous musician denounces broadcasting and packs trunk" appeared four times in the 1927 version of the column,[188] referring to how common it was for famous musicians to proclaim their dislike of radio and refusal to broadcast after a series of negative experiences. Among the musicians who despised radio was the famous conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, who considered broadcasting to be a travesty to the art of music, which he called a mere "caricature" of the artform and a danger to concert attendance.[189] Beecham's opinion towards broadcasting mellowed throughout the decade. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Beecham explained that broadcasting was unsuitable for music performed by large orchestras, as the technology was not advanced enough to clearly replicate the sound emanating from numerous instruments, but considered its suitability for jazz, which he thought sounded better on radio compared to a live performance.[190] Beecham, who had previously been a harsh critic of the BBC,[191] would eventually begin to slowly work with them towards the end of the decade. *Wireless World* described this as "burying the hatchet."[192] Despite the musicians' fears, broadcast music actually helped popularise and promote concert attendance and gramophone record sales.[193] Polish singer and actor Jan Kiepura suspected that the relatively low attendance in concerts

[186] *The Radio Times*, 24.4.1925.
[187] Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p. 184-185.
[188] *Wireless World*, 12.1.1927.
[189] Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p. 205.
[190] *The New York Times*, 22.1.1928.
[191] Briggs, 1965, p. 64.
[192] *Wireless World*, 27.7.1927.
[193] For example, *The Radio Times*, 29.2.1924 and 19.9.1924.

had more to do with the younger generation, who had not been exposed to as much live music due to the First World War, and broadcasting was actually helping music as a whole.[194]

The BBC saw instant potential with broadcasting when it came to developing the overall music taste of the British general public. As they were providing a service for the people, they saw it as a possibility to lessen the distance between social classes. However, it can be argued that this plan backfired, as the majority of the audience found it problematic that the BBC was, in essence, forcing a style of music towards them. By doing this, they effectively widened the gap between the two groups, as there now existed wide-spanning discourse of the topic, where the highbrows and lowbrows clashed against each other.

3.2.2. The Jazz Question

An extension to the discussion regarding the highbrows and the lowbrows, a common talking point was the broadcasting of jazz music, which divided the listeners' opinions. Listeners often found jazz to be exciting and interesting, but also vulgar and obnoxious. Some highbrows considered jazz to be widely inferior to classical music, while some listeners, such as those residing in the countryside,[195] did not understand its appeal. The relative popularity of the style was considered a "craze" by some people, such as Reith.[196]

Reith had originally chosen jazz to be included in the lighter portion of the programmes in 1922, which included items such as dance music and comedy shows. The jazz that was played in the BBC programmes was not "serious jazz". This was because light entertainment in general was mostly included with an older audience in mind.[197] The majority of jazz featured in the BBC broadcasts was performed by British big bands such as Jack Hylton's orchestra, who played a "light" variety of the style with relatively wide-appealing compositions, some of which British jazz historian Albert McCarthy considered being "jazz" in name only. According to McCarthy, early British jazz was often categorised as being simply "dance music."[198]

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[194] *The Radio Times*, 10.6.1927.
[195] For example, *The Radio Times*, 23.11.1923. Letters from rural listeners often expressed dislike or confusion when it came to jazz.
[196] *The Radio Times*, 29.2.1924.
[197] Briggs, 1961, p. 251.
[198] McCarthy, 1971, pp. 37-52.

Despite the BBC's general opinion on the high importance of classical music, articles featuring jazz in a positive light were not uncommon. The style was not considered "better" than classical music, but the articles contained more praise for jazz than criticism. Some writers of the magazine even expressed optimistic views about it, considering it a possibility that jazz may not be a simple short-lived craze, but an enduring form of music with benefits to the musical knowledge of the public. A lengthy article about conductor Sir Daniel Godfrey's book *Memories and Music* was entitled "Jazz as a step of progress" and contained an excerpt from the book, in which Godfrey writes about the merits of jazz from a classical musician's perspective.[199] A more evident example is the article "In Defence of Jazz", where the writer considers jazz to be a fitting style for the time that signalled change in the musical landscape.[200] The writer, who went by the initials D.W., referred to themselves as a "heretic" who "pinned his faith to modern dance music," and considered jazz to be a "lasting craze" thanks to its ever-developing sound. A reader responded to the article with an explanation of how syncopation in music and how it makes, in his opinion, jazz an interesting style of music, but dismissed D.W.'s idea of jazz being an important contribution to the development of music as a whole, claiming that "syncopation in music is nothing new."[201] The letter represents the dismissive attitude towards jazz that some highbrow-listeners had. In another letter, a listener claimed that "the average high-brow begins to talk as soon as any jazz comes on." In most cases, jazz was considered an inferior style compared to classical music by them. Some highbrows responded in an aggressive manner if classical music was mixed with jazz such as in a letter by a reader of *The Radio Times*, where they responded to an article by American musician Nat D. Ayer:

> "In his article, "Making the World Dance,"' Mr. Nat D. Ayer mentions "symphonic jazz." What is this "symphonic jazz", and how does it differ from the common or garden variety? Whatever high-sounding names jazzmongers bestow upon their pet subject, they will never succeed in disguising it any further. It will always remain the same-that pom-pom-pom noise that every jazz band bleats forth from its freak instruments. As to classical jazz -that is absurd! The very name is a contradiction. The average intelligent person would never tolerate such rubbish for long-after the novelty had worn off. Jazz can never spread further than the dance-hall; without that pom-pom accompaniment what is there? About half a dozen bars of cheap melody and some idiotic words, generally about somebody's erring sweetie. Repetition, always repetition. By classical jazz, I presume what is meant is jazzing the classics. Result: maltreated

[199] *The Radio Times*, 9.5.1924.
[200] *The Radio Times*, 20.2.1925.
[201] *The Radio Times*, 20.3.1925.

> music. Jazzmongers should leave well alone that which is beyond their powers of understanding. They should not drag down to the level of a jazz band music which is meant to be performed only by the skilled musicians of a first-class orchestra."[202]

To calculate listener preferences for music, the BBC held a special broadcast in 1926, where bandleaders Sir Landon Ronald and Jack Hylton performed with their orchestras in a "musical debate." The point of the debate was to find out which style of music was better. Ronald represented classical music and Hylton jazz. Listeners were encouraged to vote for the side they preferred by sending letters to the studio. The outcome of the debate made it obvious that classical music was preferred by a larger number of people than jazz, receiving 568 votes, while jazz received only 172. Of the votes 88 were indifferent.[203] Afterwards, Hylton himself wrote to *Wireless World* and claimed that the true outcome of the poll was 717 votes for jazz and 646 for classical, as the BBC apparently had not taken into account the 623 letters he personally received after the poll. According to Hylton, 545 of these letters were from people who preferred "lighter" music and 78 showed either "incoherent indifference or violently abusive towards him." Those 78 were presumed by Hylton to be listeners of "gentle classical music."[204] Hylton's comments had a mixed reception among the readers of *Wireless World*. One letter to the editor considered Hylton's reasoning as unprofessional because of his dismissive and critical attitude towards the highbrows and classical music in general. Another reader defended Hylton, considering the entire debate to be a farce that was definitely in favour of classical music from the beginning. Ronald's large orchestra[205] performed one of the most popular classical compositions of all time, the "Blue Danube," instead of a lesser-known song, which most likely caused most of the listeners to vote for Ronald in the poll. The letter considered it unrealistic that only 20 to 25 percent of the audience preferred jazz, when light music in general was more popular than classical music.[206]

Lighter music in general was considered "barbaric" and "deranged" by some upper-class individuals,[207] and this opinion extended to jazz as well. Negative opinions on jazz were rarely written in a way that expressed explicit racial motivation. The most notorious example of this was a sensationalist response written to composer Constant Lambert's article "The

[202] *The Radio Times*, 9.10.1925.
[203] *Wireless World*, 11.8.1926.
[204] *Wireless World*, 25.8.1926.
[205] Ronald's orchestra had 42 players compared to Hylton's 16.
[206] *Wireless World*, 22.9.1926.
[207] Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.183.

Future of Jazz"[208] by conductor and composer Sir Henry Coward, titled "Jazz has no Future!"[209] Coward held a white-supremacist view on music and reduced jazz to a deranged evolution of African dancing that used musical conventions invented by the white man, and claimed that the only reason for its popularity was the general lowering of the public's music taste. Of the responses to Coward's article published in *The Radio Times*, one reader expressed similar opinions on jazz as him, describing the style of music as "horrible cacophony that can only be regarded as a hark back to primeval savagery."[210]

Interestingly, the dislike for jazz crossed over to the discussion of amateur broadcasting as well. One *Wireless World* correspondent expressed their wishes for other amateurs to not play jazz music during their experimental broadcasts, as jazz was not "decent" music according to them.[211] Another letter to the editor mentions amateurs who played gramophone recordings of jazz during their broadcasts, which greatly irritated the correspondent due to their bad sound quality.[212] [213]

The discussion about the jazz' place in broadcasting was mostly an extension of the debate of the highbrows and lowbrows and repeated their mentalities for the most part. Interestingly, the number of articles that presented jazz in a positive light in *The Radio Times* shows that it was more respected compared to other kinds of "light" music. However, the mentalities for and against jazz were much more vehement among the listeners when compared to the usual ones represented by the highbrows and lowbrows, which exemplifies the controversial nature of the topic.

3.3. The discussion surrounding the programmes

Throughout the 1920s the general consensus regarding the selection and number of programmes was that there was never enough of them and that very few were fully satisfied with what was available. One of the most common complaints seen on the pages of both *The Radio Times* and *Wireless World* was the lack of selection in the programmes. The limitations of the technology and the BBC's monopoly status in Britain resulted in most British listeners

[208] *The Radio Times*, 20.7.1928.
[209] *The Radio Times*, 7.9.1928.
[210] *The Radio Times*, 12.10.1928.
[211] *Wireless World*, 18.2.1925.
[212] *Wireless World*, 25.3.1925.
[213] These are rare examples of descriptions of music heard in the amateur broadcasts.

only having a single station available for them during the earliest years of public broadcasting, depending on their location and the quality of their wireless receiver. The opening of the experimental 5XX[214] and eventually the 5GB stations in 1925 and 1927 respectively were seen as an answer to the problem, as they could be utilised in a way to provide the public with additional programmes. However, the 5XX was often used for relaying programmes from London's 2LO station to the rest of the country, which raised frustration in many London listeners,[215] especially after it had been announced that the station would be used for the purposes of broadcasting alternative programmes.[216]

The lack of alternative programmes was a common source of criticism throughout the research period. A *Wireless World* correspondent wrote how the average American radio listener living in a larger city always had a selection of multiple stations, while London had only a single station.[217] Rumours surrounding allegations that the Post Office or some other government entity had denied the BBC the use of Marconi House[218] for broadcasting alternative programmes during the busy Christmas season received additional criticism from the public, which *Wireless World* considered disproportionate and short-sighted as opening a temporary wireless station would be an extremely complicated endeavour.[219] *Wireless World* argued that the general public did not understand the phenomenon of radio waves well enough to criticise the BBC in this issue. A later experiment from Marconi House proved that listeners with crystal radios, who were the majority of the BBC's audience, could not separate the experimental signal from the 2LO signal, causing them to hear two stations simultaneously.[220] The BBC's general lack of extra stations was mostly motivated by the fact that they did not want to repeat the same mistakes as the United States, where numerous radio stations and the freedom of public broadcasting caused the radio waves to be crowded, leading to interference and other problems. Peter Eckersley argued that larger and more

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[214] The 5XX broadcast from the Daventry transmitter station. Its original purpose was to extend the reach of broadcasting in Britain by bringing millions of new crystal radio listeners into the receiving range of the broadcasts.
[215] *Wireless World*, 18.11.1925 and 4.8.1926.
[216] *Wireless World,* 23.9.1925.
[217] *Wireless World*, 25.3.1925.
[218] The Marconi House's studios were the original location of the 2LO transmitter. After the BBC began to broadcast regularly in November of 1922, the transmitter was transported into their premises in the Savoy Hill studios, leaving the Marconi House's studios empty.
[219] *Wireless World,* 23.12.1925.
[220] *Wireless World*, 7.7.1926.

powerful stations would be the solution for this problem, and eventually there would be a handful of powerful domestic stations available for the public.[221]

Wireless World and its readers were extremely critical of the BBC's policy of catering mainly to the majority of listeners who were using a simple crystal receiver for their listening purposes. While cheap, easily built, and simple to operate, the crystal radio could only receive a limited amount of signals. Amateur radio enthusiasts often owned and built high-power valve radios, which could receive signals from faraway locations with ease. Because of this, the amateurs generally thought that the crystal-listening majority was hindering the evolution of broadcasting. One reader of Wireless World was assured that alternative programmes would have been a staple of broadcasting much earlier if the BBC did not favour the crystal users.[222] At the same time, many crystal-users criticised the valve-users, as incorrect usage of a badly calibrated valve set was often thought of as the source of oscillation.[223]

According to the article *The BBC and the Origins and Development of the Notion of Public Service Broadcasting* by Jamie Medhurst, the BBC's employees took paramount importance to bring the audience the absolute best quality programmes possible.[224] This led the BBC to include too many programmes that were suited to the tastes of the highbrow listeners, which is why a notable portion of the listeners criticised them. Due to the fact that public broadcasting was a relatively recent phenomenon, the BBC had to experiment with the development of new programmes, as there was little to no consensus on what kind was both applicable to the broadcasts and favourable to the listeners. As can be seen from the plentiful amounts of correspondence in *The Radio Times*, the introduction of wireless plays and radio dramas were well-received, although similarly to the common mentality expressed by the musicians and concert promoters, theatre owners became fearful of the possible negative effects that broadcasting could have on their business. Radio's effect on theatre was negligible, as according to Asa Briggs, film was a bigger threat to it.[225] The BBC had difficulties in broadcasting plays directly from theatres due to the opposition of a committee composed of various entertainment industry officials, but the two parties reached an agreement in 1925 and the BBC was allowed to broadcast limited amounts from theatres. Asa

[221] *Wireless World*, 16.6.1926.
[222] *Wireless World*, 29.9.1926.
[223] See footnote 91.
[224] Medhurst, 2020, p. 11.
[225] Briggs, 1961, p. 16.

Briggs argued that the entire feud between the entertainment industries could have been prevented if broadcasting would have been promoted and sponsored by the entertainment industry, but neither of the parties wanted to take that step.[226] The BBC had no intention to compete with the theatres, but to offer the larger public entertainment similar to it. The BBC correspondent of *Wireless World* was assured that broadcasting was actually helping the theatres by giving their audience a sound-only impression of theatre, which would raise interest and bring more people to the theatres for the full experience. However, they also stated that those associated with the entertainment industry were not willing to admit the benefits broadcasting brought to the theatres.[227] The concern towards broadcasting expressed by the theatre industry can be seen as fear of being replaceable by new technology, which is a common mentality regarding technological change. As mentioned by Hannu Salmi in *Atoomipommilla kuuhun*, the film industry had a similar reaction to the wide adoption of television in the 1950's.[228]

Although notions of dissatisfaction appear relatively frequently in both *Wireless World* and *The Radio Times*, it is highly probable that the majority of the listeners were more or less satisfied with the available programmes. Judging from the letters to editor featured in *The Radio Times*, and to a lesser extent in *Wireless World*, listeners desired to be active in enhancing the programmes through the suggestions they provided, but often included negative opinions on the parts of the programmes that were not to their liking, which could have been interpreted as outright criticism. Occasionally, the listeners criticised the BBC's programmes from the standpoint that they did not fit their individual tastes, to which *The Radio Times*' editor responded by claiming criticism of such kind "unhelpful."[229] According to an article in *The Radio Times*, the BBC's openness to suggestions and criticism caused a large portion of the listeners to think that they could potentially influence the content of the programmes, without realising the fact that the company was catering to a large audience of differing tastes.[230] One correspondent found it humorous how many listeners seemingly thought that the ten shillings they paid for a licence would give them authority to mandate the BBC to provide them programmes tailored specifically to their tastes.[231] Director John Reith

[226] Briggs, 1961, p. 252.
[227] *Wireless World*, 8.7.1925.
[228] Salmi, 1996, pp. 167-169.
[229] *The Radio Times*, 31.10.1924.
[230] *The Radio Times*, 4.7.1924.
[231] *The Radio Times*, 3.4.1925.

himself found it strange how selfishly many of the BBC's listeners acted by criticising the programmes or asking them to be more in line with their tastes, as no-one was obliged to listen to the programmes they were not interested in.[232] Highly positive feedback on the programmes was rare enough that the *Wireless World*'s BBC correspondent considered positive listener feedback in *The Radio Times* to be a newsworthy occurrence. The correspondent humorously remarked how it took the BBC almost three years of broadcasting to receive a letter from a completely satisfied listener, although they also stated that "it is due to the inexplicable twist in human nature that the majority of people never take the trouble to write to the B.B.C. unless they have a complaint to unload on the headquarters."[233]

A notable instance of listener feedback actually changing the content of the programmes was the criticism received from female listeners who were disappointed in the women's programmes. Many female listeners desired for more talk programmes that were centred around non-stereotypically female topics. Their feedback led to the end of the *Women's Hour* -programme, and following programmes featured non-gender specific titles.[234] The *Children's Hour* received criticism as well. For example, the content of the programme did not appeal to a major part of its target audience due to being "too London and middle-class" -centred.[235] A similar problem was brought up by educational psychologist Dr. C.W. Kimmins, who mentioned that the audience of the programme consisted of several different age groups, making it difficult to decide what kind of content it should include to not exclude any of them.[236]

From a general perspective, opinions towards the programmes were not as harsh in *The Radio Times* when compared to the ones expressed in *Wireless World*, but there still existed a clear dissatisfaction with the programmes. As expressed humorously by Robert Magill in two of his causeries in *The Radio Times*, there was little the BBC could do to change their programmes to fit the tastes of their entire audience, and they could simply continue to cater to the entire public as a whole with the highest possible quality and as much variety as possible.[237] A.E. Parnell, assistant secretary of the Wireless League, argued that the novelty of broadcasting had worn off, and many listeners were becoming hypercritical of the contents of

[232] *The Radio Times*, 27.11.1925.
[233] *Wireless World*, 29.4.1925.
[234] Murphy, 2016, p. 193.
[235] Healy, 2022, p. 102.
[236] *The Radio Times*, 25.7.1925.
[237] *The Radio Times*, 30.7.1926 and 10.9.1926.

the broadcasts.[238] According to the reports and opinions in *Wireless World*, the quality of the programmes had risen steadily until 1926, but in early 1927, both the editorial staff and the readers of the magazine expressed their opinions on the lowering of programme quality.[239] The general feeling of the magazine and its readers was that the BBC as a service was confident that their audience required more educational and high-class programmes, but to appeal to the "lowbrow" listeners, these programmes had been cut into smaller pieces. For example, the music programmes were often shortened from concert-length to a much shorter length, and then placed between news bulletins and other programmes.[240] This had only brought in further dissatisfaction from all parts of the listening public, and according to the various opinions expressed in *Wireless World*, pleased no-one. However, this change had been in process for some time, as revealed in an article by Cecil Lewis in *The Radio Times* from May 1925, which claimed that most listeners were not interested in hearing full-length concerts on the radio and shorter programmes were going to become the standard in the future to combat their monotonous nature.[241] The magazine's BBC correspondent was assured that the only way to remedy this problem was to introduce alternative programmes to the public, which was already in plans in early 1927.[242] The disapproval of the new programmes was not an issue to those who owned powerful valve receivers, as multiple letters to the editor in early 1927 mention how a valve listener could just simply tune into a continental station and listen to the abundance of various programmes originating from non-British stations. However, the readers of *Wireless World* offered noticeably increased amounts of sympathy towards crystal listeners, who were stuck with the BBC programmes. This was a surprising change in opinion, as most of the magazine's readers had previously expressed a rather dismissive attitude towards them. An editorial of the *Wireless World* suggested that the public should be more educated about the differences between different kinds of radio receivers so the limitations brought up by the crystal-using majority would be reduced significantly. This opinion aligned well with the amateur enthusiasts, who had been using more powerful receivers for years, and were frustrated with the BBC favouritism towards the majority of the listeners. Alternative programmes became a reality once the Regional Scheme began in 1927 through the opening of the 5GB station,[243] albeit only for those fortunate enough to live in its

[238] *The Radio Times*, 25.2.1927.
[239] *Wireless World*, 19.1.1927 and 26.1.1927.
[240] *Wireless World*, 16.3.1927.
[241] *The Radio Times*, 22.5.1925.
[242] *Wireless World*, 2.2.1927.
[243] Briggs, 1965, p. 25.

reception range. From what can be seen from Wireless World, the alternative programmes were received extremely favourably and the 5GB was considered an excellent addition to the general broadcasting scheme of the BBC, although it did receive occasional complaints regarding its “dull” programmes.

One of the most radical ideas suggested on the pages of *The Radio Times* came from novelist Victor France.[244] In his lengthy letter to the editor, France expressed his concern for the inevitable dwindling of programme quality in the broadcasts which was the result of too much broadcasting. According to France, the BBC would eventually run out of ideas for programmes that were up to the standards of the general public and the listeners would grow tired of broadcasting. France’s solution to this was to drastically reduce the amount of broadcasting to four hours a day from 7 pm to 11 pm, and these four hours would only consist of “high quality” programmes, such as symphonies and plays. France added to his argument that reducing the amount of broadcasting would make the audience appreciate it even more and listening would become less passive in general. *The Radio Times* editor Eric Maschwitz considered the ideas presented by France interesting enough to have his letter published on the front page of the magazine, stating that he “would be glad to hear from the listeners what they think.”[245] France’s letter was received extremely negatively by the readers of the magazine, many of whom criticised his idea as outright terrible.[246] France’s suggestion would have meant that those who worked during the evening and night shifts would have been denied any opportunity to listen during the week, and it would have also meant the end of any programmes aimed at certain smaller demographics, such as children.[247] Some readers did react to France’s suggestions in a more positive manner, but the amount of negative correspondence drastically outweighed the positive. A lengthier response to France came

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[244] Victor France is a mysterious individual in the sense that there exists extremely limited amounts of information regarding him and his identity. According to two websites (http://www.philsp.com/homeville/FMI/i02/i02473.htm#A55 and http://www.crimefictioniv.com/Part_2A.html, both read 15.2.2024), “Victor France'' was the pseudonym of journalist Philip Furneaux Jordan (1902-1951), who later worked as a press advisor to Prime Minister Clement Attlee (source: https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,815014,00.html, read 15.2.2024). Attlee is also mentioned in the report of Jordan’s memorial service in *The Times* on 4.7.1951. Neither of the websites that mention France as the pseudonym of Jordan’s offer sources to their information. France released at least two books, *The Carved Emerald* and *The Naked Five* in 1926 and 1927, but very little information about them exists. France also contributed to *The Radio Times* on three occasions during the 1920s, first writing the short stories *The Howler* and *Mr. Turtle Broadcasts* for the issues of 23.12.1927 and 25.5.1928 respectively, and the article *Wanted- A Balieff of Broadcasting* in the issue of 3.8.1928.

[245] *The Radio Times*, 27.4.1928.

[246] *The Radio Times*, 11.5.1928 and 18.5.1928.

[247] Briggs, 1981, p. 79.

from one of the BBC staff members, actor and writer Val Gielgud,[248] whose response to France's letter was noticeably harsh in its tone compared to the usual statements given by the BBC staff in the magazine. Gielgud viewed France as a conservative fool, who thought that a typical radio audience member was a "moron or a half-wit" who listened to each and every single second of broadcasting. According to Gielgud, France lacked the understanding of the BBC's purpose as a service to the nation which was to provide entertainment and education for the entire British public as whole. In regards to the possible programme quality issues, he stated that France, similarly to other "conservatives," lacked imagination, and not even the harshest critics of the BBC would claim that the quality of the programmes had not increased during its short existence.[249]

The criticism present in the suggestions France proposed was not unique. According to Susan Briggs, "highbrow" listeners had a tendency to complain about the amount of broadcasting as a whole, as many of them preferred quality over quantity.[250] France's argument was not completely unfounded, as *Wireless World* had reported in 1925 that the BBC was constantly searching for new broadcasting talent and doing their best to keep the programmes varied,[251] and the topic was still discussed in early 1928.[252] In his letter, however, France attempted to dissuade the BBC from what he considered to be "lower-quality" and excess broadcasting on a level that was uncommon to see on the pages of *The Radio Times.* The fact that France's letter to the editor was selected on the front page of the magazine raises some suspicion, since there were no other instances of it happening during the research period. This special treatment might be because of France's status as a novelist or the unusually lengthy nature of the letter. There also exists the possibility that BBC used France's letter and Gielgud's response as means to reassure their audience that broadcasting was indeed a national service and that they would not limit its amount. France was later described as "one of the many clever and provocative writers who are keenly interested in broadcasting" in *The Radio Times*,[253] which could also indicate that his letter was a deliberate attempt to get a reaction from both the BBC and the public on their stances.

[248] Gielgud was well-known as a producer of radio dramas, and later became a pioneer in developing drama programmes for television.
[249] *The Radio Times,* 11.5.1928.
[250] Briggs, 1981, p. 79.
[251] *Wireless World*, 5.8.1925.
[252] *Wireless World*, 8.2.1928.
[253] *The Radio Times*, 3.8.1928.

4. Religion, politics, and news

4.1. Religion and politics in broadcasting

The question of implementing politics and religion into broadcasting were among the most widely discussed and controversial topics regarding the usefulness of the technology. The articles written by various church officials in *The Radio Times* viewed broadcasting favourably, although some of the statements given in the articles suggest that it was not the common mentality among clergymen and other church officials. Bishop J.E.C. Welldon, the Dean of Durham, was a strong supporter of broadcasting and preached for its usefulness to the church.[254] Welldon wrote a long article in *The Radio Times* about how broadcasting was capable of removing the physical limitations of sermons and making them available for all to hear no matter if they resided, prompting the Church to take full advantage of the technology. Other religious officials agreed with Welldon and hoped that radio would eventually bring forth a national revival of religion.[255] However, mentions of Church officials being against broadcasting appear as well, as some feared that it would keep people from attending church.[256] According to Archibald Fleming's article in *The Radio Times*, the opposite was true, as religious broadcasting had increased the appeal of the church and prompted many to attend services after years of absence.[257]

The addition of religious content into the broadcasts was well-received by many, although it also brought notable amounts of criticism from the audience. Religion was the sole reason why Sundays, which were often the only days of the week off work for the majority of the public, contained less broadcasting and variety in the programmes when compared to the rest of the week, only starting at half past twelve. This decision came from the company director John Reith, who wanted the audience to have time to attend church services before the broadcasts began. In addition to this, Sunday broadcasts contained only "serious" material, such as religious broadcasts and classical music.[258] According to *The Listener*, the majority of the listeners wanted more light music during Sundays, and were disappointed when the BBC's Advisory Committee on Religion announced that the Sunday evening service

[254] *The Radio Times*, 21.12.1923.
[255] *The Radio Times*, 17.4.1925.
[256] *The Radio Times*, 17.10.1924.
[257] *The Radio Times*, 31.8.1928.
[258] Crisell, 2002, pp. 50-51.

broadcast at eight in the evening would not be moved to an earlier time slot, which would have given more time for other programmes.[259] The religious material in the programmes was also heavily discussed in *The Radio Times*. Comments from various church officials and religious listeners eventually formed into a debate regarding which Christian denomination the broadcasts should represent. John Reith had envisioned the BBC's religious broadcasts neutral enough to suit most of the religious audience in Britain by keeping them devoid of anything that indicated a particular denomination and the BBC claimed to have "silenced all theological criticism" by having officials from various different religions broadcast from their studios.[260] *Wireless World* considered the relation of British broadcasting and religion to be a sign of backwardness compared to the United States, where the freedom of public broadcasting allowed any religious sects, no matter how ridiculous or peculiar in their teachings, to broadcast their message as long as they had the funds and equipment to operate a wireless station, and religious broadcasts of all kind could be allocated to stations specifically designated for them.[261]

The readers of *Wireless World* expressed more critical opinions regarding the religious broadcasts compared to *The Radio Times*. Their criticism was mostly directed at the amount of it rather than the content itself. The readers of the magazine showed a desire for more music and variety programmes for Sundays in the letters to the editor, as the religious programmes did not serve the average listener. This frustration reached a higher level in 1929, when it became evident that the religious programmes took up an even larger part of the broadcasts during the various Christian holidays of the year.[262] One reader described the programme listings on *The Radio Times* during Easter and Christmas resembling a church periodical instead of a radio listings magazine and criticised the corporation for pushing religious material too much for their listeners.[263] According to Crisell, the effect of religion on British broadcasting was among its most criticised aspects by the public. This can be seen from the tone of the listeners' opinions in *Wireless World*, who showed frustration towards the policy of the BBC. In *The Radio Times*, the opinion on religious broadcasting was much

[259] *The Listener*, 8.4.1928.
[260] *The Radio Times*, 6.2.1925.
[261] *Wireless World*, 22.4.1925. In this article, the magazine briefly reported about religious broadcasting in the United States, where they mentioned that a religious group preaching about "flat earth" was building a radio station for themselves. While the tone of the report is humorous in its latter part, the report's writer considered it an interesting fact how the freedom of broadcasting gives religious organisations new opportunities to spread their messages.
[262] *Wireless World*, 24.4.1929.
[263] *Wireless World*, 1.5.1929.

more positive, but a notable amount of it came from individuals without easy access to the church, such as invalids and the elderly. *Wireless World* reported how Reith had attempted to argue against the criticism directed at the religious broadcasts in an article published in the *The Guardian*[264] by referring to the numerous letters the company had received from the aforementioned part of the audience.[265] Religion was a handicap to the BBC, and according to Crisell, the "Reith Sundays" were a major reason why many British listeners favoured non-British stations to avoid dull religious programmes.

The topic of broadcasting political content was among the more controversial topics during the early years of the BBC. By the rules set by the Postmaster-General, any opinions regarding politics deemed controversial were not accepted to be in the programmes.[266] This led to a lack of political themes in the programmes and expression of political opinions could have caused problems for both the speaker and the BBC. An example of this was caused by author, journalist, and suffragist Rebecca West who was one of the few public figures whose negative opinion on the BBC was printed on the front page of *The Radio Times*. She campaigned for less restrictions on political content in the programmes and had once accidentally breached the BBC's contract with the Postmaster-General by giving a political speech during a broadcast.[267] According to *Wireless World*, West's appearance in a talk programme had created a small controversy, which had led the BBC to increase the control of what could and could not appear in the programmes.[268] West considered broadcasting to be a passing trend and disliked being on either side of the microphone; she loathed being in a studio and talking into a microphone, and considered the programmes to be dated and childish, citing the lack of political programming as one of the main reasons. Interest towards the possible abolition of the ban on controversial material in the broadcasts was brought up in *Wireless World* as well, when the magazine's writers considered it a possible remedy to the drought of well-received programmes in 1927.[269]

The idea of including more political material in broadcasting did come up early on, as radio could be utilised to bring the average citizen closer to the decision-makers. The most widely

[264] *The Guardian* was a weekly Anglican newspaper that is not to be confused with the more famous *Manchester Guardian*, later renamed to *The Guardian* in 1959.
[265] *Wireless World*, 23.1.1923.
[266] This rule applied to religious and industrial matters as well, but controversy about them was uncommon.
[267] *The Radio Times*, 22.5.1925.
[268] *Wireless World*, 20.5.1925.
[269] *Wireless World*, 11.1.1928.

advocated way of accomplishing this was through broadcasting parliamentary debates, namely the House of Commons, which was heavily discussed in the magazines throughout the decade. An article by A. Jenkins in the *Wireless World* described the idea as interesting, but impractical due to the length of the debates. Jenkins also took into consideration the fact that some of the more eloquent speakers could utilise their skills to gain the appreciation of the listening public, which could be a danger to democracy.[270] Jenkins' article was completely hypothetical and did not consider the censorship rules enforced by the Postmaster-General that the BBC was forced to follow. The magazine's writers remarked humorously in a later editorial that parliamentary broadcasts could only work if the speakers wrote all of their speeches beforehand so the BBC could deem them suitable for broadcasting, meaning that the speeches would have to be devoid of any real political opinions.[271] They were, however, assured that the interest in the possibility of broadcasting parliamentary debates would only increase as time went on. Their prediction was correct as the topic became a common talking point regarding the possibilities of wireless to which many important figures of the time showed great interest. Despite this, the idea faced several severe issues: even if the BBC was allowed to broadcast the debates, limitations in technology meant that the broadcasts would be an extraordinarily difficult task as both *Wireless World*, in a report by the magazine's BBC correspondent,[272] and *The Radio Times*, in an article written by Earl Russell,[273] deemed that broadcasting the debates would require a separate station only for them so the listeners could choose whether or not they wanted to listen to them, and this station could not interfere with the regular broadcasts. In addition, the broadcasts themselves would have required complicated microphone setups which would have been extremely difficult to implement into the House of Commons. Both labour politician Joseph Kenworthy[274] and the BBC's head of engineering Peter Eckersley[275] considered the idea impractical but were assured that it would eventually become reality. Ian Fraser, who himself was a member of the parliament, was among the most vocal supporters of the parliamentary broadcasts and dismissed almost all pessimism regarding the idea. Fraser argued that only the frontbenchers should be broadcast at first, as their speeches were "the ones that the listeners would be most interested in," and that problematic implementation of microphones into the room would disturb the House's

[270] *Wireless World*, 28.3.1923.
[271] *Wireless World*, 8.4.1925.
[272] *Wireless World*, 8.4.1925.
[273] *The Radio Times*, 5.12.1924.
[274] *The Radio Times*, 26.6.1925.
[275] *The Radio Times*, 17.4.1925.

accustomed habits too much if it was implemented too quickly.[276] Fraser's arguments were strong, as in addition to his position as a member of the parliament, he was also a veteran radio amateur with years of technical knowledge about broadcasting. According to Scannell and Cardiff, Fraser was one of the few members of the parliament who showed interest in broadcasting.[277]

The hope for the broadcast of parliamentary debates and political content in general lingered on throughout the decade until it reached a high point in early 1926, when the possibility of broadcasting the national budget speech by Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill became a notable talking point.[278] Both the parliament and the public viewed the possibility of the broadcast favourably despite the objections pressed by the press. Member of the parliament T.P. O'Connor argued that the speech was of great national importance and the public deserved to hear it.[279] O'Connor explained that radio was capable of bringing the entire speech to the attention of the entire nation, as there were still many remote areas where the evening newspapers did not reach. The readers of *The Radio Times* viewed the idea as almost unanimously positive. Ian Fraser used the interest generated to the speech as a clear indicator of growing interest in the broadcasting of the parliament and argued there was no point in stalling the practical implementation of the idea any longer.[280] A circumscribed version of the budget speech was eventually broadcast,[281] but the full implementation of broadcasting into the parliamentary speeches was a fruitless endeavour, however, and would not happen until 1978.[282]

Churchill was able to broadcast the budget speech in full in 1928, though the Broadcasting Committee deemed his speech "controversial" as it could have been interpreted as being propaganda.[283] This caused Churchill to become frustrated with the rules of British broadcasting. He was quoted by *Wireless World* calling the rules on controversy as being "idiotic"[284] and argued - against both the Postmaster-General and John Reith - in favour of

[276] *The Radio Times*, 23.4.1926.
[277] Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p. 24.
[278] Briggs, 1961, p. 268.
[279] *The Radio Times*, 12.4.1926.
[280] *The Radio Times*, 23.4.1926.
[281] Briggs, 1965, p. 132.
[282] House of Commons Information Office factsheet, *Broadcasting Proceedings of the House*, 2010, https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-information-office/g05.pdf, read 10.2.2024.
[283] Briggs, 1965, p. 132.
[284] *Wireless World*, 22.2.1928.

lifting the ban. At this point Churchill was against the BBC's policies and preferred the American way of broadcasting to the British one thanks to their more open nature, claiming that the BBC was blocking public individuals from reaching their audiences through radio. In 1929, Churchill was ready to pay £100[285] to the BBC for a chance to speak about politics on radio for half an hour, but this was rejected by Reith, who said that they would never adopt a broadcasting style similar to the United States.[286] *Wireless World*'s BBC correspondent commented on the controversy that it was bound to happen eventually, but was surprised it took as long as it did.[287]

The amount of discussion and controversy the lack of political freedom in broadcasting generated is a clear indication of the general mentality of the public regarding the topic. Apart from the Postmaster-General, who had enforced the regulation in the first place, most individuals considered the ban on controversial matters too limiting, even though there was great potential in it. Interestingly enough, apart from individuals such as Ian Fraser, the parliament itself presented a largely indifferent mentality towards broadcasting during the research period.

4.2. The problem with broadcasting news

The newspaper agencies and the press in general showcased the most opposing mentality towards broadcasting during the 1920s. Radio was viewed as a threat by the newspapers to their business, which led to them lobbying against the BBC by pressuring the Post Office to limit the amount of news programmes in their broadcasts.[288] Due to this, the BBC was not allowed to broadcast any news that was not already printed beforehand and perform any reporting of their own except under special circumstances.[289] As such, the content of the BBC news bulletins came from Reuters News Agency, and lacked any information that was not already printed in the evening newspapers.[290] S. Carey Clements, the director and manager of Reuters, argued in his article in *The Radio Times* that the limitation was necessary as the BBC could only include a certain amount of information into a single news bulletin, while a reader

[285] £100 in 1929 = approximately £7,961 in 2024. Source: https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1929, read 13.2.2024.
[286] Briggs, 1965, p. 135.
[287] *Wireless World*, 29.2.1928.
[288] Rixon, 2018, p. 47.
[289] Briggs, 1961, p. 97.
[290] Crisell, 2002, p. 21.

of a newspaper could read only the sections that suited their own interests, and the limitation ensured that the bulletins did not contain anything that could be considered sensationalism, propaganda, or advertising.[291] Asa Briggs argued that this tendency to be against the BBC was because the news agencies were jealous of the power and reachability of the broadcasts.[292] News broadcasts gained much appreciation from places where the availability of newspapers was low, such as rural areas and hospitals, but those living in larger cities showed little interest towards them as the wide selection of newspapers offered a larger and more varied amount of information. Reith made several attempts to gain rights for more expansive news broadcasting, which the Post Office rejected repeatedly, citing the interests of the evening newspapers, the BBC's status as a commercial company, and the uncertainty of the company's future as the main reasons for the limitations.[293]

Wireless World was highly critical of the restrictions placed on the broadcasting of news. In the magazine's opinion the regulations which the BBC had to follow were artificially keeping broadcasting down and thus hindering the evolution of informational media as a whole. According to them it was inevitable that broadcasting would become an important source of news to the entire population, and it was useless to keep it restricted because of that.[294] The issue where the article appeared was published on the 5th of May 1926, only a day after the 1926 general strike began. The strike shut down all printing presses in the United Kingdom. To keep the public informed, the BBC was allowed to broadcast news bulletins five times a day.[295] These news and other announcements from the broadcasts were spread even further by the public by writing them on signs and windows. The general strike was also the first time the Prime Minister gave a broadcast speech to the nation.[296] In the next issue of *Wireless World*, published on the 26th of May, the magazine reaffirmed their views on news broadcasting in their editorial. The magazine considered the general strike to have been the perfect showcase of the technology's capabilities for keeping the public informed and it was not just an auxiliary means or an adjunct to the press, but an extremely effective way of providing and spreading information which could very well become the sole way of rapid distribution of information. In *Wireless World*'s opinion, the strike was a lesson to the

[291] *The Radio Times*, 14.8.1925.
[292] Briggs, 1961, p.128.
[293] Briggs, 1961, p. 265.
[294] *Wireless World*, 5.5.1926.
[295] Briggs, 1961, p. 266.
[296] Bussey, 1990, pp. 55-56.

broadcast authorities that their interference with the evolution of broadcasting would only cause harm to the public and the nation as a whole.[297]

In *The Radio Times*, the BBC expressed a self-flattering opinion of themselves after the strike, calling themselves an entity which both the government and the public trusted wholeheartedly even during a time of national crisis. In their statement, the BBC repeatedly considered themselves saviours of the nation by keeping the public both informed and entertained throughout the strike.[298] While not untrue, the BBC's tone on their efforts was noticeably more decisively positive in comparison to many of their earlier statements regarding their efforts, which was likely an effort to capitalise on the support and trust gained by the nation during the strike. This tone was repeated in an even more exaggerated manner by Professor Gilbert Murray in his article published in *The Radio Times*, where he argued that the BBC had saved the nation from a much larger crisis with their news broadcasts by preventing the potentially catastrophic spreading of dangerous rumours among the public, making a reference to various war-time atrocities that have occurred from the spread of false information. Murray viewed the BBC as a messenger of universal truth and considered it a blessing that the BBC had been kept non-political in regards to their broadcasts, which he viewed had benefited their trustworthiness. Even though Murray's views were factual to a certain degree, the comparisons to atrocities happening in war-torn areas could be interpreted as exaggerations in terms of the scope of strike. Neither *The Radio Times* nor *Wireless World* featured any correspondence from listeners regarding the strike during its immediate aftermath, although the former mentioned receiving criticism during the strike for choosing not to cover certain news in the bulletins. *The Radio Times* dismissed these letters by claiming that any news they did not cover was too insignificant to be broadcast to the entire nation.[299]

The BBC was eventually allowed to broadcast limited amounts of news, commentaries, and reports after the company changed into the British Broadcasting Corporation on January 1st, 1927. The lobbying and pressure broadcasting faced from the press and news agencies was a pointless endeavour in the end, which was mostly motivated by simple fear of losing profits, jobs and influence to a new form of media. Even the BBC correspondent of *Wireless World*, a magazine which had been deeply critical of the lobbying by the news agencies, considered broadcast news as a lesser form of providing information and opinions, as reading news out

[297] *Wireless World*, 26.5.1926.
[298] *The Radio Times*, 21.5.1926.
[299] *The Radio Times*, 21.5.1926.

loud took longer than simply reading them in silence.[300] The events of the general strike have been attributed as being instrumental to the decision of making the BBC a government-owned corporation instead of a company, as the BBC was considered an essential entity during the strike.[301] The strike was a definitive win for the supporters of broadcasting, which only strengthened their opinions that the regulations had only delayed the inevitable introduction of expansive news broadcasting.

[300] *Wireless World*, 1.12.1926.
[301] Crisell, 2002, p. 25.

5. Conclusions

In the beginning of this thesis I asked "*What kind of mentalities towards broadcasting appeared in Britain between 1922 and 1929?*" and "*What kind of possibilities and problems there were with regards to broadcasting?*" Answering the first question required in-depth analysing of my primary sources, since the *mentality* of a person or a group is rarely stated outright. As explained by Hannu Salmi, mentalities are often hidden in the subconsciousness of the individuals or groups in question, which is why I had to indirectly construct my conclusions from what was said in the sources. On the other hand, the second question could be answered in a more direct sense.

The British public was quick to adopt broadcasting as a part of their lives. The BBC managed to build an efficient public service in a relatively short period of time. Unlike other types of media available, broadcasting was capable of quickly reaching the entire British public for the first time, which was previously unheard of. Thanks to its wide reach there was an equally wide range of opinions about the possibilities and problems of the technology. The most unanimous positive mentality regarding broadcasting was its advantageous nature for those without easy access to information and entertainment, thus bringing the more isolated portions of the population, such as those living in the countryside or stuck to their homes or a hospital bed due to ailment, closer to one another in a cultural sense.

While there existed hope of extending this effect to outside Britain in hopes of unifying the world, the mentality proved to be too optimistic and unrealistic when it came to its practical implementation, as the plans of utilising broadcasting in this mind failed to gain much traction during the 1920s. For the most part, this mentality was expressed only amongst certain individuals, but not among the general audience or the BBC themselves. In general, the BBC preferred to keep both their operations and their audience domestic, which can be seen in their early reluctance to collaborate with the IBU. However, people affiliated with the BBC, such as many of the writers who wrote to *The Radio Times* and some of its employees as well, such as John Reith and Arthur Burrows, showed interest in the adoption of English as a world language through the use of broadcasting. This was evident in the way they shot down the idea of using a constructed language for this purpose, which also went well with their idea of spreading the British thought through radio.

The overall mentality of the British general public was positive. Radio could enrich an individual's life in more ways than one, providing not only "regular" entertainment in the form of music and other artforms, but also give them religious and educational material that could be enjoyed from one's own home. However, as it can be seen from the abundance of controversy regarding the BBC's programme policies, the audience were not completely satisfied with the educational utilisation of broadcasting. This materialised as a noticeable gap between the goals of the BBC and the expectations and desires of the listeners. Under the leadership of John Reith, the BBC operated with the mentality of helping the public, but this way of thinking rarely aligned with listeners, who usually viewed the medium as a source of entertainment first and foremost. From what was expressed on the pages of radio magazines, the expressions of dissatisfaction and pleas for changing the programmes to the audience's liking were much more common than mentions of complete satisfaction to them. For example, the broadcasting of music, which was the most popular form of entertainment on radio, brought with it the most vicious and vocal opinions from the public and the musicians themselves, which generated perhaps the largest divide of preferences between audience groups. Although the BBC would respond to their audience's demands by slowly giving them more content to listen to, there was never enough broadcasting to cater to everyone's preferences. The BBC's monopoly and their policies regarding the programmes and the amount of stations were a major reason why this level of differentiation in the public opinion was as commonplace as it was, and this remained as the most enduring problem broadcasting faced in Britain during the 1920s. The BBC's monopoly also had the negative side effect of severely harming the amateur radio hobby, but there was little they could do about it due to the Post Office's control and demands regarding broadcasting in Britain. Although the amateurs were not afraid to criticise the BBC, the two parties did not oppose one another. While the amateurs faced hardships due to the arrival of the broadcasting service, they were quick to adapt to the new circumstances, and it also generated more interest towards the hobby and brought new people into it over the years. Adapting to the new circumstances was one of the reasons how they managed to avoid a possible anti-BBC mentality.

Most of the major hardships broadcasting faced in Britain were not caused by the limitations of the technology, but the fearful and sceptical mentalities of various entities. The most notable cases of opposition towards broadcasting came from the press and the entertainment business, whose fears reflected the typical mentalities held by those whose sources of revenue and relevance were threatened by new technologies. The initial mentality expressed by the

musicians and theatre owners came directly from the fear of the new, but after it was shown that broadcasting did not harm their businesses, their mentalities began to change into more positive ones. A similar course of events happened between the newspapers and the BBC, but the newspapers were even less keen to accept a newcomer in their field. Ultimately, it took a general strike for them to realise the importance of having an alternative to the services they provided. Broadcasting eventually prevailed over their projected fears and proved that they were not trying to compete with them but provided an alternative to them. A more indifferent view to broadcasting was shown by the majority of the members of the parliament, who showed little interest in it despite the public's overwhelming desire to implement it one way or the other to their meetings. Even without the technological problems the idea faced, the regulations on political content the BBC faced made the realisation of the idea overwhelmingly difficult.

By the end of the decade, most of the major problems about broadcasting had been solved. Only the glaring issues of the programmes and the discussion they created remained. At the same time, the more optimistic and hopeful way of thinking had also mostly disappeared as the decade came to an end. Broadcasting had become commonplace and had lost its “magic” within the general mentality of the population, who viewed it as a service not unlike others.

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