

## THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

THE annual report of the British Broadcasting Corporation for the year 1963-64\*, which includes those of the Broadcasting Councils for Scotland and for Wales, notes the approval by Parliament of the new Charter and the associated Licence and Agreement between the Postmaster-General and the Corporation. Under the new Charter, the Corporation's borrowing powers have been increased to £10 million for temporary banking accommodation, instead of £1 million, and up to £20 million for capital expenditure, subject to approval by the Postmaster-General. The Broadcasting Councils for Scotland and Wales have been given powers in the field of television similar to those which they already possessed in radio.

In television, throughout the year, staff and resources were assembled and deployed in the most complicated single operation in the history of the Corporation. For the B.B.C.-2 operation, an entirely new transmitter network of some sixty main stations and a large number of subsidiary stations are being planned, some with new masts 1,250 ft. high. In many cases complete new sets of circuits are being provided to carry the more complicated 625-line signals, and new methods of operation to maintain picture quality are being devised.

Large numbers of staff have had to be recruited and trained while maintaining present output without any decline in standards, and this has necessitated finding and training 125 producers and many hundreds of supporting staff for programme work. On the technical side, about 900 technical staff had to be recruited and trained, of whom some 750 specialist and operational engineering staff had already been recruited and integrated with existing staff in good time for the opening date. The staff employed on March 31, 1964, was 19,722 full time and 1,114 part time, compared with 17,930 and 1,010, respectively, on March 31, 1963. By November 1963, 154 engineers, 176 technical assistants and 189 technical operators had been recruited, and some 75 trainees are at present undergoing the sandwich-course training given to selected staff, while some more senior staff are taking courses for the Diploma in Technology.

Much research effort was concerned with various aspects of the introduction of the 625-line television standard for B.B.C.-2, and with problems of ultra-high-frequency transmission. New equipment has been designed for use at the Television Centre to meet the requirements of 625-line signal distribution, including pulse and timing wave-forms and signal switching, and a range of trans-

istorized video amplifiers has been designed which combines relative simplicity and the ability to meet all requirements at a fraction of the cost of valve type of equipment. Much effort has gone into colour transmission, including an investigation of the three systems proposed for the transmission of colour signals.

A fully-transistorized frequency-modulated sound translator for very-high-frequency relay stations has been produced which is much easier and cheaper to maintain than the valve-type translators previously used. The first fully transistorized sound control desks designed by B.B.C. engineers have been installed at Broadcasting House, London. The possible future of stereophonic broadcasting in Britain has been reviewed, taking into account the results of the experimental work done, the response to experimental transmissions and the introduction of such broadcasting in the United States and in Canada. The Corporation believes that stereophony can give a worth-while improvement in reproduction, especially of music, and that there is a substantial demand for it. No definite plans can be made for its introduction, however, until a decision is reached on the system to be used.

The report emphasizes the need for a substantial reinforcement of the technical resources of the B.B.C.'s external services in the form of relay stations which will improve signal strength, and enable the British voice to be heard more widely and clearly. The Corporation, which was first in 1950, is now in fourth place in the number of receivers in the world, following the United States, the U.S.S.R., and China? but West Germany is drawing up steadily. In reputation and effectiveness, however, the Corporation more than holds its own, but the statistics given in the report demonstrate vividly how the rival systems, large and small, regard external broadcasting as of national importance, to be supported and strengthened. During the year, it is noted that jamming of B.B.C. services to Eastern and Central Europe came to an end, and this probably marks the end of an era in East-West broadcasting.

The failure to reach agreement on the merits of the three competing systems has deprived the Corporation of the possibility of introducing a colour service before early 1967. Since the report appeared, the International Radio Consultative Committee has met in Vienna, but once again agreement was not reached.

On finance the report refers to the inadequacy of the licence fees for television and radio and the difficulty in obtaining sufficient income to finance adequate services, with the result that the Corporation is being forced into extensive borrowing.

\* The British Broadcasting Corporation. Annual Report and Accounts for the year 1963-64. Pp. 188+15 photographs (Cmnd. 2508). (London: H.M.S.O., 1964.) 13s. net.

## THE NATIONAL ELECTRONICS RESEARCH COUNCIL

THE first issue of the *N.E.R.C. Review* appeared in January\*. The journal is a quarterly review of progress in electronics research published by the National Electronics Research Council.

In a foreword by the chairman of the Council, Earl Mountbatten, readers are reminded that the National Electronics Research Council was formed to facilitate understanding and exchange of ideas among all engaged in electronics research, and that it is only by such exchange

that any form of co-ordination in research can be achieved in industry, the universities, colleges of advanced technology and Governmental research establishments. He goes on to state that the purpose of the review will be to record facts concerning the activities of the Council, to publish brief accounts of such projects as have been initiated and to comment generally on research achievement and on work in progress.

The longest article deals with the Council's proposal to investigate the system known as 'S.D.I.', the selective dissemination of information. Recognizing the importance and urgency of the problem of keeping the research

\* *N.E.R.C. Review*, 1, No. 1 (January, 1965). A quarterly review of progress in electronics research. Edited by Graham D. Clifford. Pp. 1-20 +iv. (London: National Electronics Research Council, 1965.) 10s.