

the thoroughness and reliability which one has come to expect from the Research Association of British Rubber Manufacturers. It is a book which no rubber manufacturer can afford to be without.

"Rubber: Fundamentals of its Science and Technology", by le Bras, is a masterpiece of conciseness. It covers the whole field of rubber in less than 500 pages. The diagrams are fascinating and carefully designed and with few exceptions explain the apparatus or plant without the necessity of referring to the text. The first four chapters are particularly excellent, and reflect the author's life-study of natural rubber. From its very size and coverage it is obviously not a reference book, and the limited references at the end of each chapter must be regarded as the personal selections of the author and not necessarily the most important. It can be recommended to students of rubber technology who have a basic knowledge of chemistry and who have already read the exhaustive treatises on particular fields as a 'refresher' before taking their examinations.

"The Chemistry of Natural and Synthetic Rubbers", by Fisher, covers, as can be judged from the title, a narrower field. It can be recommended to those rubber technologists who already possess a sound knowledge of organic chemistry. Unlike the previous book by le Bras, the chapters on synthetic rubbers are more thorough than those on the natural product. The book is essentially descriptive, and where the author has dealt with the theory behind the facts it can be taken that the most modern views have been given; for example, free radical mechanism is given as the basis of the attack on rubber by oxygen. In addition to its practical use to the young student of rubber technology, it is a book which can be read with pleasure by those to whom the facts contained in it are already known.

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## TO VIEW OR NOT TO VIEW?

### Television and the Child

An Empirical Study of the Effect of Television on the Young. By Hilde T. Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim and Pamela Vince. Pp. xix + 522. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958. Published for the Nuffield Foundation.) 42s. net.

THE widespread interest aroused by this report is easily understood. It is the first study of its kind to be conducted among English-speaking peoples and, indeed, probably in the world. Unlike so many other pronouncements about the effects of this popular new medium on children, it is truly a scientific survey conducted on a large enough scale to make its findings weighty and authoritative. It should, for example, cause many school medical officers to hesitate before they include in their annual reports pontifical and unsubstantiated judgments about the harmful effects of television on children's eyes, posture and behaviour.

The report is of value not only for the observations it makes but also for the deductions which may be made from them. Among the more cheering conclusions is that children of healthy interests and appetites seldom become addicted to television and that there are comparatively few children who do. Nor do children view continuously from the time they get home from school until they go to bed. Most children view selectively and exercise a good

deal of discrimination; working-class children do not view more continuously than those from the middle-classes. In general, television does not cause listlessness, loss of sleep, bad dreams, lack of concentration, or eye strain. Children are not made more passive or become more aggressive, or kept away from youth clubs by television.

Against this are a number of conclusions which, on balance, suggest that television, as at present administered, has more harmful than beneficial influence on children. Most viewing by children is done up to 9 p.m. and, since the introduction of the second channel, is done by switching from channel to channel to find their favourite programmes. These programmes often consist of plays or playlets which, while differing superficially, show much uniformity in the values and stereotypes which they present and have a slow but cumulative effect on the outlook of the child viewer. Since the world of television drama tends to be that of upper middle-class urban society, the occupations of people of this level are depicted as worth while, whereas manual work is presented as uninteresting. Although television plays teach that self-confidence and toughness are needed to achieve success they also show that goodness of character is not enough; that life is difficult, especially for women; that marriages are frequently unhappy, and parent-child relationships often strained. Events rarely turn out satisfactorily, and virtue seldom brings happiness in its train. Violence is an inevitable part of life, and good people often resort to it. For the adult observer a hackneyed view of life emerges, similar in many ways to that offered in the cinema or theatre; for the child television may afford a glimpse of adult life which he would otherwise gain less often and only at a later age. What television can do is indicated by the conclusion that, probably as a result of B.B.C. programmes about foreign (and especially European) countries, viewers made fewer value judgments about foreigners; where stereotypes were given, they tended to reflect those offered by television.

All in all, the values of television can make an impact if they are consistently presented in dramatic form, and if they touch on ideas or values for which the child is emotionally ready. Extrapolating from these findings, one would expect that in crime and detective series the constant display of aggression by both the criminal and the upholder of the law would also make an impact on those children sensitized to such cues.

The main recommendation made by Dr. Himmelweit and her colleagues is that the B.B.C. and I.T.A. must collaborate much more over the balance of programmes; worthwhile programmes should go out on the air at the same time. They also recommend that producers should be supplied with more information about the effects of programmes on their audiences. Here the Granada Television Company should be commended for its initiative in sponsoring a fellowship at the University of Leeds to examine the impact of programmes on audiences.

What the authors do not openly recommend is that before the Government authorizes the use of a third channel, the B.B.C. and I.T.A. should prove themselves worthy trustees. The I.T.A. particularly would need clear direction and close supervision before it could be entrusted with a task which all its previous performance suggest it is unfitted to perform.

Parents and teachers who read this report would do right to insist on substantial guarantees.