(*April 26th, 1937*)

Radio Broadcasting

By W. E. Gladstone Murray, M.C.

Colonel Mess:—Members of the Canadian Club. Our guests will perhaps excuse us while we transact the business of the annual meeting.

The reports of the Secretary, Treasurer and Nominating Committee were presented.

Colonel Mess:—Gentlemen: On retiring from the presidency of your club I have little to say except in words of thanks; thanks to you for the very pleasant responsibility you placed on my shoulders, and for the interest and enjoyment I have taken from that responsibility; thanks to your executive for the unqualified support they have given me, and in that respect I would like to speak particularly of your Honorary Secretary, Professor MacKenzie, and your Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Curtis and the chairman of your membership Committee, Mr. Goudy; thanks to your assistant Secretary, Mr. Philp, who has ever been on hand; and very many thanks to the past presidents, to whom nothing has been too much trouble.

I regret to say that I have one piece of unfinished business to turn over to my successor, that of possible closer relationship between the Empire and Canadian clubs. Negotiations have been carried on throughout the year, but due to circumstances beyond our control, the official report is not ready for your consideration.

May I now introduce to you our new president, at least to those who do not know him personally. Your selection was a very happy one. You have chosen a gentleman who will carry out his duties to the club as he carries out all his duties, efficiently and with complete modesty. A very honourable gentleman, straightforward and forthright, who owing to his war services has carried on his professional and other activities under a very great handicap. A man

who is as highly regarded in the West as in the East, a most important feature at the present time, Mr. T. D'Arcy Leonard, who, I hope will say a few words to us.

MR. LEONARD:—Mr. President and Gentlemen: May I thank you most sincerely for this very great honour, and you, sir, for your more than kind remarks. I realize it is not going to be an easy task to follow in the footsteps of Colonel Mess who has so admirably filled the position, but I can assure you on behalf of myself and on behalf of the incoming executive that we shall do our very best to uphold and carry on the high standards and traditions of the club. I thank you.

COL. MESS, introducing the speaker:—Gentlemen, may I read to you an extract from an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* on Major Murray's leavetaking for Canada:

Surely that is a wonderful tribute to our new radio chief. Perhaps we need one so justly described to manage Canada's operation of what is probably the world's most outstanding invention of the age—the greatest medium for propaganda, good or evil, that we have, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Major W. E. Gladstone Murray, M.C., general manager.

MAJOR MURRAY:—Mr. President and gentlemen, let me first thank you for your extremely cordial welcome, which has a double meaning for me because I am just recovering from a nightmare concerning the dangers of this meeting. The dream was this that your chairman, in introducing me stated that you had changed the subject of my address and that I was to speak on calculated indiscretions, and that I had undertaken to say nothing that could not be misunderstood. The subject to which I should like to call your attention is: "Program Building for Broadcasting."

In a general way it may be said that the materials of broadcasting are music, drama, talks, debates, discussions, education,—the whole field of music, literature, and contemporary interest. Of these constituents programmes are built, as either "sustaining" or "sponsored". In the latter category the objective is to sell commodities, services or ideas; in the former the purpose is to establish and retain the interest of the listener for its own sake. In both, the widest possible audience is sought. Each has its advantages. The sponsored programme usually has ample resources behind it; on the other hand the sustaining programme draws from a wider range of material.

The chief difference between broadcasting on this continent and broadcasting in the United Kingdom is the absence of the sponsored programme on the other side. The BBC's resources, although considerable, do not compare with those of the NBC, on whose sponsored programmes advertisers can lavish tremendous sums for special occasions. On the other hand there is no doubt that the average BBC programme is in advance of the average American production. Certainly the BBC has the advantage of long-term planning and correlated effort in educational work. This main distinction should be kept in mind when the problems of programme building are analyzed.

In Canada there is emerging a broadcasting system different from any other system. There is the public broadcasting authority, the CBC, exercising direct control over 9 stations and general responsibility for the standard of all broadcasting. Alongside this public system there are 70 privately owned stations which live on sponsored programmes. The CBC is supported chiefly by licence revenue; but the enormous area to be served and the relatively small population make it necessary for the CBC to secure some additional revenue from sponsored programmes. Therefore, in Canada the characteristics of the British and American broadcasting systems are combined and are being shaped into something new.

Programme building for commercial sponsors on a commercial basis tends to rely on light entertainment. It appears to be the feeling of most radio advertisers and their agents that light entertainment is bound to attract the maximum audience. Big names, lively airs, rapid fire production, these seem to be predominant slogans for commercial radio; but there are not lacking signs of a new realization that commercial goodwill may be developed by sponsoring serious programmes. The classic examples in this connection are the Ford and General Motors music programmes. Coming nearer home another good example is the Imperial Tobacco Sunday afternoon programme, which is an interesting experiment outside the normal territory of sponsored

broadcasting activity. It seems clear that programme building for sponsored programmes is beginning to get out of a rut as advertisers and agents realize that important changes are taking place in the tastes of radio listeners. This is very fortunate for Canada, in that it makes less difficult that measure of co-operation between commercial and public service broadcasting, which is essential to general satisfaction.

For a long time commercial broadcasting was far ahead of non-commercial; in fact sustaining programmes were looked upon not as entities in themselves, but rather as insignificant links between commercial programmes. That state of affairs is no longer true. Certainly in Canada and also to a degree in the United States the richest field of experiment and development is the non-commercial programme wherein the broadcaster can concentrate his endeavour upon the interest of the listener. There is no diversion for other purposes. This being the case, the broadcaster does not proceed to build programmes on a mass production basis. Plan, balances, and standards must be set and maintained. For example, there must be a reasonable distribution of the principal constituents of programmes. This is not a distribution to be laid down arbitrarily. It is established in the light of experience adapted to local conditions. BBC programmes are planned on a basis of two main contrasting or alternative sets, the one called National and the other Regional. The National, which is more comprehensive and serious in its scope, contains nearly 23% of talks, drama, education, news commentaries and 50% music, the remainder being miscellaneous services including religious services, children's programmes and special transmissions. The regional set of programmes, designed to be more popular, contains only 9% of talks and nearly 80% of music of which 40% is of the light variety. That is the general distribution of the principal constituents which has emerged from fifteen years of experience of centralized non-commercial broadcasting in the United Kingdom.

It is too early as yet to plan as definitely for Canada. For one thing national network operations are still limited to six hours on week-days and eight hours on Sunday.

There is not much elbow room for planning. When, however, network operations are extended to twelve hours or fifteen hours, planning will become essential. Even then, however, care must be taken to avoid undue standardization. Regional requirements may vary. Even in the relatively centralized organization of the BBC it was found that much more talk was acceptable in Aberdeen than in Bournemouth; also there was in the Midlands of England an appetite for community singing which was not paralleled in the north of England. So that the broadcaster must sense his audience and must be aware of local susceptibilities and characteristics. Then also there are the changes of season, involving changes of habits. There should be a general lightening of broadcasting fare during the summer. Then also changes in taste must be discerned and catered for. Every programme whether it be of entertainment or of education should be well produced, should have real artistic unity and should be appropriately adapted to its audience.

There used to be two schools of thought in broadcasting about the settlement of the vexed problem of the average standard versus peaks. There were those who felt that effort should be sustained at one level in order that the highest average might be available from day to day. The opposing view was that dilution was wiser; in other words, that the successful broadcaster should move from peak to peak, creating at reasonable intervals really outstanding programmes. Experience suggests a compromise. Just as the tempo of modern life is partly regulated by occasional outstanding events, marked by special numbers of newspapers and publicity campaigns, so the advance of broadcasting should have its characteristic peaks of endeavour, although not to the extent of starving the average programme. It is by following a prudent policy of peaks that broadcasting gains new adherents. The chief peaks, of course, are international, participation being general. The Christmas Empire programmes which began during the reign of His late Majesty, George V, and the forthcoming Coronation programmes which in Canada will be on the air for twenty-three hours continuously, from 4 a.m. on May 12th till 3 a.m. on the following day, are outstanding examples of these peaks.

Programmes should be planned both vertically and horizontally. Vertical planning is secured by the right adjustment of the constituents of the same programme throughout the day. There should be a reasonable alternation of light and serious. Horizontal planning is the contrasting of two or more programmes available at the same time on the same apparatus of reception. Horizontal balance calls for close co-operation between all broadcasters of each area, public and commercial. It is not possible as yet to do this but vertical planning is possible and is being undertaken.

It was an early vogue in the world of broadcasting that all entertainment would have to be treated to a special technique for broadcasting. Thus symphonies would have to be condensed; plays adapted; literature read in a special way, and so on. It may have been that the technical imperfections of the early period had something to do with this view, but experience has not borne it out. The chief material of broadcasting is music and music should be given over the microphone, as it was conceived by the composer, and as it is performed by the best musicians. It is assumed, of course, that studio practice is skilled and effective. Radio drama is evolving a technique of its own, but this does not alter the fact, that the plays of Shakespeare, given practically as they were written, still constitute the model drama programmes.

For talks, given acceptable personality with appropriate voice, tone and control, what is required in addition is the informal conversational approach. It may be trite to say that the secret of all good broadcasting is personality. It might be observed that the same thing is true of all activities in life; but there is an aspect in which personality plays a peculiar part in broadcasting, whatever the nature of the programme. There is a natural interest in the announcer whose voice becomes familiar as an introducer of programmes or as a reader of news. An effective device for widening the area of intelligent appreciation of music is to acquaint the listener with the personality of the composer, conductor or artist; the symphonies of Beethoven mean much more to the listener, who feels that he knows Beethoven, understands, the triumphs, disappointments and difficulties of his life. So that the music of the master is,

indeed, something more than an interpretation of the fundamental harmonies; it is a reflection of a human problem. And so with talks, the microphone dislikes impersonality. It is an unvarying detector of insincerity; a debunker of pomposity and make-believe. In the long run it is the worthwhile message with a sincere motive that secures the ear of the radio audience. Just as impersonality is foreign to the microphone so are the customary devices of rhetoric. It is the manner of conversation that succeeds. The wise radio speaker follows the example of that great master, Sir Oliver Lodge, who was among the first to realize that although millions may be listening they are listening as individuals and not in the mass. Therefore, the message should be directed to each one individually.

The subject of programme building for broadcasting covers a very wide field and it is possible now to select only a few points with a view more to stimulating thought than to covering the ground comprehensively. The importance of quality is difficult to exaggerate. All programmes should be good. By this it is not meant that all programmes should be classical or should have an obtrusive intellectual or ethical character. By good programmes are meant well produced and well performed programmes. If, for example, the programme is of dance music, then it should be built for dancing, cleanly, neatly and crisply produced. If it is a chamber music programme, it should be made acceptable to the average listener by proper explanation. In addition there should be as smooth a transition as can be gained; jerkiness is bad "programming". The sense of rhythm should be continuous.

Good programme building avoids calculated propaganda of all kinds. The healthy average listener resents patronage; he resents being scolded, being talked down to, being uplifted in an obvious way. One of the chief dangers to good broadcasting at present is the increasing pressure of propaganda societies of all kinds, political, religious, industrial and social. These organizations are concerned with the spread of their ideas and causes and, if there is no restriction, this kind of broadcasting will soon bulk disproportionally, to the general discontent and dissatisfaction of the listening public.

Canada has both assets and liabilities in programme building. There are obvious difficulties in the size of the country in relation to its population; limited financial resources; high cost of lines communication and distribution generally. On the other hand, there are important assets and advantages. There is probably more human interest concentrated in Canada than in any other country. By this I mean there is a larger aggregation of really interesting microphone personalities. For example there still survive a surprising number of the real pioneers of Canada, particularly in the West,—people who have a rich store of reminiscences and possess the capacity of imaginative description. Broadcasting can use this material to make Canadians as a whole conscious of the struggles, disappointments and triumphs that have gone to the making of this new nation. Talks of this kind will be given in the autumn. As with varied personalities so with varied interests. Each of the nine provinces contains a wealth of programme material of interest to Canada as a whole. I do not mean orchestras and bands and colorature sopranos although indeed these are creditably represented. What I mean is: that the life and aspirations of each part of Canada can be portrayed by broadcasting in a way, that will be pleasantly acceptable to the rest of Canada, creating an important by-product, a new sense of Canadian citizenship and solidarity.

Finally the programme builder must maintain a balanced perspective. For the community programme he naturally stresses local interest and aspirations. When the larger area of the county or province is concerned, there is a corresponding extension of the range of programme material; so also for national, empire and international. The progress of broadcasting throughout the world will soon reach the point, where it should be possible to draw upon a common reserve, a composite pool of resources. The short-wave era is here and there will be also the steady expansion of programme exchange. It is in this period that distinction in broadcasting will be an important national asset. The discerning listener in any part of the world will wish to make his broadcasting engagements weeks ahead of time and, as a result of his listening experience, he will

tend to shape his conceptions of other countries and their peoples. When that time comes how will Canada stand? The extent of our success will depend largely on how well we contrive to build the foundation on which we are at present engaged. It is the ultimate aim of every broadcaster to have his programmes sought wherever listening is possible. Perfection in announcing on distinctive Canadian lines, adequate reflection of Canadian personality, the development of the panorama, the radio story-teller, the best of the music and literature of Canada; these and other subjects, artistically interpreted and supported, should begin soon to establish for Canada that prominence in the broadcasting firmament which is so important to the future of the nation and the British Commonwealth.

We are rich in personality and history that will lend itself to portrayal by Radio. We are rich in artistic attainment and I am now ready to deny the suggestion that Canada cannot produce professional programmes that will measure up to the highest standards of broadcasting.

A week next Sunday I invite you to listen to one of the best programmes that has ever been produced. It is the first of a new Series, The Cities' salute to Canada, and we have taken the Queen city for the inauguration. On that evening Toronto will salute Canada, and we shall include on that programme the finest representation of artistic achievement of this great City. The programme will be introduced by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mr. Reginald Stewart, and will conclude with the same orchestra conducted by Sir Ernest MacMillan. The Mendelsshon choir will participate and many prominent artists. I advise you not to miss the dramatic and artistic effect of Stanford's arrangement of the National Anthem. I may tell you, too, that that great discovery of the Microphone, B. K. Sandwell, is consenting to be the narrator of this programme.

I have just been looking over some of the arrangements for the Coronation broadcast. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will be on the air for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four, from four o'clock in the morning of the 12th to three o'clock in the morning of the 13th, twenty-three hours in which the whole activities of the British

Commonwealth of Nations will be reflected. There will of course be a concentration on the British Broadcasting Corporation in London. The actual ceremony will be broadcast and the words of the king will be heard. We shall hear the celebrations throughout Canada. The Homage Programme in which we shall participate, will, so far as Canada is concerned, take the form of a simple, natural and spontaneous tribute to the new King by a lady from a farm in Saskatchewan, and by a little girl from the province of Quebec. It will be part of the general homage programme of the whole British Empire.

We have just joined the International Union of Broadcasters, and in connection with the activities of that society it will soon be our turn to put Canada on the air throughout the thirty-five countries which are members of the Union. The last was the Argentine in February. It will not be by short wave only, but will be picked up and rebroadcast by their national broadcasting systems. With all this activity going on at home and abroad there is no more important task for this generation of broadcasters than enlightened programme building. Technically there are important deficiencies in such things as signal strength and interference. These are being corrected, and we look forward to a time when the whole world will be glad and anxious to receive Canadian broadcasting.