

Mr. Oskar Barnack

THE optical industry is peculiarly one in which development seems to take place around individuals of special genius. We have only to think of names like Dollond, Fraunhofer, Abbe, and many others of later times to realise that this is so. Even to-day there are few optical firms without some one or two special persons around whom the whole activity seems to centre.

The firm of Leitz mourns the death, on January 16 at the age of fifty-seven years, of a technical leader in Oskar Barnack, probably best known to the world as the inventor of the Leica camera. He appears to have been a man of this type. Beginning his serious work in connexion with the design and improvement of cinematograph apparatus, he realised before the Great War that if a camera were made small and precise, pictures might be obtained which would bear a great deal of enlargement. An experimental model of the Leica was produced in 1913.

One advantage of such small cameras is that since the depth of focus for the object-space is dependent solely on the diameter of the lens, one can obtain a great depth of focus by the use of a small camera

using a lens of small actual aperture and small stop number, and the enlarged pictures have thus some advantages even over those made from cameras of larger size. Certainly the Leica has been a very popular camera since it first appeared on the market in 1924. Barnack was responsible for the design of a number of useful accessories.

Somewhat delicate in physique, Barnack was at once a firm disciplinarian, and a kindly leader of those employed under him. In this age of mass-production, it is worth while to remember how much any living industry must always owe to such individuals.

L. C. M.

WE regret to announce the following deaths :

Prof. P. F. Kendall, F.R.S., emeritus professor of geology in the University of Leeds, on March 19, aged seventy-nine years.

Mr. C. R. Richards, formerly director of the Department of Science and Technology of the Pratt Institute and a founder of the New York Museum of Science and Industry, on February 21, aged seventy years.

News and Views

Report of the Broadcasting Committee

THE Broadcasting Committee was appointed last year by Sir Kingsley Wood to consider the constitution, control and finance of the broadcasting service in Great Britain, and has now presented its report (Cmd. 5091. London : H.M. Stationery Office, 1936. 1s. 3d. net). The Committee states that it was impressed by the influence of broadcasting upon the mind and spirit of the nation and the immense issues involved. Its recommendations are directed towards the strengthening and securing of the position the B.B.C. has happily attained. It recommends that from the end of this year its charter should be extended for a term of ten years. The large measure of freedom from direct Parliamentary control makes it necessary to have some form of staff representation, and it suggests the constitution of one or more internal associations. It is difficult to give protection to those who are engaged to broadcast for remuneration. The B.B.C. should make it clear, therefore, that it welcomes criticism and that it would not exclude any person from an engagement merely because he had expressed adverse opinions on its activities. Most people will agree that the Exchequer should not retain any part of the net revenue collected from listeners until the Corporation has received an income sufficient to ensure the full and adequate maintenance and development of the service. The estimates show that during the next few years the necessary amount will be about 75 per cent of the licence revenue remaining after the deduction of the proportion required to cover Post

Office costs. The avowed policy of the B.B.C. is to hold the scales even between the various political parties, and on the whole this has been done successfully. As the broadcaster who has the last word during an electoral contest is at a great advantage because there can be no adequate reply to whatever he may say, it has been agreed that political broadcast should cease for three days before a poll.

THE published lists show that music takes up two thirds of the total time for all the programmes, and only half as much serious music is given as light music. The Committee looks forward to the time when every school will have wireless receiving apparatus as part of its normal equipment. At the present time, there are more than 3,500 schools in Great Britain regularly listening. Relay exchanges are organisations for receiving broadcast programmes and distributing them to subscribers over a local wire network. If the subscriber supplies his own loud speaker, the charge made is usually 1s. 6d. a week, but he must take out a licence. This method has the great advantage of requiring in the subscriber's premises nothing more than a switch and a loud speaker. In Germany, a standardised receiver has been designed and is sold at a low fixed price. A similar procedure in Great Britain might well be of benefit to the poorer classes, and should be considered by the B.B.C. and the wireless trade. Although direct advertisement should remain excluded from the broadcast service, 'sponsored' items, that is items provided gratuitously by any person with or