CHAPTER 2

ORIGINS AND GROWTH

The two individuals most associated with the development of radio are James Clerk-
Maxwell and Guglielmo Marconi. While James Clerk-Maxwell, working on the
earlier discoveries of Michael Faraday and others, in 1862 formulated the equations
governing the basic laws of electromagnetism and electro-magnetic waves (of which
the radio wave is one), it was Marconi who developed the use of radio waves as a
practical means of communication; he was himself standing on the shoulders of
Heinrich Hertz, who had conducted successful experiments in 1887 confirming
Clerk-Maxwell’s theories of electro-magnetic waves. Marconi conducted the
world’s first radio transmission over a distance of a mile in 1895, and in 1901,
transmitted to Newfoundland from his station in Cornwall, the first ever transatlantic
signal, thus making the discovery that radio signals can bend around the spherically
shaped earth. He founded the Marconi Company in 1900, and pioneered the setting
up of transmitters and receivers throughout the world. Though the first transmitters
and receivers were able to communicate only in Morse Code, much experimental
work in the nascent medium soon led to the technological advances which facilitated
the transmission of a wide range of sounds, including the human voice and music,

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1 As Marconi wrote later, “By availing myself of previous knowledge, and working out theories
already formulated, I did nothing but follow in the footsteps of Howe, Watt, Edison, Stephenson
and other illustrious inventors. I doubt very much whether there has ever been a case of a useful
invention in which all theory, all the practical applications and all the apparatus were the work of
one man.” Quoted in Asa Briggs, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, vol.1,
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 31
from powerful transmitters to thousands of individual receivers.² By the time of Marconi's death on 21 July 1937, the medium was far different from what he had first envisioned; a system of point-to-point communication without wires, a sort of wireless telegraphic system, in other words.³ With the developments in technology, especially those that made possible the transmission of speech, its primary use ultimately became that of a medium of "broadcasting" entertainment and information. But, all that was still in the future.

In Britain

Early History of Broadcasting

As Anthony Smith put it, in the 1920s, "...every government in the world was presented with the same intriguing politico-cultural problem of finding a way to homes and control the new broadcasting technologies...."⁴ The British government had promulgated the Wireless Telegraphy Act in 1904,⁵ making it mandatory for all wireless operators to take out an official licence. Thus, for the first twenty years of this century, barring the years of the First World War (when all amateur radio activity was suspended), the wireless world was the exclusive domain of radio amateurs and the government.⁶ After the war, pressures from the Armed Services and the uneasiness of the Post Office led to the imposition of a ban on experimental

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³ Briggs, n. 1, p.30
⁵ According to Asa Briggs "...anticipating the rapid development of the medium, and the need to control and regulate its growth." Asa Briggs, BBC: The First Fifty Years (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.10
⁶ Ibid., p.12. In retrospect, the War aided the development of radio in two ways; there was rapid and increased development of that integral component of the first radios, the thermionic valve, and
broadcasts in 1920, The Postmaster General informing the House of Commons that "it was found that the experiments caused considerable interference with other stations, and for the present, the trials have been suspended." According to Asa Briggs, such a decision could be taken because broadcasting was also the concern of the Imperial Communications Committee which included representatives of Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, the Treasury, the India Office, Foreign Office, Colonial Office and Board of Trade. The Post Office was, therefore, merely an internal representative at this level of policy making.

It was only in 1922 that pressure from both the public and the wireless industry led to the Post Office authorising the Marconi Company to provide regular broadcasts of "speech and concerts." However, this permission came with lots of restrictions attached which emphasised the governments' earnest desire at that time to keep a tight control over this unknown new "mass medium." In the first instance, no musical sounds could be broadcast – only speech was permitted; the power of the transmitter was limited to 100 watts; the times of broadcast transmission were severely restricted to not more than one hour a day; at the end of every seven minutes of transmission there had to be a three minute interval during which the operator was enjoined to listen on his wavelength for official messages to tell him if

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many soldiers, sailors and airmen encountered radio for the first time during the War, and their interest in the new medium continued even after the War.

7 Quoted in Briggs, n.1, p.50
8 Ibid., p.96
9 From the Marconi Archives. Quoted in Ibid., p.58
10 According to P.J. Edmunds, Director of Wireless, Government of India, in Britain, "Broadcasting developed comparatively slowly owing to the fact that the government was afraid of the results of any premature action...." National Archives of India (from now on NAI) Home-Pol-1927-File F227, No.7, Explanatory Note by P.J. Edmunds, Director of Wireless, 1 July 1927, p.2
for some reason the programme could not go on. Gradually, some of these restrictions were eased and the power of the transmitters was also increased to 1.5 kW which greatly increased its range from the existing 30-40 mile radius. By the autumn of 1922, the existing stations had a listening public of about 30,000 licensed listeners. ¹¹

The momentum for broadcasting came from many disparate sources. Again, to quote Anthony Smith,

There were three separate and distinct interests involved: all those who wanted to manufacture wireless sets and therefore needed programs for the buyers of sets to listen to; those who want to perform and experiment privately with radio apparatus and therefore needed a constant source of programmable material, and those in government who realized that the new medium contained enormous social and political potency. ¹²

The Post Master General (PMG) derived his powers to control and regulate broadcasting from two pieces of legislation. The first of these was the Telegraph Act of 1869 which gave the PMG control over the transmission of telegrams in the United Kingdom. The 1904 Wireless Telegraphy Act extended the PMG’s powers to the control of wireless telegraphy as well. This was the first Wireless Act in the world and laid down that “no person should establish a Wireless Telegraph Station or install or work any apparatus for wireless telegraphy without first securing a licence from the PMG.” A further clause stated: “every such licence shall be in such form and for such period as the PMG may determine, and shall contain the terms,
conditions and restrictions on and subject to which the licence is granted." As wireless telephony developed, the Post Office and the PMGs regarded it as a natural extension of wireless telegraphy just as wireless telegraphy had been regarded in 1904 as a natural extension of line telegraphy.

As more and more companies applied for broadcast licences, the government, anxious to avoid the chaos that had arisen from unrestrained broadcasting in the United States, and unwilling to arbitrate between the rival interests in the British radio industry, persuaded the manufacturers to form themselves into a cartel which represented the interests of the industry with which the government could negotiate. In fact, in the first ever formal statement on broadcasting policy made by the Post Master General to the House of Commons on 4 May 1922, he announced that all those (companies) that had applied for licences had been invited to come together to work out a way to provide an efficient service through "co-operation rather than competition."

This led to the six major manufacturers along with a clutch of smaller ones coming together to form a limited company called the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in 1922, with a working capital of £60,000 and revenues derived from a Post Office licence fee of 10 shillings, of which the BBC received half with the other half going

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13 Briggs, n.1, p.95
14 In 1922 alone, the Post Office received two applications in March, five in April and fifteen in May. "... of these two were given permission to broadcast; Metropolitan-Vickers in Manchester and Western Electric in Birmingham...." Briggs, n. 5, p.24
to the government, payable by anyone owning a receiver. Additional revenue was to come from a percentage of royalties on the sale of receiving sets made by the licensed manufacturers and each member company had to undertake to sell only British-made sets. As Asa Briggs comments, "The BBC came into existence only after tough commercial bargaining, first between competing commercial interests, and second, between the wireless interests as a whole, and the Post Office."

The British Broadcasting Company

The BBC was granted a licence for broadcasting on 18 January 1923. The first licence was a twelve page long document laying out in intricate detail regulations and restrictions that the Company had to follow; the relevant clauses of the Licence read as follows:

2. The Company shall for a term from and including the 1st day of November 1922 until the 1st day of January 1925 ... have licence and permission from the Postmaster General:-

(a) to establish eight wireless telegraph stations at such places in Great Britain as shall be selected by the Company and approved in writing by the Postmaster General and therein to install and work apparatus for wireless telegraphy of which the transmitting and receiving instruments shall be telephones (hereinafter called the licensed apparatus);

(b) to transmit by means of the licensed apparatus spoken messages or music constituting broadcast matter;

(c) to receive messages by means of the licensed apparatus.

Provided that the Company shall not broadcast any news or information in the nature of news except such as they may obtain on payment from one or more of the following news agencies ... or from

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17 NAI-Home-Pol-1924-File 68/24, "Explanatory notes on the organisation of the BBC", in Notes on a Conference held at Delhi on 17 March 1924.
any other news agency for the time being approved for the purpose by
the Postmaster General.  

The company was also only allowed to "work the stations on any weekday during
the hours between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m." though it could work throughout the day on
Sundays. A number of clauses in the Licence were devoted towards detailing the
procedure to be followed in case of undue interference by the broadcasts in "naval
signalling." The Company also had to "comply in all respects with all such
directions and regulations as may from time to time be given or made by the Army
Council or the Secretary of State for Air and ... if so required cease to work the
licensed apparatus during any military or Air Force manoeuvres or other
operations." The Agreement part of the "Licence and Agreement" referred to the
agreement between the Company shareholders on the funding of the Company.

The BBC began operations with a staff of four, including the man who was to play a
vital part in the development of the philosophy/ethos of broadcasting. The man was
John Reith, the first General Manager of the BBC who had responded to a
newspaper advertisement asking for people to man the newly formed company.
Reith had no background in broadcasting to speak of, unlike Captain Peter Eckersly,
the Company's first Chief Engineer and Arthur Burrows, the first Director of
Programmes, both of whom had been associated with the Marconi Company's
broadcasting operations. In fact, the first-ever broadcast by the Company went out
through what had been the Marconi Company's 2LO transmitter in London. Within

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18 See Appendix
19 See Appendix, p.3
a year of the beginning of operations, five stations across Britain had been added to the ones already in existence at London, Birmingham and Manchester, and the staff had grown from four to 177. Though the terms of the licence stipulated the establishment of just eight transmitting stations, the BBC Board applied for and received permission to add eleven relay stations and a new main station at Belfast and a High Power station at Daventry.

Table 2.1 – Expansion of BBC Transmitters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transmitter</th>
<th>Date of Opening</th>
<th>Transmitter</th>
<th>Date of Opening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>14/10/22</td>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>28/3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>15/11/22</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>1/4/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>15/11/22</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>11/6/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>24/12/22</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>8/7/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>13/2/23</td>
<td>Hull</td>
<td>15/8/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>6/3/23</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>16/9/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>10/10/23</td>
<td>Stoke</td>
<td>21/10/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
<td>17/10/23</td>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>12/11/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>24/10/24</td>
<td>Swansea</td>
<td>12/12/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>16/11/23</td>
<td>Daventry</td>
<td>27/7/25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BBC Written Archives Centre

The new transmitters were the result of a decision by the BBC Board to build a number of low power transmitters to be connected through land lines. The

20 See Appendix
21 Cain, n. 2, p.13
22 BBC Written Archives Centre (from now on WAC), File CO 69, “The Broadcasting Service”, in British Broadcasting Company The Broadcasting Service 1922-24, July 1926, p.1. This was done only after action on the Sykes Committees recommendations had extended the Licence to 31 December 1926.
advantages of this would be manifold – while national programs could be broadcast, at the same time interesting provincial programs could be shared by more than one station.\(^{23}\) Another momentous decision taken was to build a single high-power (25kw) long wave station at Daventry to meet the needs of the "country folk" who were out of the range of the other transmitters.\(^{24}\) Asa Briggs sees this decision as a crucial one in the history of broadcasting for the following reasons, "It invigorated the British radio industry and it provided complete protection against American made sets which did not cater for a longwave reception....\(^{25}\) Furthermore, "The bold engineering feat of opening one new relay station a month produced immediate economic returns and the number of license holders doubled between 1923-1924 December.... With the provision of nine main stations and ten relay stations, between 60-70 percent of the total population of England, Scotland, and Wales could receive the BBC."\(^{26}\)

**Teething Problems**

And yet, the new company had its fair share of problems, including, among them, the thorny question of the licence fee. The Post Office continued to issue 10 shilling "Constructors" licences, entitling amateurs to create their own receiving sets from components without having to stick to parts manufactured by the licensed manufacturers or making royalty payments to the BBC.\(^{27}\) This meant that the BBC

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\(^{23}\) Briggs, n.1, p.216

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p.224. Daventry had a radius of 150-201 miles.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p.215

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p.219

\(^{27}\) BBC, WAC, File CO38/2, *Broadcasting Question: Official Statement by the BBC*, 17 April 1923, p.2
lost considerable income on both set royalties and licence fees. Together with the Post Offices’ tardiness in handing over the company’s share of the licence fee, the Company found it hard to plan its expenditure and even harder to figure out how to finance the capital cost of improvement and expansion.\(^28\) Pleas to the PMG to redress this problem proved futile and the BBC went to the extent of going public on its dispute and releasing statements to the press explaining the problem, of course, only, “in view of the interviews granted by the Postmaster General, and the unreserved expressions of opinion therein....”\(^29\) The press statement virtually accused the PMG of actions which “... in effect constitute [d] a serious breach of faith with those who, on the strength of that Agreement, not only provided capital for the formation and operating of the Company, but, in addition, undertook still greater outlays in the establishment of a new industry, an adequate return for which was dependent solely on the observance of the signed Agreement ....” and it ended rather ominously by saying: “The Post Office has obligations to the Company and its members; if these be further disregarded in the manner indicated, it can be left to the public to judge on whom the responsibility will rest for any action the company may be compelled to take ....”\(^30\)

The Post Master General set up a commission of enquiry headed by Frederick Sykes in April 1923 to “consider the unresolved issues of finance, organisation and control

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\(^{28}\) Briggs, n.1, p.146  
\(^{29}\) BBC, WAC, n.27, p.1  
\(^{30}\) Ibid., p.3
of broadcasting." In a letter to Reith, the Postmaster General, William Joyson Hicks wrote,

...you will have realised from the speech I made in the Commons that I'm not at all satisfied with the whole broadcasting situation and I propose therefore to appoint the strongest committee I can to consider the position in all detail. I propose to make the terms of reference as wide as possible so that the committee can take a survey of the whole broadcasting position, both present and future, including the terms under which licences have been and should be issued and the desirability of maintaining the prohibition against foreign manufactured apparatus or apparatus not manufactured by the BBC....

The Committee's report was presented to Parliament in August 1923. As per the Committees recommendations, the system of royalties was given up, as also the bar on foreign receivers since that too had been observed more in the breach. The Committee also made recommendations on the future direction that broadcasting policy should take, indicating its preference for the establishment of an entity ultimately responsible to the government, but free from government control in its day-to-day functioning. To facilitate this, the Committee recommended the establishment of a "Broadcasting Board ... to assist the Post Master General in the administration - technical, operational and general - of broadcasting, and to which the PMG should refer important matters concerning the control of broadcasting for advice." Though such a board was set up, it did not prove very successful, especially in resolving the Post Office's tendency to appropriate a large chunk of the

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32 BBC WAC, File CO 38/2, Letter from Joyson Hicks to Reith, 21 April 1923  
34 MacDonald, n. 31, p.7
licence fee revenue for itself.\textsuperscript{35} The minutes of a Board meeting held on 13 November 1924 notes with regard to licences that "the Managing Director's expression of dissatisfaction with the General Licence position was affirmed by the Board, and the Managing Director was instructed to make overtures to the Post Office for the expeditious passing of a Bill early in the forthcoming session to enable powers to be secured by the Post Master General to enforce payment."\textsuperscript{36}

Even though the immediate problems had been resolved satisfactorily, other more long-term questions defied easy solutions or answers. These included the question of censorship, and the disquiet of the Press regarding the company monopoly and its potential to sideline the press. Thus, within two years, a second committee was set up, chaired by the Earl of Crawford, with a brief, this time, to draw up a permanent structure for British Broadcasting "to advise as to the proper scope of the Broadcasting Service, and as to the management, control and finance there-of after the expiry of the existing licence on 31 December 1926. The committee was to indicate what changes in the law, if any, are desirable, in the interests of broadcasting."\textsuperscript{37} That the Company pinned a lot of hopes on this committee is evident from the Managing Director's Report to the Board wherein he said: "Although the original and primary function of this committee was to be the future constitution and control of broadcasting, the committee's appointment earlier than anticipated is I think very satisfactory since apart from many requests for further

\textsuperscript{35} Asa Briggs comments: "As was to be so often the case... an unimaginative treasury stood in the way of wireless development." Briggs, n.5, p.14

\textsuperscript{36} BBC WAC, File CO7/2, BBC Board of Directors Minutes 1924, 13 November 1924.

facilities being continually deferred which will now be settled by the committee, it is very desirable to have as early a decision as possible as to the future financial arrangements of the Company.\textsuperscript{38} According to Asa Briggs, almost all the witnesses before the Crawford Committee, however different the interests they represented, generally agreed that there should be a single broadcasting authority subject not to trade but to public control. The only person who could have challenged this view, Reith, had indicated his preferences in November 1925 when he had come out with a "Memorandum of Information on the Scope and Conduct of Broadcasting Services" in which he indicated the desirability for the conduct of broadcasting as a public service, for the adoption and maintenance of definite policies and standards in all its activities, and for unity of control.\textsuperscript{39} There were many reasons for Reith’s preference; he knew that Members of Parliament were anxious about the status of the BBC particularly in view of its increasing popularity, he was also increasingly anxious to divorce it from the radio trade, and he was tired of press magnates refusing to make concessions to the BBC on the grounds that it was an ordinary business enterprise.\textsuperscript{40} After listening to various views, Reith’s included, the committee came to the conclusion that "no company or body constituted on trade lines for the profit, direct or indirect of those comprising it" could be regarded as adequate for the conduct of broadcasting.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, it deemed that:

\textsuperscript{38} BBC WAC, File CO7/3, “Managing Director’s Report to the Board” in \textit{BBC Board of Directors Minutes 1925}, 17 September 1925.

\textsuperscript{39} Reith added that “the memo[was] submitted in the interests of broadcasting, not of the British Broadcasting Company.” Quoted in Briggs, n.5, p.84

\textsuperscript{40} Briggs, n.1, pp. 330-328

\textsuperscript{41} Briggs, n.5, p.89
a public corporation [would be] the most appropriate organisation to run broadcasting because it would enjoy a freedom and flexibility which a Minister of State himself could scarcely exercise in arranging for performances and programmes, and in studying the variable demands of public taste and necessity. Although the State through Parliament must retain the ultimate right of ultimate control ... the [Corporation]... should be invested with the maximum freedom which Parliament is prepared to concede.\textsuperscript{42}

Thus, the committee was seized of the importance of having the new entity free from immediate government control.

The government accepted the main recommendations of the Crawford Committee and announced that from 31 December 1926, the service conducted by the British Broadcasting Company would pass over as a "going concern" to a new authority, to be called the \textit{British Broadcasting Corporation}. It would derive its authority from a Royal Charter, rather than from a statute in order to make it clear to the public that it was not a "creature of Parliament, and connected with political activity."\textsuperscript{43} With that announcement ended the first phase in British Broadcasting, but not before the occurrence of an event that was later to be considered as a milestone in the history of British broadcasting. This was the General Strike of 1926, and how the Company responded to it had a significant impact on the development and formulation of attitudes towards broadcasting both of the government and of the public.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{43} Briggs, n.s, p. 90
\item\textsuperscript{44} For more details, see Chapter 5.
\end{itemize}
The Corporation Takes Over

The Corporation was created with a mandate to organise broadcasting in Britain for a period of ten years from 1 January 1927. Financing was to be by licence fee, and overall control was to be in the hands of a Board of Governors, comprising four Governors, and headed by a Chairman of the Board, all of whom were to be appointed by the King-in-Council. Their powers and duties were formally set out in the Royal Charter. In recognition of his services to broadcasting in the short span of four years, John Reith was knighted and re-designated as “Director General” of the BBC.

While the Charter dealt with such aspects of the new set-up as the powers and functions of the Board of Governors, the accompanying Licence and Agreement dealt with the technical details such as the location, wavelength, power and height of aerials of the broadcasting stations. The PMG retained the authority to approve such details, and even to take them over in case of an emergency.

The existence of such stringent controls gave the government the confidence to give the BBC an increasingly longer leash, with many hitherto taboo subjects being allowed on air. Regular news bulletins were instituted in 1927 and the ban on broadcasting “controversial” items was lifted in 1928. Music, Drama, Feature programmes as well as outside broadcasts from sports arenas were soon regular

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45 That meant, in effect, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and the Minister concerned.
46 For more details, see Chapter 3.
The beginning of longwave services meant that by 1925, 94 per cent of the population was covered by the BBC's signal.

Other services that were added during this period included the Empire Service broadcasts over shortwave, inaugurated in 1932. The BBC had begun an experimental short-wave service in 1927 but it languished since the question of who would fund this service took a long time to be resolved. The government, though keen to have a service directed towards the Empire, gave only verbal support, and Reith was reluctant to have it funded from the licence fee. The committee on Broadcasting in the Colonial Office Conference of 1930 recommended that if an Empire Service had to be satisfactorily run by the BBC, then "a levy of 5 shillings should be charged in each colonial licence for the reception of broadcast messages, the proceeds of such levy to be paid to the BBC." The Dominions were more interested in building up their own broadcasting services and this proposal fell through. Finally, the issue was settled only in 1931 when the BBC agreed to carry the cost of Empire broadcasting as part of its contributions to the nation's finances.

The BBC's domestic listenership grew dramatically over these years with the number of licences taken out touching four and a half million in 1932. Two years later, in 1934, the BBC faced competition for the first time when Radio Luxembourg

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47 Cain, n.2, p. 25
48 Briggs, n.1, p. 224
50 NAI-Home-Pol-1934- File No. 119/1/34, Developing of Broadcasting in India.
51 Walker, n.49, p.22
52 Cain, n.2, p. 20
began to broadcast commercially sponsored programmes aimed specifically for a British audience.

The Entry of Television

Television came on the scene just when radio had finally taken-off in the early thirties and thus, faced the added disadvantage of being overshadowed by the already-established medium. The man behind the development of television was John Logie Baird, a Scotsman (like Reith). Baird had started his experiments with television before the First World War, but he found it difficult to get the BBC, busy with radio, in his concept of sound coupled with vision. Though he had transmitted his first pictures in 1924, it was only in May of 1929 that he could get the BBC, and specifically Reith, to take a look at his invention. Reith regarded the new invention with considerable scepticism seeing it as a device that deflected attention and energy away from the development of radio.\(^{53}\)

However, since the BBC held a broadcasting monopoly, it was duty-bound to seriously examine the new technology. Experimental broadcasts were begun in September 1929, and though these achieved wide publicity, very few people actually got to see these broadcasts since there were very few receivers in existence capable of receiving these broadcasts.

The main drawback with Baird’s invention was that the scanning of pictures, necessary to break the visual image down into small elements which could be handled electrically, was done mechanically, and was thus, a slow and cumbersome

\(^{53}\) Ibid., p.32
Baird's competitors, mainly big electronic companies such as the EMI Company in Britain and the Westinghouse Electric Company in America were experimenting with electronic scanning using cathode ray tubes (CRT's) and making rapid progress.

The government, faced with yet another dilemma in broadcasting appointed a committee headed by Lord Selsdon in May 1934 to go into all aspects of television from technology to finance. Members of the committee were sent to the United States and Germany to observe developments and advances in television technology that were taking place there, and, in England, the committee listened to evidence from as many as thirty-eight experts in the field. The Selsdon Committee submitted its report in 1936, along largely expected lines, giving the BBC the responsibility of operating a television service, aided by a Television Advisory Committee, to be set up shortly. The service was to be funded out of the existing budget since it was felt that an increase in the licence fee would "be unfair to those millions who lived outside the range of transmitting stations," and a separate television licence was also vetoed on the grounds that if it were high, it would "strangle the growth of the infant service" and if it were low, it would be "purely derisory as a contribution towards the cost." The Selsdon Committee took no sides on the contentious issue of the

54 Briggs, n.5, p.159
55 Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Information, had quickly cottoned on to the public relational benefits of television, and in 1935, had begun the world's first public television service, its objective being to "imprint the image of the Führer in the hearts of the German people by television." Ibid., p.161
57 Ibid., p.68

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technical merits of the rival broadcasting systems, instead suggesting that both systems should be tried out on alternate weeks as a trial.

The government accepted the Selsdon Report, and set up as per its recommendations, a Television Advisory Committee, with virtually the same membership as the Selsdon Committee. It was this committee that monitored the two systems as the trial run got under way and finally recommended that the Baird system should be dropped in favour of that developed by EMI.

Milestones in television broadcasting followed quickly after that. The world's first outside television broadcast was on the occasion of the coronation of King George II on 12 May 1937, and was watched by over 10,000 viewers. Tennis at Wimbledon followed, and the new medium was well on the way to establishing itself. An increasingly wide variety of programmes were offered from 1936 to 1939 when the television service was suspended with the onset of the Second World War for security reasons. Television returned to the screens only in June 1946.

End of an Era

John Reith resigned from the BBC in 1938 after having served for ten years as its Director General (and a further five years as the Managing Director of the British Broadcasting Company). More than anyone else, he was singularly responsible for setting up the BBC and giving it a sense of purpose and direction. The fifteen years

58 Cain, n.2, p.145
59 The waves radiated by the television transmission towers acted as perfect aircraft direction finders for the enemy.
60 "Public Service Broadcasting" was the term given to that ethos of broadcasting on which the BBC based itself.
that he had been directing the fortunes of the BBC had seen its explosive growth from a small company, with just four employees in 1923 when he joined, to an organisation of over 4,000 employees broadcasting an array of regional and national services over long wave and medium wave as well as to the British Empire over shortwave. In Britain itself, the number of licences over that period had risen from 5000 in 1924 to 8.5 million in 1938.\(^{61}\) It also provided television services, though on a smaller scale. More important than the numbers, Reith had provided the fledgling service with a *raison d'être* moulded around the ethos and structure of public service broadcasting with the objectives of educating, informing and entertaining the listener/viewer.\(^ {62}\) Reith had also successfully managed the transition of the BBC from a private company to a public corporation, and though there were initial problems with the newly formed institution of the Board of Governors, covered more in depth elsewhere in the thesis, those were overcome to his satisfaction.\(^ {63}\)

**The War Years and After**

Scarcely a couple of months after Reith resigned, Britain was at war with Germany. The war years were difficult times for the BBC which now had to contend with a ministry of Broadcasting and a plethora of controls, often overlapping, being wielded by different departments over it. To begin with, the Board of Governors was reduced to just the chairman and the Vice-Chairman, and that too, only after the government had been persuaded that it was neither in the government’s nor in the BBC’s interests to take direct control over the BBC. F.W.Ogilvie, who had

\(^{61}\) Cain, n.2, p 20  
\(^{62}\) See Chapter 1.
succeeded John Reith, was soon forced to resign after he proved incapable of managing the BBC under these complex circumstances. A “diarchy” of Joint-Director Generals was instituted to replace Ogilvie, based on a combination of BBC and outside experience. The diarchy experiment lasted only for a year, and in 1941, William Haley, journalist, former editor of the Manchester Guardian, and editor-in-chief at the BBC, was made the Director General, a position he held till 1952. Among the many changes that took place in the BBC over the war years, and which were to have an impact on the post-war BBC, were the introduction of a forces programme to keep the soldiers entertained through the long days of the “Phoney War”, and a dramatic increase in the hours of broadcasting provided for listeners abroad. The BBC also played a stellar role in what Asa Briggs described as a “war of words” in which broadcasting was used as the main instrument of propaganda by all sides. By not resorting to similar tactics which itself was only possible because the government had been dissuaded from taking over the BBC, it established a reputation for telling the truth, “as far as that is possible in wartime.” The war years also saw an increase in the number of BBC staff, from 5,000 in 1938 to 11,000 in 1946.

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63 See Chapter 4.
64 Such complexities included dealing with the government’s censorship regulations, dispersing staff out of London to safer regional centres and finding additional new staff to replace those who had been conscripted as well as to cater to increased broadcasting hours. Also see Chapter 5, and Cain, n.2, p. 42
65 Cain, n.2, p. 43
In India

Radio under the British Administration

The Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 gave the government its power over broadcasting. It stated that "... within India, the Central Government shall have the exclusive privilege of establishing, maintaining and working telegraphs...." It also conferred the power to grant licences to others to establish, maintain or work telegraphs. As in Britain, the initial momentum for broadcasting in India was provided by a combination of amateurs interested in the new medium and manufacturers and businessmen who saw possibilities for making money in this new field and who were anxious to get in ahead of their competitors. While the British Indian Government was still discussing the pros and cons of broadcasting, the Radio Club of Bengal, located in Calcutta, applied for and received permission to transmit programmes on a small transmitter in November 1923. A similar service was started by the Bombay Radio Club in June 1924, and the Madras Presidency Radio Club in July 1924. A willing collaborator in this endeavour was the Marconi Company which readily leant transmitters to the Bombay and Calcutta Radio Clubs for this purpose.

The Government's discussion on the subject had begun with an advisory note put up by the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs in the Department of Industries and Labour in 1922, in which he advocated that a system of broadcasting by companies

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67 India, Progress of Broadcasting in India: Report by the Controller of Broadcasting, (Simla: Government of India Press, 1940), p.151

68 BBC WAC File No E1/897/4, "BBC memo on India Broadcasting prepared for Viscount Burnham who was about to visit India on the Statutory Commission, 26 September 1928," in Indian
be introduced and established by means of licences and under strict official control. In his estimate, if these proposals were approved, the system would also be a source of income for the government with fees being levied on both the transmitting station and the receiving set. The government gave assent to these general proposals but with the specific proviso that interested manufacturers should form themselves into a single broadcasting company composed of British and Indian firms.

A meeting was convened at Delhi in 1923 which was attended by twenty of these firms along with members of the press, where more discussions took place. At the meeting, it was decided that a draft licence would be prepared by the Director of Wireless, based to a large extent, on the licence used by the Post-Master General in the United Kingdom to regulate and control broadcasting there but suitably modified to suit Indian conditions and exigencies. This was then to be circulated to other departments concerned for examination and advice on matters such as copyright in news, censorship of broadcast matter, import of sets and components, levy of customs duties, and the position of the Indian princely states. Additional inputs were to be added after studying the report and proceedings of the Sykes Committee that had by then been set up to study broadcasting in Britain and make recommendations. In order to bring the provincial governments into the picture, a letter outlining the general policy of the government on broadcasting was sent to them to elicit their


70 This was roughly similar to what had taken place in Britain in the early stages of broadcasting there.
reactions and recommendations. An informal conference was also held in Delhi on 17 March 1924, attended by A.H. Ley, Secretary, Information and Labour Department, C.R. Clarke, Director General Posts and Telegraphs department, F.E. Rosher and Commndr. R.L. Nicholson, Director of Wireless. The preparatory memo outlined the contours of the vexatious issues these honourable gentlemen were trying to grapple with:

2) Local Broadcasting Stations – If more than one person applies in an area, should applicants be required to combine?

3) Monopoly – Not proper to grant additional licences unless the existing system is inadequate and the Licensee refuses to improve it

4) Composition of Local Broadcasting Companies – should it be confined to manufacturers and dealers or open to public subscription?

5) Protection of Manufacturers – Is any form of protection desirable?

6) Licence Revenue: a) What share of receiving licence fees shall accrue to the Licensee? b) Shall the royalty system be applied in the case of local companies being formed?

7) Duration of Licences – The BBC is licensed for four years. What should be the duration of the Indian Licences?

8) Programmes. Is there any necessity for restrictions on the times of broadcasting (except news and information in the nature of news)? There are none in the United Kingdom...

10) Commercial Information – should these be permitted?

11) Advertisements. Should these be permitted beyond those of the kind permitted in the United Kingdom?

12) Is any provision in this respect necessary or desirable? If so, what form should it take?

13) Receiving Licences – proper to follow general practices in the UK and issue these from Post Offices on demand and without any

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71 Luthra, n.69, p.2
72 NAI-Home-Pol-1924-File 68/24, *Notes on a Conference held at Delhi on 17 March 1924*. 57
formality beyond filling up an application form and without restrictions as to age, sex or nationality of the applicant.\textsuperscript{73}

Once reactions had been received, and necessary amendments made, the stage was set, approximately three years after the proposals were first mooted, for the Government of India’s official policy on broadcasting to be announced. This was done through a press communiqué entitled, “Broadcasting in British India” which was issued on 27 March 1925, notifying that the government was prepared to grant a licence to private enterprise for the provision of broadcasting by means of stations to be erected in British India.\textsuperscript{74} Some new provisions in addition to those mentioned earlier were that the majority of Directors must be residents of British India and the company must be prepared to undertake broadcasting throughout British India at places to be agreed upon between the company and the government. The licence was to be for ten years from the date of the commencement of a regular service from at least one station. During the first five years, and subject to satisfactory performance, the government would undertake not to licence any other person or company for the purpose of providing a broadcasting service. The Company would be free to manufacture and sell apparatus for wireless telegraphs of all kinds, including broadcast receivers and their components, but no monopoly would be permitted for this. Also no limitation would be imposed on profits for the first five years, after which the government would have the right to reduce the proportion of fees payable to the company. There were to be no restrictions on the number or size of the

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. The explanatory note attached to this memo gave a detailed explanation of the system as it operated in Great Britain.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
stations which the licencee would erect, but their location would be subject to
government's approval, and wavelengths would be allocated by the government in
consultation with the company.75

The government reserved the right to inspect broadcasting stations, take over or
operate these or impose a complete censorship or close them down in times of
emergency, impose complete or partial prohibition or pre-censorship either generally
or specifically at any time, issue any special or general restrictions as regards matters
which may or may not be broadcast or as to the persons who may or may not.broadcast,
specify sources from which news and information in the nature of news
may be obtained and the times of broadcasting the same, terminate the licence at any
time in the event of improper or inefficient use of broadcasting station, require a
broadcasting station to broadcast free of cost to government weather reports,
forecasts, government notices and communiqués and educational propaganda or any
other government matter, provided the time taken out of the ordinary programme did
not exceed ten per cent. The annual fee for each broadcast receiver licence was to be
Rs.12, calculated at Re.1 per month, of which the government would retain Rs.2,
and the remaining Rs.10 would go to the company providing the service. The
communiqué also made it clear that all talks, readings and addresses were to be of a
non-political nature. News broadcasts were to be strictly confined to press messages
supplied by specified news agencies approved by the government. Speeches could
be broadcast provided the government had previously approved of both the speech

75 NAI-Home-Pol-1924-File No. 153-P.T/24, Serial Nos. 19-27, Agreement with the IBC for the
establishment, maintenance and working of a commercial broadcasting station in British India;
and speakers. Advertisements and announcements were not normally to exceed ten per cent of any programmes as regards the time taken to broadcast.\textsuperscript{76}

The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) was awarded the first licence to operate a broadcasting station in India, mainly because it was the only company to put in an offer when the government invited applications.\textsuperscript{77} The main shareholders in the IBC were Raja Saheb Dhanrajghirji Narsinghirji and the Indian Radio Telegraph Company. While the former contributed Rs. 2.64 lakhs, the latter contributed Rs. 2.63 lakhs out of a total subscribed capital of Rs 6 lakhs.\textsuperscript{78} The remaining Rs. 73,000 was contributed by numerous shareholders including some well known names from the electronics industry such as M.A. Fazalbhoy, Y.A. Fazalbhoy and N.G. Motwane.\textsuperscript{79} Control of the company, for all practical purposes rested with the Indian Radio Telegraph Company, which, in its turn, was two-thirds owned by the Marconi Company of Britain.\textsuperscript{80} The Board of Directors was made up of C.N. Wadia (Chairman), his brother N.N. Wadia, C.N. Moberly (representing the government),

\textit{appointment of the Director of Wireless as a government representative on the directorate of the IBC, 25 March 1924.}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} NAI-Home-Pol-1927- File F227, No.7, \textit{Explanatory note by P.J. Edmunds, Director of Wireless}, p.1

\textsuperscript{78} Contrast this with the BBC's initial subscribed capital of £60,000. As Reith put it, "...this is a very small sum as they have to deal with the whole of India..." BBC WAC, File E1/897/1, \textit{Letter from John Reith to Sir William Bull}, 22 April 1926. In the same letter, Reith goes on to say that "it is the intention of four large manufacturing firms in this country to underwrite the total amount – Marconi through their Indian company, General Electric, Standard Telephones, and Cables (Western Electric) and Burndect.... Membership, as here, is open to manufacturing firms and shares will apparently also be available to the public, but the four firms will retain a majority holding. I gather that there will be two from the first company mentioned who will underwrite half the amount, the remaining half to be underwritten by the other three.... The revenue for the first five years of the company is to be derived from 80% of the receiving licence fee and 10% on all wireless material imported into India."

\textsuperscript{79} BBC WAC, E1/897/4, \textit{Indian Broadcasting Company 1928-30}.

\textsuperscript{80} NAI-Home-Pol-1927-File F227, No.19, \textit{Further Note by Director of Wireless}, 5 August 1927.
J.P. Dastur (a Bombay solicitor representing Raja Dhanrajgirji), R.M. Chinoy and Sultan Chinoy.

The BBC and Indian Broadcasting

Three factors contributed to the inevitability of close cooperation of Indian broadcasting with the BBC; the fact that India was a part of the British Empire; that the five top operational staff in the IBC were all drawn from the BBC, and that John Reith was deeply interested in Indian broadcasting, and indeed all broadcasting. In fact, in early March 1924, the BBC addressed a letter to India Office on the subject, and then on its instructions contacted the Government of India but received no response from that end. In the spring of 1925, on accidentally discovering that the IBC was in the process of being formed by the Marconi Company, the BBC again sent a communication to the Viceroy suggesting that in view of the great influence of broadcasting, he might inform himself of the BBC, but that too fell on deaf ears. Undaunted, again on 4 June 1925, Reith sent yet another letter to the Secretary of State for India stating that "...in view of the recent regulations drawn up by the Government of India and of the very great potential influences of broadcasting ... I should be very glad to supply information...." It was the IBC that took advantage of Reith's enthusiasm, with the Marconi Company

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82 BBC WAC, File E1/897/1, "Letter to Secretary of State for India from John Reith", in *Indian Broadcasting Company, 1924-26*, 13 March 1924.

83 BBC WAC, E1/896/1, "8/5/34 — Broadcasting in India — Comments on the report accompanying a Dispatch from the Secretary to the Government of India", in *Indian Broadcasting June 1933-August 1934*, 28 February 1934, p.1

84 BBC WAC, E1/897/1, "Letter to Secretary of State for India from John Reith," in *Indian Broadcasting Company 1924-26*, 4 June 1924.
sending over the Indian directors of IBC to the BBC where they "learned a great deal that was new and unexpected." The IBC also asked the BBC to provide them with a General Manager and other staff. The BBC Handbook of 1928 also drew attention to this fact, saying:

Probably no broadcasting organisation in the world has entered on its task in circumstances involving more unknown factors or greater possibilities. As a field for the cultural potentialities of Broadcasting, surely India, with its diversified races, its many tongues and its systems of caste is unique in the world.... It may be mentioned that not only the General Manager, but also the principal officials of the existing stations have been recruited from the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Reith's major concern was that Indian broadcasting should not go the commercial way and that it retained some of the public service element that he had formulated for the BBC. In a letter to William Bull, he pointed out to him those aspects of broadcasting formulated by the Government of India that made "the Constitution of the Company much more commercial than the BBC even at the beginning ... there may be no other way to get a Broadcast Service established, and perhaps one should not expect to find in formal documents of this order any recognition of the moral or ethical responsibility, which is, or ought to be, inherent ...." He may have had the American experience in mind when he went on to say that "even from the purely

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85 BBC WAC, E1/896/1, "8/5/34 - Broadcasting in India - Comments on the report accompanying a Dispatch from the Secretary to the Government of India", in Indian Broadcasting June 1933-August 1934, 28 February 1934, p.1
86 BBC, WAC, E1/897/1, "Letter from Reith to Bull" Indian Broadcasting Company, 1924-26, 30 December 1925.
88 Conservative MP and Reith's friend. Quoted in Ian McIntyre, n.16, p. 116
commercial point of view, it is necessary in this business to have regard to public service obligations ... in other words, it not only pays to do so, but disregard brings commercial difficulties." That even if Reith was in a minority with regard to this issue, he still made up a very influential minority can be drawn from the fact that the very next day of receiving his letter, William Bull dashed off a letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, which elicited a response a month later. In his letter, the Viceroy said he had made due enquiries, and had been assured that "the possible danger of ... broadcasting ... in India developing upon low standards had been realised ... and the proper safeguards exist[ed] to combat it."90 However, Lord Irwin exhibited a poor understanding of broadcasting and an excessive dependence on his bureaucrats when he elaborated on these safeguards as consisting of "a general power of pre-censorship and the [issuance] of special or general directions regarding matter which may or may not be broadcasted."91

The Indian Broadcasting Company

The IBC operated medium wave transmitters in Bombay and Calcutta; the Bombay station being first to go on air at 6.00 p.m. on 23 July 1927. The power of these stations was 1.5 kW and they covered a radius of 30 miles (50 kilometers).92 In his inaugural speech Ibrahim Rahimtoo, Chairman of the IBC, spoke of the need to

91 Ibid.
92 As the Director of Wireless noted, this was the same power as the London station. NAI-Home-Pol-1927-File F227, No.19, Further Note by Director of Wireless, 5 August 1927, p.1
incorporate the spirit of public service into broadcasting, providing entertainment, information and education to the people.\textsuperscript{93}

However, things began to go wrong for the IBC almost immediately; in the first instance, though the IBC had issued capital to the tune of Rs. 6 lakhs, about Rs. 5 lakhs had been spent on the construction and equipment of the two stations as well as preliminary expenses up to the date of inauguration of the service. Thus, by the time the stations actually went on air, only Rs. 1 lakh was available as working capital. The revenue of the company accruing from the company’s share of the licence fee and a “tribute of 10\% of the invoiced value of imported wireless receiving apparatus which was to be collected by the Company itself from the dealers”\textsuperscript{94} was grossly insufficient to meet its monthly expenditure of Rs. 33,000 for a number of reasons. As far as the licences were concerned, by the end of 1927, the number of licences issued had risen from 1000 to merely 3,594.\textsuperscript{95} Eric Dunstan, the General Manager, was convinced that a large number of pirate receivers were in operation without a valid licence going by the “aerials springing up on all sides both here [Bombay] and in Calcutta.”\textsuperscript{96} As per his calculations, 53,000 licences were required to make ends meet at the present rate of expenditure without taking into account the 10\% tribute. With regard to the tributes, he had this to say: “We now have 150 importers as members of this company who are supposed to pay us 10\% on their imports, but of this 150, a 100 are still sitting on the fence and importing

\textsuperscript{93} Luthra, n.69, p.34
\textsuperscript{94} Progress of Broadcasting in India, n.67, p.2
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., p.1

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nothing or next to nothing; another 30 are only importing a few samples and the remaining 20 provide us with the greater part of such income as we have so far derived from this source ... with the small staff at my disposal, it is extremely difficult to chase up the laggards...."\(^97\)

Thus, in September 1927, barely a month after the station went on air, the IBC appointed a Sub-committee to advise on the following points: a) decrease of expenditure; b) increase of revenue; c) ensuring a maximum return from licenses; and d) approaching the Government of India as to whether they might help with the further capital needed.\(^98\) Eric Dunstan was sent to Delhi to ask the government to come as shareholders by purchasing all or part of the additional Rs. 4 lakhs worth of shares that the IBC proposed to issue in order to raise the working capital required.\(^99\) However, the Government after due consideration decided that it was against its policy to give any financial assistance whatever to the Indian Broadcasting Company. In Eric Dunstan's words: "... the government as yet looks upon broadcasting as an uninteresting toy which, if it cannot stand straightway on its own feet, must remain lying until it can ... few people in government have any vision, and of broadcasting they know little and care less...."\(^100\)

\(^{96}\) BBC, WAC, E1/897/2, "Letter from Eric Dunstan to John Reith" in Indian Broadcasting Company 1927-28, 2 December 1927.

\(^{97}\) Ibid.

\(^{98}\) BBC, WAC, E1/897/2, "Letter from Eric Dunstan to Sir Ness Wadia" in Indian Broadcasting Company 1927-28, 30 September 1927.


The actual reasons for the government’s refusal to help the IBC are not clear but certain pointers appear in a note by P.J. Edmunds, the Director of Wireless, in a note on broadcasting in 1927. In that, he observed that though broadcasting had developed on “the lines originally adopted in England, [it] had developed so rapidly that it is necessary to reconsider arrangements in India almost before they come into force.”101 However, that was not possible since “the next ten years are governed by the existing agreement. There is no provision for the government taking over the service within that period.... The existing agreement with the company thus places them in a strong position....”102 Given that scenario, it is possible that the government felt it might therefore be in its interest to let the Company be weakened or even die a natural death so that it could once again take control of broadcasting policy. This is further borne out by a letter, dated 28 April 1927, from the Department of Information and Labour to the Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, explaining the rationale behind the decisions taken till then.

Your Lordship will observe that our policy hitherto has been the grant of a monopoly to a private company with provisions intended to retain ultimate control in the hands of the government.... This policy was formulated nearly two years ago and at the time followed very closely the arrangements adopted in England. Since that date the position has materially altered and it has been found necessary to change the policy in England. The information we have received leads us to believe that Broadcasting is one of the great forces of the modern world and although we could possibly delay its growth in this country for a few years, it is bound to develop eventually. If properly guided it should be a great power for good although we realise that it has also inherent capabilities for doing great harm.... We cannot

101 NAI, File F227 of 1927, explanatory note by P.J. Edmunds, Director of Wireless, p.4
102 Ibid., p.6. Edmunds also noted that “Broadcasting is a very sensitive thing and it is doubtful if it would ever obtain the confidence of the public in India if entirely worked by government.”
afford to take the risk of allowing the future character of broadcasting
to be determined solely by commercial considerations.\textsuperscript{103}

In the absence of any monetary help from the government it was decided that the
only option left was to drastically reduce expenses by at least Rs. 9,000 - this was
done by cutting down on staff, reducing the programme allowance and reducing the
hours of broadcasting from 5 hours a day to three.\textsuperscript{104} The result of this was to turn
what was left of the first attempt at organised broadcasting in India into a tragic
farce. As Dunstan put it in a letter to John Reith, “Had it been possible for the Board
to save their faces and do so, it would shut down altogether, but this being
impossible, they have condemned us to a lingering rather than a sudden death. With
the means now at my disposal, I cannot put out programmes that either community,
European or Indian, will invest money to listen to, and the Company can never hope
to reach a paying basis on such poor programmes ....”\textsuperscript{105} Eric Dunstan, desperate to
save his skin (and that of his fellow European colleagues), with the permission of the
Board, embarked on a desperate attempt to convince British and other international
wireless manufacturers that it would be in their interests to invest in Indian
broadcasting. His proposal was to issue the remainder of the authorised capital of the
Company to the tune of Rs. 8.75 lakhs and to use this money to not only maintain
and extend the present services from Bombay and Calcutta but also to start two

\textsuperscript{103} NAI-Home-Pol-1927- File 227, “Letter to the Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India”, 28
April 1927, p. 3

\textsuperscript{104} BBC, WAC, E1/897/3, “Letter from Eric Dunstun to John Reith”, \textit{in Indian Broadcasting
Company January-June 1928}, 14 February 1928.

\textsuperscript{105} BBC, WAC, E1/897/3, “Letter from Eric Dunstun to John Reith”, \textit{in Indian Broadcasting
further stations in Lahore and Madras respectively. John Reith tried his best to help Dunstan out, writing to many manufacturers himself and asking them to look in to Dunstan's proposal. However, the reply from J.T. Mould of the Igranic Electric Company was indicative of the general feeling in the British industry on Indian broadcasting. He simply said that "from the British manufacturers point of view, the Indian broadcasting proposition is a rather hopeless one." This was more or less what was felt within the BBC itself; in an internal memo on March 7, 1928, the BBC concluded that "no good purpose would be served by bolstering up the present IBC for the following reasons: a) the present Board was worthless; b) the government was unsympathetic to the IBC; c) the main shareholder in the IBC, the Marconi company was unpopular in India, and finally, there was complete apathy and want of conscience of the people concerned in the matter of paying licence fees and import dues."

The End of the IBC

With the failure of his initiative, Dunstan returned to India to find on the one hand, an increasingly hostile Board which blamed him for all the troubles facing the IBC, and, on the other, an increasingly disillusioned and mutinous European staff.
who felt they had been brought to India on false assurances. Relations between the Board and Management, as represented by Dunstan, deteriorated rapidly to the extent that the correspondence between the two descended below what was the norm in official correspondence with both parties accusing the other of not having acted in good faith. It was only a matter of time before the inevitable happened and all the ex-BBC staff presented a memorandum to the Board, listing their grievances and demands with an attendant threat to resign if their demands were not met by 12 October 1928. On that date they received the Board's reply to the effect that it was unable to meet their demands and therefore their resignations had been accepted.

With the departure of the employees of the IBC, it was left to the Indian Radio Telegraph Company to provide personnel to keep some semblance of the service running. In March 1929, the Indian Broadcasting Company informed the Government that it would not be able to go on incurring losses (which by then amounted to Rs. 3,82,882) and invited the government to either take over its assets at cost price or to assist it by granting Rs 2 lakhs per year to cover its losses. The financial position of the Company then was that the company had completely spent its original capital of Rs. 6 lakhs, plus a further Rs. 3 lakhs borrowed from The

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110 In fact, the exodus had begun earlier in the year when Charles Barnes, one of those who'd come over from the BBC, decided to leave pleading ill-health. BBC, WAC, E1/897/2, "Letters to Reith from Dunstan", in Indian Broadcasting Company 1927-28, 5,6,9 December 1927. Also BBC, WAC, E1/897/4, "Letter from Dunstan to Goldsmith", in Indian Broadcasting Company 1928-30, 14 August 1928. Ibid., "Letter from Dunstan to Sir Ness", 21 September 1928.

111 BBC WAC, E1/897/4, "Memo to Board", in Indian Broadcasting Company 1928-30, 22 September 1928.

112 On 29 October 1928, Reith received a letter from the Marconi Company requesting his services to help them find a new General Manager for the IBC. Reith sent his regrets, not even directly, but through a subordinate. BBC WAC, E1/897/4, Indian Broadcasting Company 1928-30.
Indian Radio Telegraph Company as also the revenue received from all sources amounting to approximately Rs 3.5 lakhs.

The government, after due consideration, conveyed its refusal to bail the IBC out in January 1930. Faced with no alternative, the Company decided to go into voluntary liquidation with effect from 1 March 1930. However, unprecedented protests from the wireless trade and those members of the public who had invested in wireless receivers led the government to reverse its earlier decision and to decide to purchase the physical assets of the Company for a sum of Rs 3 lakhs. The service was then started as a government service under the name of the Indian State Broadcasting Service from 1 April 1930.

The Indian State Broadcasting Service
The government was left holding a baby that it hadn’t wanted at all in the first instance and its first move upon taking over the IBC was to further reduce the monthly expenditure budget from Rs. 24,000 to Rs. 22,000. However, even this

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114 From proceedings of Standing Finance Committee – 7/2/30, quoted in Progress of Broadcasting in India, Report by the Controller of Broadcasting, (Government of India Press, 1940),p.3. On 3 March 1930, Col. Howard-Bury, Unionist Member for Chelmsford put the following question to the Secretary of State for India in Parliament: “What steps does the government propose to take with regard to broadcasting in India; and whether it is proposed to take over the IBC and to establish communal loud-speakers in the larger villages?... The Secretary of State’s response was as follows: The Government of India intends, subject to the ascent of the Legislative Assembly, to purchase the property of the IBC and to carry on experimentally for a year the service hitherto offered by the company. Pending the result of this experience no new developments will be attempted but the government intends next year to appoint a committee to examine the position in the light of the experience gained and the possibilities of further development....”

115 BBC WAC, E1/896/1, “Development of Broadcasting in India from 1927 to 1933,” in Indian Broadcasting, June 1933-August 1934, p.2.

116 A Chapter heading in Luthra, n.69

117 Luthra, n.69, p.62
measure was stop-gap, and with the Great Depression of 1929 having its effect on economies the world over, the Retrenchment Committee set up by the Indian government decided that the ISBS was a prime candidate for retrenchment since it was being run at a loss. As mentioned in Lionel Fielden’s Report this was despite arguments in favour of the continuance of the service, “especially its probable ultimate financial value, its educational, cultural and nation-building possibilities, its utility (when extended) in times of national disturbance (as evidenced in Britain during the General Strike of 1926) and the objections to the alternative of allowing small independent organisations to spring up without adequate control.”

A press communiqué announcing the decision was released on 9 October 1931. A public response similar to the one following the announcement of the shutting down of the IBC a year and six months earlier resulted in the government deferring this decision as well and deciding to continue the service “for an interim period during which proposals for its maintenance by private enterprise might be formulated and examined.”

The attempts to foist it back onto private enterprise were unsuccessful and it soon became apparent that the service, if it were to be carried on at all, would have to be conducted by the government itself. Once that became obvious, a number of decisions were made to obtain more revenue for broadcasting. Customs duties on wireless receiving sets which were initially set at 12.5 percent before March 1931 and which had been raised to 20 percent from March 1931 onwards and then to 25 percent six months later were doubled and fixed at 50 percent from 1 April 1932.

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118 Progress of Broadcasting in India, n.67, p.4
119 Ibid.
120 Luthra, n.69, p.65
The next step undertaken was to improve on the statutory provisions regarding licence fee collection; the existing legislation, The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, gave control only of the establishment, maintenance and working of wireless apparatus. The lacunae lay in the fact that there was no restriction on the possession of wireless apparatus and it was thus impossible to obtain a conviction without proof that the apparatus had been used for reception or transmission.\(^{121}\) The Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, which came into law from 1 January 1934 was promulgated to shut this loophole. Ironically enough, many of these measures had been asked for by the IBC, on the plea that it would rescue it from bankruptcy, and had been refused by the government. The government also took this opportunity to incorporate in the legislation regulations which ensured that they kept a close eye on those who possessed or intended to possess a wireless set, which only reflected its fear that broadcasting had the potential for mischief. Dealers were “bound to keep a register of wireless apparatus in their possession and record the name and address of every person to whom they sell a ... set.”\(^{122}\) Persons who possessed wireless apparatus, “although not required to maintain a register, [were] bound to give information regarding the disposal of wireless apparatus”, if required.\(^{123}\)

The government’s take-over of the broadcasting coincided with a sharp increase in revenues from the increased sale of receivers. This astounding development was a result of the BBC having started its Empire Service through shortwave transmissions on 19 December 1932.

\(^{121}\) Italics by Lionel Fielden, p.5
\(^{122}\) Progress of Broadcasting in India, n.67, p.152

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Table 2.2 – Licences 1929-35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>10,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>16,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>24,839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Archives, India

Thus, for the first time, in the period from 1931-1934, the total revenue from all sources was Rs. 12,88,000 and expenditure was Rs. 10,61,000, leaving a profit of Rs 2,27,000. This gave the government the courage to embark on a cautious programme of expansion and it sanctioned a grant of Rs 2.5 lakhs for the purpose of setting up a radio station in Delhi.

However, it was not just the Indian dealers who were pushing the Government of India to do something about broadcasting. There was a flurry of activity in England as well after a widely publicised report to the Indian Village Welfare Association by Col Hardinge following his visit to India on its behalf. Following a report in The Times, London, on “Rural Broadcasting in India,” the Under-Secretary Sir Findlater Stewart complained plaintively to Noyce in a letter dated 10 August 1934 that “the only reports I get are from the papers.” 124 There were also a number of other factors which “made the government realise that it could not afford to abandon a potent

122 Ibid.
weapon which would otherwise be used by its opponents both inside and outside the
country.”125 An underground station was heard broadcasting during the Civil
Disobedience movement in 1932 in Bombay “urging the boycott of British goods
and Britishers in English, Hindi and Marathi.”126 There was also the possibility that
Radio Moscow would extend its broadcasts, until then, meant for a European
audience to India since amateur radio enthusiasts were already able to pick up its
signals and responding to Radio Moscow’s invitation to write in.127

The next phase of the BBC’s involvement with Indian Broadcasting began in 1934, a
few years after the government took over broadcasting. The immediate impetus was
provided by a visit the then Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, made to Broadcasting House
while in England. It was not difficult for one who knew “little or nothing” about the
wonders of the new medium to be “impressed with the possibilities of not only what
he saw, coupled with John Reith’s explanation of its potentialities.”128 Willingdon
came over to the BBC, was escorted around by John Reith and was “enormously
impressed by the possibilities” not only of what he saw, but by what John Reith told
him.

Lord Willingdon wrote back to John Reith requesting him for the services of an
expert from the BBC to assist the Indian government in developing broadcasting in
India. As he put it, an expert so appointed “will not have an easy task, but he will

125 Biswajit Das, Radio Broadcasting in Colonial India, 1924-47 Monograph published by the Indian
126 NAI Home-Pol-1932-File 21/12
127 Das, n.125
128 BBC WAC, E1/896/2, “Internal Memo from Carpenter to Reith”, in Indian Broadcasting
September 1934-November 1935, 7 November 1934.

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have a wonderful field to work in. He will need great tact and a complete sympathy with the Indian point of view and with Indian aesthetic standards, ... he will have to make the best out of what may seem to him somewhat indifferent material, for broadcasting in India has been badly starved in the past; and even in the future he must be content with a good deal of improvisation ... he must be a superman.”

The BBC’s involvement this time around was different to the previous one; it had itself gained much experience in the theory and practice of public service broadcasting and wanted to transplant it to other countries to the extent possible. Other countries in their turn had acknowledged the superiority of the British public service model over other existing models. At the same time the BBC was wont to tread cautiously since its personnel had burnt their fingers quite badly in the disaster that had been the Indian Broadcasting Company. On the other hand the bureaucrats who ran the Government of India (as opposed to the enthusiasm of the Viceroy) were prone to look at broadcasting purely in terms of the monetary aspect and what they added up didn’t enthuse them particularly. The differing viewpoints in London and Delhi on the development of broadcasting set the stage for what was to be a long search for the “superman” who was to develop broadcasting in India.

Though Reith had put the idea of an all-India service similar to what obtained in Britain into the Viceroy’s head, he was swiftly divested of such wild ideas once he reached India. Thus, in his letter of 17 September 1934 to John Reith, the Viceroy said that the Government of India had decided to “build at once a large station in

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Delhi ... and to establish other stations as the further increases in revenues from broadcasting justify demands for further expenditure." The Viceroy also outlined his bureaucracy's plan for the future constitutional position of broadcasting as follows:

Broadcasting in India can be divided into two branches. The first relates to ordinary broadcasting for entertainment purposes, effected from large installations and in the various Indian literary languages - much on the lines of your own B.B.C. broadcasting but complicated by the variety of languages involved. This class of broadcasting should pay for itself by licence fees, customs duties, profits on magazines, etc. The second class of broadcasting ... will consist of broadcasting carried out largely in the local dialects and relating to "village uplift", that is, the improvement of methods of cultivation of local crops, village sanitation, hygiene, and so on. This may be done in part on the large installations primarily used for entertainment, but probably chiefly on small installations especially devised for the purpose, serving villages with a small radius only. The future development of this class of broadcasting is still very obscure, but we know enough to realise that it is bound to be costly, as even the receiving sets and their maintenance will have to be provided free for some years to come.  

This ran quite counter to the principle of Reith's principles of public service broadcasting viz., that of autonomy, monopoly and universality. In fact, as early as 1928, the BBC had in its internal discussions accorded primacy to these principles over others such as independence from the government. Autonomy was also discounted early on; a BBC report of a meeting between its officials and Indian

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131 BBC WAC, E1/896/2, "Letter from the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon to John Reith", in *Indian Broadcasting September 1934-November 1935*, 17 September 1934. The Viceroy was quite willing to pass on the burden of the second class of broadcasting to the local administration.
officials noted that the Indian officials reiterated that "Broadcasting would be government controlled...quite sure that for many years to come corporations such as existed in UK were out of the question as there were in India very few public spirited individuals as we understood the term in this country, and any corporation would undoubtedly misuse its powers." In his internal report to the Director-General, Prof. J. Coatman, the BBC's News Editor and a former Director of Public Information in the Government of India had raised the bogey of an impending "Americanisation" of broadcasting if broadcasting were left in the hands of the provincial governments. As an old India hand, he could talk authoritatively about the fissiparous tendencies of the provinces, and the potential anti-imperial purposes for which broadcasting could be used where it to be left in native control which would be the case if it were to be handed over to the provinces. He had also talked in terms of broadcasting being instrumental in creating a homogenous Indian nation. Discussions between the BBC and the representatives of the Government of India pointed to considerable confusion on the latter's part as to the priority to be accorded to broadcasting.

One reason for this was that the Government of India Act, delineating the powers of the federal versus the local governments, was in the process of being constituted and

132 BBC WAC, E1/897/4, "Internal memo from Foreign Director to Director General", in Indian Broadcasting Company 1928-30, 15 November 1928.
133 BBC WAC, E1/896/1, "BBC report of meeting at India House with Sir Findlater Stewart (Under Secretary of State for India) and A.M. Green (Deputy High Commissioner of India) with Controller (Admin-Vice-Admiral Charles Carpendale) and DEFS", in Indian Broadcasting September 1934-November 1935, 18 October 1934
134 BBC WAC, E1/896/1, "Note from Prof. J. Coatman," in Indian Broadcasting June 1933-August 1934, p.3 -7
135 Ibid., pp.3,4,5
it was not yet clear whether broadcasting would be in the federal, concurrent or state list. The feelings of the bureaucracy on this issue were clearly conveyed in the Viceroy's letter to Reith wherein he said that:

Noyce suggests that the first class of broadcasting should be entirely a central subject, under direct control by a Central Broadcasting Department. The second class is obviously a provincial concern, except as regards technical control which must remain with the centre. This constitutional scheme is now being considered in the India Office, and if Hoare accepts its broad lines, we intend to address local governments to secure their concurrence, so that the necessary provision may be made by or under the forthcoming Constitutional Act. 136

In the Report on the Development of Broadcasting from 1927 to 1933, brought out by the Federal Government, the argument had been that

...although broadcasting, as an activity coming under telegraphs, is subject to the direct control of the Central Government, and exclusive authority is vested in the Governor General by the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the objects served by broadcasting, namely education, entertainment and information are matters falling largely within the sphere of the provincial governments and the Government of India would not therefore be justified in incurring any material expenditure on broadcasting which is not covered by the revenues directly or indirectly derived from that source.... 137

This point was again reiterated in discussions with the BBC in 1934; a new proviso being that "though broadcasting would be placed under the control of the centre in so far as the technical side went ... all programme matters would have to be dealt with provincially ... except for the treatment in programmes of subjects which were 'reserved' ones under the future constitution could always be controlled from the

i.e. foreign affairs were reserved subjects and talks on foreign affairs could be supervised from Delhi. 138

**Provincial Broadcasting**

In the event, while the government of India was struggling to shape the form and structure of broadcasting it was the provinces who took the initiative into their hands and tried to use broadcasting as a tool for development, using whatever help and methods that came their way. These stations did not have a long life given the enormous expenditure demanded by broadcasting; nonetheless, they form an important part of broadcasting history. 139 As mentioned earlier, the first wave of broadcasting stations were those operated by radio clubs in the cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. While the former two folded up with the establishment of the IBC, the Madras station continued till 1927 when it was wound up owing to financial difficulties and the transmitter was presented to the Corporation of Madras. The Corporation then obtained a licence for broadcasting and started a regular service from 1 April 1930. It also obtained the services of a BBC engineer for “making a study of the physical, atmospheric and other conditions of the presidency

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137 BBC WAC, E1/896/1, *Report on Development of Broadcasting from 1927 to 1933*, p.10

138 BBC WAC, E1/896/2, “BBC record of interview at India Office with Sir Findlater Stewart on the subject of Indian appointment”, in *Indian Broadcasting September 1934-November 1935*, 1 October 1934.

139 BBC WAC, E1/882 contains an article entitled “The Story of Broadcasting in India” which goes so far as to give the credit to the village for reviving broadcasting in India as follows: “...the scheme proposed by the Indian Village Welfare Assoc. Of London was followed by the visit of Col. Hardinge to this country and his tour of India in 1934 with the object of inaugurating rural broadcasting, and the erection of wireless stations in some of the Indian states notably Hyderabad in 1934 bought about a radical change in the outlook of the Government Of India and marked the initiation of a new policy of expansion and extension. Thus, the village proved the means of bringing radio to the city!”
and submitting a detailed scheme to the government with an estimate of the cost.\textsuperscript{140} This station continued till 16 June 1938 when the new station installed by All India Radio started operating on both medium and shortwave. Similarly, a small 100 watt medium wave station had been established by the YMCA in Lahore in 1928. It was on air for about an hour every day and its running costs were met by an annual grant of Rs. 1500 from the Punjab Text Book Committee! This station also continued until 1 September 1937 when a new 5 kW MW station of AIR was opened on 16 December 1937. A third such initiative was that of the North West Frontier Province which was aided by the Marconi Company's loan of a 250 watt transmitter and some specially built community sets for use in villages on the understanding that these would be purchased after a year's trial.\textsuperscript{141} Khan Bahadur Kuli Khan, Publicity Officer, North West Frontier Province, gave the details on the broadcasting scheme to be initiated by the Provincial government in a letter to IM Stephens, Director, Public Information, Home Department, on 4 November 1933:

"...the scheme provides only for 10 receiving apparatus at 10 selected villages ... as regards transmitting station, we intend to make use of the Civil Wireless Station at Peshawar with a studio at the Civil Secretariat Office ... would cost us over Rs. 14000.... Purely

\textsuperscript{140} British Library, India Office Records, Information Department IOR L/P/1/445, "Letter from Secretary to the Government, Public Works and Labour Department to Indian High Commission, London", in Correspondence on Broadcasting in India 1932-45, 14 November 1933. The expert loaned from the BBC happened to be V.A.M. Bulow, who had been Chief Engineer of the ill-fated Indian Broadcasting Company.

\textsuperscript{141} The BBC was unwittingly drawn into the competition between the various provinces for scarce resources in the form of transmitting apparatus when it agreed to a request made by the Punjab government for a transmitter for 'village broadcasting'. This led to a clamour by the other provinces also for similar equipment which resulted in the BBC deciding not to provide equipment for any of the provinces with the excuse that the equipment they had planned to provide was out of date. BBC WAC E1/923/3, "letter from DEFS to the Secretary to the Government Of India, Department Of Industries and Labour", in Vernacular Broadcasting in India 1933, 30 August 1934.
experiment and confined to one district, it is intended partly to find out what can be done and partly to stimulate enough interest in the possibilities of broadcasting to enable the government to command the necessary resources for a scheme on a much larger scale. The Frontier government is as anxious as other provincial governments are to start village uplift movement in the Province.¹⁴²

According to a government note, this scheme was not entirely successful “due to the paucity of funds and staff and the difficulties of transporting batteries and recharging them. The programs given were digests of agricultural pamphlets etc and considerably above the heads of the villagers.”¹⁴³

What can be gleaned from the study of the documents of that period was that in all these instances, there usually was an individual with a keen interest in broadcasting who was the driving force behind these efforts. If in Lahore, it was the Commissioner of Lahore, F.L. Brayne, I.C.S, in Peshawar, it was the Director of Agriculture, Col. Noel¹⁴⁴ and in the Doon Valley, it was the Superintendent, B.J.K Hallowes who obtained permission of the provincial government to collect fund amounting to nearly Rs. 45,000 by local subscription to install a station with a radius of 20-30 miles.¹⁴⁵ The problems that came in the way of such initiatives were laid out in a talk by C.F. Strickland and published in the Journal of the East India Association in 1933. According to him, “The mechanism of the Indian government

¹⁴² British Library, India Office Records, Information Department IOR/L/I/1/445, “Letter from Khan Bahadur Kuli Khan, Publicity Officer, NWFP, to IM Stephens, Director, PI, Home Department”, in Correspondence on Broadcasting in India 1932-45, 4 November 1933.

¹⁴³ “Note on Rural Broadcasting in India” in Ibid., 21 February 1938.

¹⁴⁴ Noel and Brayne were mentioned in the Viceroy’s letter to Reith as examples of persons who were canvassing for the establishment of stations.

¹⁴⁵ This service started on 6th April 1936 and was carried out under the supervision of J.E.C. Turner, an officer of the Imperial Forest Service.
is already ponderous, and there is a natural reluctance to adopt any new measure which may increase the weight of the machinery or add to its expense. It is perhaps on this account that no serious attempt has been made to reach the rural population of India by means of wireless broadcasting.¹⁴⁶ More than the expense, it was the government's inability to work out a policy that would enable it to keep a tight rein on this new technology that was largely responsible for its inertia. As P.J. Edmunds, the Director of Wireless, noted in 1927: "if local bodies are prepared to bear the cost, it will be difficult to find reasonable grounds to reject their applications. It would however be almost impossible to maintain an effective control over the matter broadcasted."¹⁴⁷ At the same time, since the local governments were all chewing at the bit, the "only effective reply [was] to hold out a prospect of the early erection of really efficient broadcasting stations."¹⁴⁸

The princely states were rather slow on the broadcasting front though as early as 1928, the IBC had signed agreements with the states under which 80 per cent of the licence fees were to be given by the state to the IBC.¹⁴⁹ It was only in the mid-thirties that some of the princely states began to put up broadcasting stations in earnest; the first of these was the "Akashvani" station at Mysore, which was formally opened on 10th September 1935 by Dr. Metcalfe, Vice Chancellor at the University of Mysore. The station had a power of .25 kW and worked daily from 6-8 p.m. Travancore,

¹⁴⁷ NAI Home-Pol-1927-File F227, note by P.J. Edmunds, Director of Wireless dated 5 August 1927, p.3
¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

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Hyderabad and Baroda were the other princely states that acquired stations, usually with the help of AIR during the course of the 1930s.  

Controller of Broadcasting

The Government of India created the post of Controller of Broadcasting on 1 March 1935 and requested the BBC to nominate a suitable person for the post. The requirements of this person were listed as follows:

The selected candidate required will be expected to undertake a considerable amount of touring and should not be of not more than middle age and of active habits. He will be expected to make suggestions to the Government of India and to local governments regarding the most suitable means for broadcasting in India and should therefore have a thorough all-round knowledge of broadcasting in its various aspects. He will also be required to build up the new Department of Broadcasting, a task for which the Government of India have at present no agency which combines the necessary experience with the necessary leisure. It should be understood that Broadcasting is, and must for some time remain a Government activity and that the general line of policy must therefore necessarily be laid down by the Government of India themselves....

The BBC nominated Lionel Fielden, Head of the BBC Talks Department from 1931-33, as its candidate for the post. As it gradually became clear, Fielden was precisely the sort of person G.M. Stephens, the Director, Public Instruction did not have in mind when he wrote thus to M.G. Hallet, Secretary to the Government of India:

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149 Luthra, n.69, p.73  
150 Progress of Broadcasting in India, n.67, p.169  
In view of the politically rather 'advanced' tone of a section of BBC staff, it might be wise to take steps to ensure that the BBC expert who is to be appointed as ... Controller of Broadcasting ... and is described as being potentially the "keystone of the whole structure", is a man whose general attitude of mind towards political and kindred problems is innocuous. Had he the very 'progressive' a priori views of some of the BBC people he might ultimately prove dangerous under Indian conditions, and a thorn in the side of the Home Department....

Fielden took charge on 30 August 1935. His first hurdle was to counter the hostility displayed towards him by the bureaucracy, the very people who were supposed to help him in his task. As Reith noted of a letter he had received from Fielden, "Edmunds [the Director of Wireless] dined with Fielden and, besides making the most offensive remarks about the BBC and D.G., said that Fielden knew nothing about broadcasting and that Edmunds had persuaded Government in previous May to cancel Fielden's appointment in favour of himself, but Secretary of State would not permit it." As Fielden was to note ruefully a year later:

I don't see how any one man can tackle them all with any success. If one could go straight ahead, one might – but when every detail has to be explained at length on paper to government servants who don't understand or care about broadcasting, and you don't get a reply to anything under two months, the task becomes Herculean. Edmunds is behaving abominable again and putting every spoke in my wheel. After a particularly futile conference this morning, even Noyce said

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153 British Library, India Office Records, Information Department, L/I/1/1373, "Lionel Fielden Personal File.

154 BBC, WAC, 119/1/34, "Memo from Stephens to Hallet", in Development of Broadcasting in India, no.32. Stephens was referring to a letter from Noyce to Stewart dated 3 September 1934 wherein he described the BBC expert as the "keystone of the whole structure," He was referring to a letter from Noyce to Stewart in which this term was used first. File 119/1/34, letter from Noyce to Stewart, in Development of Broadcasting in India, no.28.

154 BBC, WAC, E1/896/3, "Broadcasting in India", Indian Broadcasting February 1936-March 1940, p.5. Edmunds had been appointed Controller of Broadcasting pending Fielden's arrival.
to me, 'Sorry, Fielden. I really don’t see how we’re ever going to run broadcasting successfully until we make it into a corporation.'

A Corporation had been ruled out by Sir Findlater Stewart, Under-Secretary of State for India, in 1934, even before Fielden set foot in India. According to Stewart, "corporations such as existed in this country were out of question, as there were in India very few public spirited individuals as we understood the term in this country, and any corporation would undoubtedly misuse its powers."

Broadcasting had by now acquired sufficient importance to merit a meeting of the Viceroy's Executive Council to decide on broadcast policy. Among the conclusions reached at that meeting were the following:

that the transfer of the Indian State Broadcasting Service to a statutory corporation was at present impractical but it was emphasised that the decision should not be regarded as permanent ... in view of the fact that attacks will be made in the legislature on the government's broadcasting policy

That the Service should for the present remain under official control, and that Government should be prepared to appoint Advisory Committees. The decisions need not however be announced until nature and strength of the criticisms in the Indian Legislature are fully known.

The reasons for such deviousness on the part of the government were explained in an attached summary: "The basic question is that of control. ISBS is a government concern, and as long as it remains a government concern, no policy will satisfy

\[\text{\textsuperscript{155}}\text{Ibid., p.4.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{156}}\text{BBC, WAC, E1/896/2, "Report of Meeting at the India Office", in Indian Broadcasting September 1934-November 1935, 18 October 1934.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{157}}\text{NAI, File No. 52/11/36. Copy of Conclusions reached in Executive Council Meeting as finally approved by Viceroy.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{158}}\text{Ibid.}\]
In March 1936, Fielden and Kirke visited Lucknow, Allahabad, Benaras, Calcutta, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Bezwada, Ellora, Rajamundhry, Madras, Madurai, Trichinopoly, Bangalore, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Peshawar and Lahore (the last two now part of Pakistan) to discuss the problems with local authorities. In May 1936, they submitted to the Government of India their recommendations about what could be done with the Rs. 40 lakhs provided for development.
Their report represented the first coherent plan for broadcasting in India with a view
to providing an all-India service. In the opening paragraph of their report they drew
comparisons with the broadcasting set-up in England and Europe to emphasise the
point that the 40 lakhs allocated, though a substantial amount of money, was
thoroughly inadequate for the purpose. As they put it, in England, which was a much
smaller country, with no language problems of the kind obtaining in India:

... there were nine 50 kW transmitters, one 100 kW transmitter and
four stations of one kW or less, while one additional transmitter of 50
kW and one of 100 kW were under erection, and several more small
transmitters were projected. This involves an expenditure of well over
a hundred lakhs for transmitting stations alone, excluding the cost of
studios.... In Europe which could be compared with India in size and
coverage required, there over a 100 high and medium power stations
representing a total cost of about 10 crore rupees. Considering also
the fact that India had an area over sixty times as that of Great
Britain, and a population seven times as much as the latter any
service that could be given for only 40 lakh rupees would be very
poor by comparison.162

Kirke's recommendations envisaged the setting up of seven new medium stations
apart from those already existing at Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta, a shortwave station
at Delhi for the centralised news service, and the purchase of the existing medium
wave station at Peshawar. It was further proposed that Medium Wave stations - one
of 100 kW, five of 5 kW, and two of 2 kW of power should be set up at various
centres. Some modifications and improvements in the existing stations at Bombay
and Calcutta were also included in the scheme, estimated to cost Rs. 40,19,000 on

162 Ibid., p. 11
capital equipment and with a recurring annual expenditure rising to a maximum of Rs. 26 lakhs when the scheme was complete.\textsuperscript{163}

In the concluding paragraphs of his report, Kirke said that an element of cross-subsidisation was built into his plan, based on a compromise between providing a service to urban areas, from where the bulk of the licence revenues was anticipated, and using those revenues to provide a similar service to rural areas which were unlikely to have high listenership.

So long as the Indian State Broadcasting Service was regarded more or less like a commercial undertaking and not as a social service, such considerations must affect its development; ... and rural areas of comparatively sparse population which were actually more in need of broadcasting than richer and more populous districts, would necessarily get excluded from its scope. It may be thought that the idea of a self-supporting service is wrong and that government should devote the limited funds available to 'unremunerative' stations in rural areas ... there are several good reasons for holding the more mercenary view. If broadcasting is to develop as it should, the service must have a life of its own and the strength to survive budgetary fluctuations. In the early stages at least, vitality can come only from the body of sophisticated listeners who are prepared to pay for their entertainment. Generalizations about the value of rural broadcasting are not necessarily correct, and in actual life little is known at present of the rural side of broadcasting problems.\textsuperscript{164}

C.W. Goyder of the BBC came over to India and became the Chief Engineer of the Indian State Broadcasting Service on 19 August 1936 after Kirke's departure in May 1936. Goyder modified Kirke's scheme, putting more emphasis on shortwave broadcasting since he felt that if medium-wave transmitters only were to be used it would not, within the funds made available, be possible to cover more than a small

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{164}
percentage of the total area of India. A basic shortwave service, on the other hand, could provide service to the whole of India, even if the quality would be low, and this could be supplemented with a better quality medium wave service at important centres.\textsuperscript{(165) According to his estimates, 10 kW SW transmitters operating on 60 metres wave length at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras would provide a reasonably satisfactory coverage with a radius of about 804.67 km. of each of these stations. Thus between them they would cover almost the whole country at a cost of Rs. 5,40,000 (at Rs.1,35,000 each) which would be just a little more than half of Rs.10 lakhs of the single large medium-wave transmitter proposed by Kirke.\textsuperscript{(166)}

As the \textit{Hindustan Times} newspaper reported in its “Annual Number” in February 1938:

1937 has been a very busy year for the authorities of All-India(sic) Radio in running about the country and speeding up installations of new stations. In December 1937, the Lahore medium-wave and the Delhi short-wave stations were put on air. The remaining six stations at Lucknow, Dacca, Calcutta, Madras, Trichnopoly and Bombay are in various stages of completion.

1938 is expected to be a year of boom for Radio – in India – when twelve A.I.R. broadcasters will all radiate together, along with the new Hyderabad station, and Akashwani of Mysore. Other leading Indian states are also expected to put themselves on the radio map during the course of the year. The programmes are also expected to improve and lose the dull tone of monotony.

The broadcasting revenues have shown quite a satisfactory rise considering the service an Indian listener has to be contented with. During the financial year 1935-36 the revenues from all sources went

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p.14  
\textsuperscript{165} Progress of Broadcasting in India, n.67, p. 14  
\textsuperscript{166} Luthra,n.69, p.86
up to 14.3 lakhs and the expenditure during the same period to 5.8 lakhs.\textsuperscript{167} 

The War Years

As in Britain, the beginning of World War II had a major impact on broadcasting in India. From being an unwanted child, it became the cornerstone of Allied broadcasting in Asia and also played a major role in informing the people of India on the progress of the War, as seen through Allied eyes.\textsuperscript{168} Among the first steps taken was to increase from 1 October 1 1939 the number of hours of transmission in a day, from a total of 50 hours 45 minutes to 70 hours 15 minutes and to introduce News Bulletins in 5 new Indian languages – Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Marathi and Pushto.\textsuperscript{169} Services were also started in foreign languages to counter Nazi propaganda, the first of these being a news service in Persian. India became even more important as a broadcasting centre once Japan entered the war in 1942. The British government requested All India Radio to install at Delhi five shortwave transmitters including a 100 kW shortwave transmitter as an urgent war measure. A press note gave a detailed break-up of the new stations that had come into operation after the commencement of the war:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} J.L. Dar, "Broadcasting and Regeneration", \textit{Hindustan Times}, Annual Number, February 1938, in P.N. Chopra, (ed) \textit{Towards Freedom: Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1937} (Delhi: OUP,1986) p.952
\item \textsuperscript{168} Even this was a belated recognition; L. Brander who had been deputed from the Overseas Services Division of the BBC as its Indian specialist says, in a letter to Prof. Rushbrook Williams, Head of Overseas Services, that "...AIR was conceived and born in poverty and has been poverty-stricken ever since ... when the War came, there was a departmental suggestion that it be axed for the duration as a 'luxury'..." BBC WAC E1/880/1, "Letter from Brander to Prof. Rushbrook Williams" in \textit{Branders visit to India 1942-43}, 18 July 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{169} BBC, WAC E1/877/2, \textit{All India Radio 1946-49}. The initial grant of Rs 40 lakhs was supplemented by yearly block grants of Rs. 17 lakhs during 1941-42, by 22 lakhs during 1942-43, by 12 lakhs during 1943-44 and by 4 lakhs during 1944-45.
\end{itemize}
1) The Dacca station was completed and began to operate on 16/12/39 with a 5 kW medium wave transmitter. Dacca was the ninth AIR centre and the fourteenth transmitter created under the original program of development.

2) On 17/2/40, a 10 kW transmitter was assembled and set up departmentally at Delhi for news distribution by radio link.

3) In view of the Japanese threat to the East Coast in April 1942, a 10 kW short wave transmitter at Madras was removed to Delhi where it was set up as part of the Madras radio station. The whole work of dismantling, transport and reassembling was done in less than a month. Madras continued its local shortwave broadcasts with the .25 kW transmitter.

4) The original .25 kw medium wave transmitter at Peshawar was replaced by a new 10- kw medium wave transmitter and Peshawar became a full fledged “originating” station with a studio building which was designed and constructed as such.

5) Two 7.5 kW short wave transmitters were installed and added to the service for operation from Delhi in the early part of this year. In April of this year, AIR added to its service two 100 kW shortwave transmitters.¹⁷⁰

Another fall-out of the War was that work on Broadcasting House in Delhi was taken up in right earnest, as the press note testified:

Broadcasting House in New Delhi was one of the projects which made up the original scheme of development of broadcasting in India. It was thought at one time, however that the construction of the building would have to be held over for in indefinite time. But with the tremendous pressures on broadcasting brought about by the war, the vast expansion that has taken place in the last few years in AIR’s services, both internal and external, with the decision to install high powered transmitters, the construction of Broadcasting House could no longer be postponed. Work was started on the building in October 1941, and the studios began to function in July 1943.

Architecturally, Delhi’s newest and one of its most striking buildings, Broadcasting House represents from the point of view of equipment, the latest in engineering with its soft shaded studios, each within individual acoustic pattern to suit every variety of sound reproduction, its Control Room – a compact of up-to-the-second scientific efficiency, its dramatic control panels, its maze of concealed wiring, and its luxury liner corridors, Broadcasting House constitutes a landmark, in every sense of the word, in the history of Indian broadcasting.171

A second press note from the Public Information Bureau informed that “At present daily programs in English and 13 Indian languages are broadcast from AIR stations.... The various stations of AIR put out on air approximately 36,900 hours of varied items such as music, news, talks, drama, etc, during the last year. Of this, music formed about 44%, news 18% and external services 14%.”172

Fielden happened to be on home leave and in his absence, his deputy A.S. Bokhari functioned as Controller of Broadcasting. He was designated as Controller in 1940, since Fielden stayed behind in Britain, to help in the war effort. This brought with it a new set of problems, since the British government was not too happy at the thought of a “native” being in charge of broadcasting at this crucial juncture. According to Luthra, A.S. Bokhari had to use all his persuasiveness to convince the authorities that “any decision to transfer the responsibility for programmes directed to Indian listeners to any organisation under the direct control of British authorities would arouse adverse reactions in the people and thus indirectly hinder the War effort.”173 Though Indian programmes were spared it was decided that broadcasts to

171 Ibid
172 British Library, India Office Records, Information Department, L/1/1/445, Correspondence on Broadcasting in India 1932-45, item 2.
173 Luthra, n.69, p.128
British troops stationed in India and in foreign languages to listeners abroad would be looked after by the newly created Far Eastern Bureau of the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) of the Ministry of Information, London which was to be responsible for the dissemination of propaganda. Inevitably, there were major turf wars between the two organisations but ultimately, at the end of the war, AIR found itself with more transmitters which had been constructed for the War effort.

It was during the War that AIR became part of the Department of Information and the Arts and A.S. Bokhari was designated as the Director-General of All India Radio.

By the end of the War the first draft of plan for the post-war development of Broadcasting in India was drawn up by the Directorate-General, AIR and submitted to the government as the staff and resources of AIR were inadequate in view of its functions and responsibilities, especially during the war, the Department was re-organised during the period under review and an annual additional expenditure of Rs. 23 lakhs was sanctioned for this purpose. Of this sum, approximately Rs. 11 lakhs were to be spent on the improvement of programmes and the rest on improvement in salaries of the existing staff and the creation of new posts.

174 See Chapter 5 for more details.
175 British Library, India Office Records, Information Department, IOR L/1/1/967, Government of India's Reports on Broadcasting, 27/7/43.
Table 2.3 – AIR Transmitters - 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>80 miles</td>
<td>Hindustani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>500 miles</td>
<td>Hindustani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Gujerati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Maratti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>20/30</td>
<td>Hindustani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahore</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Hindi, Punjabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichnopoly</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peshawar</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hindi, Pushto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Hindi, Marathi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Hindi, Canarese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BBC Written Archives Centre

Conclusion

The basic framework within which broadcasting was to function within Britain and India had been drawn up in the late 19th century both in Britain and India, with the promulgation of the Wireless Telegraphs Acts in 1869 and 1885, respectively. The basic objective of these Acts was to give to the government complete control over the newly found phenomena of the airwaves, with considerations of national security being cited as the rationale behind such control. The result of this was that the government came to play a crucial role in the development of broadcasting in both countries, despite an initial reluctance to get involved too closely in this field, for differing reasons in the two countries. Whilst, in Britain, the government of the day was of the opinion that too close an identification with broadcasting would be seen
as an attempt by it to control the new mass medium, in India, the colonial government did not see broadcasting as a crucial tool to control public opinion and was therefore simply not interested in it, or in its potentialities.

Thus, in both countries, in what might be called the initial phase in the development of broadcasting, commercial interests were given permission to set up transmitting facilities and broadcast programmes, but under the close supervision and regulation of the government. The 'commercial interest' common to broadcasting in both countries was the Marconi company which constructed both radio transmission equipment as well as receiver sets and therefore had a keen interest in furthering the expansion of broadcasting. However, the end results were strikingly different in the two countries; while in Britain, the commercial interests were satisfied to hand over the Company to the government after their limited goal of popularising broadcasting had succeeded, in India, the Company went bankrupt in less than a year's time without making any impact on broadcasting. This happened despite the fact that, on the face of it, the IBC had the benefit of obtaining revenues both from the licence fee as well as from advertising.

In Britain, success came from the well-planned and structured expansion of broadcasting to cover the country within a span of a few years, coupled with a tremendous interest in the new medium from listeners. Britain also had an advantage in having a relatively homogenous population with similar interests, which made it relatively easy for the broadcasters to cater to a range of tastes. The government,

177 BBC, WAC, E1/897/4, “BBC memo on broadcasting prepared for Viscount Burnham” in Indian Broadcasting Company July 1928-December 1930, p.1
notwithstanding the reservations it might have had on the new medium was forced to take cognizance of the new phenomenon of broadcasting and seek to address its demands by constituting two committees to look into the matter within a span of a few years. The BBC was also benefited by having John Reith at its helm in its formative years; he gave the BBC the necessary focus and direction that was so essential to its growth in its formative years. As a member of the establishment, he could be depended on to ensure that the BBC did not overstep its limits.

Lionel Fielden, India’s first Controller of Broadcasting, ascribed the failure of the IBC to various factors, mostly economic in nature and ranging from under-capitalisation of the Company to the price of radiosets. However, he left out the most important factor which was a wilful lack of interest of the colonial government on matters pertaining to broadcasting. While the many other arms of the government such as the Posts and Telegraphs, and the Railways, were essential to the effective functioning of the government, this was not the case with broadcasting. In fact, there were very real fears in the Indian Civil Service that broadcasting, though seen in Britain as a unifying factor, might come in the way of the British imperial policy of “Divide and Rule.” This can be seen in the fact that much of the labour and effort that went into formulating a policy for broadcasting was centred around keeping tight control over it by creating laws for pre- and post-censorship. Even after the Indian Broadcasting Company had begun its services on a minuscule scale and then immediately run into financial difficulties, the government turned a deaf ear to its appeal for help. That response indicated the government’s hope that the fad of
broadcasting would die a natural death. In this endeavour, the government was aided by the fact that the Indian Broadcasting Company was in the hands of businessmen who had no prior knowledge or interest in broadcasting and who only saw it as a tool for making money.

The contrasts between the two organisations become starker once they took on new personifications; while the BBC became an autonomous corporation, the IBC came under direct government control in its new avatar as the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS). The BBC gained immeasurably from its transition, since the uncertainties and constant problems with the regulatory authorities it had faced as a private company were reduced considerably and it could get on with the task of expanding broadcasting. On the other hand, despite the BBC lending a helping hand by sending over experienced personnel to help Indian broadcasting, the attitude of the authorities to broadcasting was decidedly detrimental to the development of broadcasting in India. The little attention it gained was only after the government began to perceive broadcasting as a potential milch cow since all equipment had to be imported and there were considerable customs revenues to be had from such imports.

Given the economic, geographic and other disparities between Britain and India, the BBC model was unworkable in the Indian context. What the colonial government did was to transplant the BBC model, leaving aside the ethos on which that model was based. Secondly, though a unified model was suited for Britain, the

178 Examined in detail in Chapter 5.
heterogeneity of India would have been better served by a provincial or community based system of broadcasting. The BBC had even suggested a variation on this theme in 1930 by suggesting that an alliance should be forged between a public service corporation (to handle the broadcasting aspect) and the Co-operative Movement, (for supply and maintenance of listening facilities) "whose financial resources and business efficiency are matters of common knowledge" as a solution to the problem. However, the colonial government, intent on keeping broadcasting on a tight leash given its perceived potentialities for mischief and therefore, ensuring complete control over the system and its output, would not consider such alternatives. With the dawn of Independence, even though this systemic aberration could have been corrected, the fact that most institutions were passed on as "going concerns" led to a situation in which broadcasting carried on as before with very little modification and improvement.